

**GREENSBORO VOICES/GREENSBORO CIVIL RIGHTS ORAL HISTORY  
COLLECTION**

INTERVIEWEE: William H. Jackson

INTERVIEWER: Glen Jordan

DATE: February 25, 1988

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

GLEN JORDAN: I'm Glen Jordan, we're here at the home of William Jackson in Greensboro, North Carolina, and today's date is February 25, 1988. Mr. Jackson, before we get into the interview with questions of the interview--

WILLIAM JACKSON: --a little louder.

GJ: A little louder? Okay. Before we get into the interview, I'd like to get a little biographical information, when and where you were born, and how long you've been in Greensboro.

WJ: I was born in Waycross, Georgia, and I've been in Greensboro since about 1923. I moved here as a small child, and I've been here since that time.

GJ: All right, okay. When did you first become involved with the police department in Greensboro?

WJ: February 1940.

GJ: February 1940. Right. And as you were living in Greensboro, and being from the South, being born in Georgia, growing up in Greensboro--what notice did you take of the racial differences, and the differences in the races that had been played out, say before changes in the 1960s?

WJ: You're going to have to speak louder, I can't hear you.

GJ: Okay. I was just wondering--your awareness of racial differences. It's something that we all become aware of at a certain age. And what changes did you notice, say, from when you were a child until now? What are some of the changes you have noticed?

WJ: I was aware of the fact that there was a difference in them. I was raised in a family who didn't have prejudice. I had a--what we refer to now as black, we referred to then as colored--nurse when I was little, that had also looked after my father when he was a baby. And there was a man, a colored man, who worked with my grandfather and my father,

who helped around the house. And we were never permitted to be disrespectful to them anymore than we were to our own people. If we were to sass one of them, we would get a whipping just as fast as we sassed my mother, my father, or my grandparents. And Aunt Dicey, the lady who looked after us, would spank my bottom just as soon as my mother would if I got out of the way. And we well respected. And she is buried in the family--my father's family plot.

GJ: Did you notice this attitude being pretty much among the people you knew, too, as you grew up? Your friends?

WJ: Yes, very much so--very little difference in them. The majority of the--everyone tended to their own business, and the blacks looked after their own and the whites looked after their own, and if they were friendly, they were friendly and they got along well. No trouble whatsoever. As I was growing up there were--I worked at a barbecue stand here in the city, and went to school. And there was a colored man who cooked there by the name of John Graves. John Wesley Graves. He and I were real good friends. We worked until two o'clock in the morning lots of times during the summer, and we'd get off work and he and I would go frog gigging together. I remember once when I was in high school--I liked to play baseball--we had a ball team in high school--which is now Grimsley--and we were going to have to cancel the games because we had no money to buy balls. And John Graves, through his friendship to me, gave me a dollar, and I put a dollar with it--and with that two dollars, baseballs was bought so we could have the game that day. Now that was my relationship with them. I have always been--gotten along with them. And of course, just like lots of white people, there was some that I couldn't get along with. And there's been lots of white people the same way.

GJ: All right. So you noticed as you were, say, a child, from the time you were growing up, as you said through high school--early adulthood then--this is pretty much the same attitude? It's remained basically the same?

WJ: Yeah, but I was never permitted to abuse one or speak ugly to one, anymore than that would be [unclear].

GJ: Okay. I believe earlier you said you joined the police force in 1940?

WJ: That's right.

GJ: At the time it was a segregated police force, or there were no black--

WJ: There were no colored members of the police force at that time.

GJ: Right. What--when--in the early years, then, of your membership in the police force, what was the relationship of the department with the black community?

WJ: As long--just same as any, as white. As long as they behaved themselves and there was no trouble, they were treated the same--except they were segregated in the jail. But the

jail--one side was as equal to the other. And they were fed out of the same pot. One was fed the same thing as the other. There was no discrimination whatsoever in the jails; only thing that you could say was discriminate [was] they were separated, and what separated them was a hallway. Identical same box, identical same blankets, toilet facilities, everything were identical.

GJ: All right. Was there ever any mention, say, let's say, the 1940s--was there ever any mention of the segregated--segregating the prisoners? Did anybody ever--

WJ: No, no. Never had it mentioned.

GJ: Never had it mentioned?

WJ: Never had it mentioned.

GJ: Okay. Looking in the 1940s and 1950s, did you notice any changes starting to take place? Say before the sit-ins in 1960? Did you notice any changes?

WJ: I left the police department in '41. No, correction: '40. Fall of '41. And I had to go into the army. And I was gone four and a half years. And I came back, I went back to the police department, and I could see a difference then, that they--blacks were beginning to gain a little more privileges around. And it was shortly thereafter that we got our first two black officers. There was Sam Penn, was one and John Montgomery, the other. Sam is not living now but John is, and is retired. And they were very, very, very good individuals.

After I became a supervisor I supervised John Montgomery. Funny thing about John--when I was a sergeant--I was Mr. Jackson to him when he came to work there--and when I was a sergeant I was still Mr. Jackson. And I see him today, he still calls me Mr. Jackson, which I have no objection if he called me Bill. I think that much of him. That's just John. He's a fine individual.

GJ: Right. So did the hiring the two black officers in the forties, did it help some with the relations with the black community? Did it help or--

WJ: In some respects it did and in some it didn't. I've answered calls where the black officers would have someone under arrest and get there and they'd be having trouble. And the person, the people under arrest would holler, "I don't want that nigger arresting me! You come take me!" And I'd take a hold of them and all things [unclear].

Now that was the language that they used. And it was no--but that began--it didn't last long for them, it got better all along. And they quit resenting them so bad, but for years they did resent the black officers.

GJ: All right. Is there--did that resentment seem to be both black and white? Did there--

WJ: Yes, yes, but more so in the black than it was with the white. They arrested a white person--wasn't near as much commotion as it was if they arrested a black.

GJ: All right. Now this was right after the war, when they were hired--they were hired right at the war?

WJ: Yeah. [Nineteen] Forty-five, forty-six.

GJ: Were there any more black officers hired during the fifties?

WJ: Yes, whoever came along--they picked them on up along. And there was one that was hired that didn't last too awfully long. He didn't know how to conduct himself with the black or the white. And it was the same with him as with these other whites we had. He didn't last long with us. But he's the only one that I know of or can call that was let go of because of his actions at that time.

GJ: Okay. Once you started hiring black officers in the police department, how did they interact with the white officers? What relationships--

WJ: Very well. Very well. There was no trouble there whatsoever. There's--all of them was just fine. We worked side by side. I never had a black partner in the scout car when I was in that. But I had blacks that walked, that walked the beat in areas that I called--that I had to work right side by side with all the time. I had no trouble whatsoever. The majority of them were good officers. And I'd have to say the majority of the white were good officers. Of course there was some bad ones there, as there was some others.

GJ: Okay. I want to bring the questions now to the 1960s and the sit-ins at Woolworth. What were you expecting after you first heard there was a sit-in--the four black students sitting-in at Woolworth? What were your initial reactions?

WJ: Let me bring you into 1960. In 1960, I commanded the juvenile division of the police department. I was not in the detective division. And I didn't have as great a hand in that as I did later on when things came in. When the juveniles began to come in to the Woolworth thing, then I took care of that end of it.

But now sheriff of Guilford County, Sticky Burch, had more charge of the Woolworth sit-ins than I did. I didn't--but we were expecting some trouble, but we handled it--it was handled in a manner which there actually was no trouble. The Ku Klux Klan, if you'll research the cause, interfered into that, too. And I did get into--involved in that. There was even a junior Ku Klux Klan situation here. And being in the juvenile division, I took care of that. And at night, when the Klan would have their rallies in different areas where they were beginning to integrate the white neighborhoods--I was there, and I remember one--the head of the Klan over there said, "I want you to look right over there. That man's Bill Jackson. He's a police officer. Want you to know that he's here." Now, that type of thing--but it didn't bother me, we just went ahead. I didn't care if they knew I was there. They knew that I'd do what was supposed to be done and it was automatic.

GJ: It was your job to be there, in other words.

WJ: That's it.

GJ: Right. So, from talking maybe with some other officers, who were maybe more closely connected with Woolworth, what were some of their opinions on how the crowds conducted themselves, both black and white, in that situation?

WJ: At the beginning of it there was whites there and there were some that came here from out of town, were not residents of Greensboro. And there were some two or three young ladies out of New York who came. And they were arrested because of their attitude and trying to incite something within the store itself. And I was given those young women, to take charge of them. Carry them back.

And the first they did--one of them wanted to use the phone and she called New York. And she said, "We've been arrested." They were her first words. And I doubt if there were half a dozen words spoken after that. So they were sent here for the purpose, in my opinion, of being arrested. The local people--if the outsiders had let our blacks and our whites handle it, there would have been no trouble. As it was, there was very little trouble, considering what was taking place.

GJ: All right. So it was--the police department then was satisfied then with the crowd handling itself in a very--the crowd made your jobs easier at that time?

WJ: That's right. Crowds can make any police officer's job easier.

GJ: Right, right, right. Well, after the furor died down from the sit-ins in 1960, did you start noticing any changes among the police relationship with the black community?

WJ: No, no. Not to the point where it was obvious. It was the same; they were given their rights and what they were entitled to and they were handled the same way.

GJ: Right. Did you notice a lot of difference between younger blacks and older members of the community in that respect?

WJ: The older ones--lots of the older ones, forty years old and older--resented the attitudes of the younger ones. The younger ones--the college-aged ones, the high school ones--they were more militant then. But the older ones, no.

GJ: The younger ones who were a little more militant in--if you had any dealings with them--how did they conduct themselves in dealing with the police department?

WJ: When they saw that you meant business, and that what was going on that you was right in what you were doing, they were no trouble. There was no fussing or fighting, scrapping, at all. They knew the situation and accepted it.

GJ: So, basically, you didn't see them--the only laws that maybe they were breaking were ones that they felt were based on segregation, and other laws, they made sure they didn't break those?

WJ: That's right. That's right. But those laws they was breaking were still laws. And then, because of their feelings, did not give them a right to break those laws. And that's when they were arrested. But there were very few arrests.

GJ: Right.

WJ: Very few arrests. In those sixties' business [at] Woolworth.

GJ: Right. Okay. Let's jump to '63 and the demonstrations in '63 which you did have more of a direct role in. '63, that spring was very volatile all over the South. Did you anticipate anything happening in Greensboro?

WJ: Did I anticipate anything happening? Yes, I did. 1961 or '62, I can't remember the exact dates, I attended the FBI national academy, where they train their FBI agents and they train selected police officers. And I was there, and I had to give a presentation to the class. And mine was "The Possibilities of Racial Tension within Our Neighborhood." And when I say neighborhood, I mean the city. And I can remember that I went to the board--and I had a blackboard--and I drew Market and Elm Street, and the square.

I don't know if you're familiar with that, but that's where the Jefferson Standard [Jefferson Pilot building] sits. That's what was known as the square and was the center of our town. And I drew and explained in my presentation to this class what we could expect. And it so happened when we received it, it came exactly as my diagrams had shown. So I was right in my thinking as to what would happen when it came. It came from East Market Street, headed west, into the town, and congregated at the square.

GJ: Okay. Let's get to '63, specifically, in May 1963, when the demonstrations occurred. Did any student leaders come to you before the demonstrations began to let you know what was going on?

WJ: We had contact with them, yes. Jesse Jackson was the student leader from A&T [North Carolina A&T State University]. There were other leaders in there, you see, there were several factions of organizations of blacks, and there was another young man here, William Thomas, and Alvin Thomas--they were brothers, and Jackson, from the school. The Thomas brothers were not students at A&T, but they were involved in these organizations that came up and I met with all of them on different occasions. I've been to the Thomas's home when this national organizer and leader of one of the outfits--

GJ: Was it CORE [Congress of Racial Equality]? James Farmer?

WJ: Farmer. Farmer. James Farmer was here. Now personally, I don't think much of James Farmer or what he did, or his attitude here, and other things that happened that I'm familiar with. He's not one of my favorite people, although he and I never had any words,

never had any conflict. But the Thomas boys--they also had a sister who's a school teacher, and she taught, I believe, in the Washington or Philadelphia area.

And those three kids--I don't know what's happened to them, but I would think that they have been successful in their lives. And Jesse Jackson was easy to work with, although I arrested him on two or three different occasions. He and I had an understanding. He'd tell me what he was going to do, and I'd tell him, "That's against the law and if you do, I'll have to arrest you."

He said, "I'll have to do it."

And I said, "I'll have to arrest you." And I did.

And today we have no hard feelings. I hear from him occasionally. Four years ago, when he was first running for president, he came here to town. He called for me to come down to see him. I went down to see him, to talk with him. I have no animosity toward the man whatsoever. I think he was doing what he thought he should be. And I fault him not one bit in this world.

GJ: So, how often were you in contact with people like Jackson?

WJ: Every day.

GJ: Every day? Every day. So they would basically come up to you and say, "We want to do this." And you would say, "Well, if you do it--"

WJ: I met with them at the school. Other places too.

GJ: Well, overall, when the demonstrations did break out in '63, what was your attitude, say, being the chief of the detective division then. What would the police department do? What would it take to start making arrests in '63?

WJ: Maintain order, to see that there was no disturbance. And as long as they were not too belligerent, and violating the law flagrantly, to the point where it was obvious, to let them continue in the peaceful marches and demonstrations. And that's what we did.

I remember one night in front of the Central Theatre--which is just off of the Square on Elm Street--they had no facilities for the blacks in that theatre at all. And we had some to arrest down there, and they--when we arrested them for the conduct, they sat down, laid down, and I don't think that was right. When my officers were treating them right, and told them they were under arrest, they should have gone with the officer. And I told my officer not to pick them up, to grab them by the wrist and drag them. And there was a young preacher here in town. I wish I could remember his name. I can't right now, right off hand. He got into a something, and I arrested him myself, and I put him in the back of the station-wagon.

And he said then--the minute he called me over there, and he said, "I'm a preacher and I don't want to be arrested, and I don't--"

And I said, "Well, let me ask you this. Do you think you could get out here and tell your people that when my officers arrest them that they will stand up and walk with my officers?"

He said, "Yes, sir, I certainly will."

I said, "You do that and there will be no trouble."

And he did. And I let him out of that wagon, and turned him loose and he did exactly what he said. And for a long time after he left Greensboro I used to receive letters and cards from him. He went up north some place. And the older element in the city--one or two school teachers who were trying to supervise some of this stuff--I had a meeting with them, bunch of them in my office one morning, three o'clock. And they really didn't like it because we drug them.

And I told them, "I'll tell you the same thing I told this other fellow. When my officers speak to them and tell them they're under arrest, for them to get up and walk, and they'll never be mistreated. If they lay down on the streets, we will drag them. We will not pick them up."

They said, "That's fair enough." And from that time on we did not have to drag them because they came in with us. It got back to them, it was an understanding between us. What they could expect from us and what we expected from them.

GJ: So do you think that made a big difference, say in Greensboro, [than] say in Birmingham, Alabama, where it became very violent?

WJ: Certainly. Certainly, I do. I don't know--I don't know anything about Birmingham except what I've read and saw in the paper.

GJ: Right. Right.

WJ: I wasn't there. But we in Greensboro, as a community that does not want trouble--didn't want it then and I don't think they want it today. And we had the cooperation of the majority of the whites. They stayed at home. There were a few rabble-rousers up there, but when they got out of line they were arrested also.

I remember one night we had some were riding by in the car, raising Cain, carrying on, and I knew that we had to get rid of them, get them out of the way. And they had done nothing that you actually could arrest them for. And I stopped them. I asked two of them for their draft registration and they didn't have it. And the law at that time said that if you did not have your draft registration on you, and you were eighteen years old, a police officer could lock you up, and at his earliest convenience notify the FBI. And that's what I did. I put them in jail to quell what they had come into town to do. And the next morning, when I got a chance, I called the FBI. They came over and talked to them some, and turned them out, which is perfectly all right, because I had accomplished what I wanted. And from that time on, that group and the ones that they were associated with, we had no conflict with them.

GJ: So you feel then that the department was successful in making the stand clear from the beginning? And that made the difference, then?

WJ: That's exactly right. Our stand was equal, as it was the way the law read. The law did not say that a black could get on the street and holler and carry on. And it didn't say a white could get on the street and holler and carry on. And the whites knew that they would be

arrested the same as the blacks knew, if they conducted themselves in a manner in which they did. In other words, we were colorblind regardless.

GJ: Right. Okay. The big demonstration they had at Jefferson--the square--the sit-down demonstration there--when did you make the decision there to begin making arrests?

WJ: When they sat down in the street. I asked them--they sat down in the middle of the street, blocked the traffic from one end to the other. I stepped on the bumper of an automobile parked and asked them to get up. We knew they were going to do that from my meetings earlier--they did that. And I asked them to get up and continue to move. And they refused to do it.

And when they did, I said, "You are under arrest."

And my officers were around the crowd and circled the group and we arrested all of them in there. And there was an ex-police officer, a black one, in that group. And he had something to--an ugly remark to make to me. But I told him, "You'll go to jail just like the rest of them." And he did.

GJ: So basically, though, they were very peaceful then after the arrests?

WJ: That's right, yeah, yeah. They weren't bad, weren't bad.

GJ: They were prepared, then, to go to jail?

WJ: Yes, some of the younger ones. We commandeered some public-service buses, and shipped them to the [Greensboro] Coliseum for processing. And some of the young ones in there cut up the upholstery in the seats of the bus. Now that was an uncalled-for thing that they could have done, and did. We don't know who did it and made no arrests for it. In fact, we didn't even try to find out who it was, it would have been a physical impossibility. And lots of them that were being arrested that night--there was a couple of them I remember that gave false identities.

I remember one young lady was supposed to have been in court and she wasn't. And we photographed each one of them. I guess she gave a name and an address. When she didn't show up I went to that address myself to arrest her and I had the photograph and a warrant, and when the girl came to the door by the name that I called for, it wasn't the one on the ticket. And I told her why I was there.

She said, "Let me see that picture, mister," and I showed it to her. She said, "That's not me, as you can see. And I'll tell you who this is." And this was a girl from Goldsboro, North Carolina, that had come up and had used her name when she was arrested. That happened on several occasions.

GJ: But for the most part, though, they were willing to be arrested, though, for what--and went up peacefully?

WJ: Yes, yes. We had fourteen hundred under arrest and incarcerated at one time. No trouble. No trouble with it. Some of them was dissatisfied and I don't blame them there. But as far as being ugly, cutting up and things, no.

GJ: Well, in '63, when, as you were telling me, there were some differences in the older blacks and the younger blacks--when some of the older blacks did start joining, they didn't, they had a silent demonstration, the silent march down Market Street? What was--

WJ: There was so many silent marches and things under that, you know, I couldn't differentiate between any of them right now. But there was sometimes as many as two and three a day. Some of the older people began to get into it and to supervise it.

GJ: Did you notice a difference when older blacks became involved?

WJ: No, no.

GJ: No difference.

WJ: No. There were some of the ministers here in town who started having their services on the street, which was a violation--

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

GJ: Okay. You were talking about the minister in front of the S&W Cafeteria holding a service.

WJ: Holding a service there, preaching. And I was sent up there to have them move. And I asked him to leave, and he wouldn't. And when I asked him to leave he went into a prayer. When he went into his prayer I took one step back, and waited until he completed his prayer. And when he completed his prayer, I arrested him, and carried him to jail. I had no trouble with that. For years--I think he's dead now, that particular one--but the years after I saw him, he and I would laugh about the thing and we were good friends. I created lots of black friends. And still have lots of black friends.

GJ: So you see the situation in '63 [as] basically, you were doing what you believed you had to do, and they were doing what they believed they had to do?

WJ: That's exactly right.

GJ: When things finally quieted down in '63, what were you anticipating for the rest of the summer? As what would--might happen?

WJ: We thought that when school was out and the students left, that it would quiet down. And it did quiet down. And--was that the--my years are mixed up here now--was it in '63 that Martin Luther King was killed?

GJ: I think that was '68 when he was killed.

WJ: [Nineteen] Sixty-eight?

GJ: Right. We can talk about that a little later.

WJ: It was a few years later.

GJ: Right. Right.

WJ: We get--it was just prior to that that we had some trouble. Then it had ceased and then he--we thought after--but that caused no trouble.

GJ: Right, right. Well, what changes did you notice, then, after '63, after that May? Did it seem to change things around here?

WJ: Everything began to smooth--to run smooth. The theatres opened up. [coughs] The cafeterias opened up. And things--the transition was smooth and there was no trouble between the white and the black or anything else. I was in S&W Cafeteria the first night any blacks were permitted in there. They actually didn't know how to be served in a cafeteria. They took their seats, and the lady who was in charge of the serving operation went to them and told them to get in line, follow the line with the rest of them. And they did it. It was just as nice as you please. In that group was a minister, who is still a minister in this town, and a very good friend of mine. And I see him and we speak, shake hands, wherever we meet today.

GJ: So did you notice it was just a gradual thing? Blacks just gradually started going to the restaurants?

WJ: Well, there was no rush there. And the older people didn't come back into it, or rush into it like the younger ones, the college students more than anything else. And there were a group of--Quaker group that was headquartered in High Point [American Friends Service Committee]--was in here--the majority of them were white. And they would try to instigate some things, but not--they were not successful in getting things started as they would like to have done.

GJ: So you see it as basically, then, the people who wanted to come--then they were able to come now? And that was basically what it was? You didn't see anybody just, like you say, there wasn't a big rush to storm the doors?

WJ: Ones that wanted to come, who came, and the ones who served, they came, and they came on and they go right on about their business.

GJ: Well, say, between 1963 and when Martin Luther King was assassinated, were there really any major incidents between that time?

WJ: There were minor situations. A&T--and I can't recall the years again now--there was one student killed along there on the campus [Willie Grimes, 1969]. There were three police officers wounded. One of them is crippled from it today. And there was another student

shot in the back of the arm as he walked down the street. And in my opinion he was shot by a student, and I talked with him in the infirmary at the school. And a few years later, a nice-looking young man came and wanted to talk to me.

He said, "You don't remember me, do you?"

I said, "No, I don't."

He told me who he was and it was this student who had been shot in the arm. And he was wanting to become a police officer. Not here in Greensboro, he wanted to go back to his home. And he wanted some ideas on some things. And we had a nice chat there. But there was another young man killed on the campus. By whom, I couldn't answer. I don't know. And I went to Greenville, North Carolina, to notify his parents. When I got there his mother and father were both working and the neighbor said they'd be home somewhere around the neighborhood of four o'clock. And I waited till they came in and I went down in their home. I sat down and I told them what had happened. And I never will forget the attitude of his father. He was the type of man that anybody would have been glad to have called [a] friend, whether black or white.

He said, "I sacrificed to send that boy up there. I went up there and got him a nice room in a private home. And I told him to stay out of that stuff over at that school that was going on. And this is what has happened." I never felt so sorry for anybody in my life as I did for him, his daddy and his mother. But I was accepted in their home, before I told them what had happened, and their attitude never changed towards me at all.

GJ: Did the violence catch you off-guard, there, with that particular incident, or--

WJ: The violence kept--check--caught me off guard to a degree. At this particular time when it started at A&T, I was still in charge of the detective division, which I was in charge of until I retired. I was not consulted with regards to what was taking place.

GJ: As opposed to the earlier incidents where you were always kept in touch?

WJ: I was more or less an outcast, if you want to get right down to the bottom of it.

GJ: What do you think made the difference?

WJ: And I've never made that statement before either. But that's the truth. And the night the officers were shot, I was on Market Street at Benbow Road, where Benbow Road intersects with Market Street. That was before it was changed as it is down there now. And I don't know how Benbow Road comes into Market right now. And I was there, and I was listening to my radio, and I could hear the gunshots. There was a highway patrolman sitting there. There was another police officer sitting there. And here came some people with authority. "Get out of here, get out of here! Right now they're coming over this way!" I didn't rush back in there. I was riding by myself.

I heard a call come over the radio from one of our sergeants. He said, "I've been hit and I've got a man here with me that's hit bad. We need to get out of here, get somebody in here." And in just a second he came back, "Another one of my men's been hit." And the authorities that passed by and told me to get out, they kept on going. Well, I

was less than two blocks from them and I saw that there's nobody going for them. The ambulances wouldn't go in there. And I don't blame them.

And I told them, "I'll get them." And I went in there by myself. And I got them loaded. The sergeant was hit in the shoulder with a wound that you could lay your hand in. The other man--one of the other men--was hit in the leg and could hardly stand up. The other man was hit in the chest, and it came out of his back, and he was next to death. And I got them in the car and I don't know to this day how I got the man who was wounded so bad in the car. I couldn't tell you. I don't remember. But I got him in there. And I backed out of there. And I saw something that actually shocked me. And I'll not say what it was, when I was turning around. And I left there and I went to the Cone Hospital. And when I got there--with them the news media, the cameras and the bright lights, all over the place--and when I got out of the car I told the news media not to put those lights in my eyes. If they had, I expect somebody would have gotten hurt because I was mad, was upset. I wouldn't put it--and they didn't put it in my eyes. And we got those people out of there and into the hospital.

And the young man who was hit into the chest--if it hadn't have been for a nurse there in the emergency room, working on him until the doctor could get there, the boy would've been dead. She was marvelous. And I said, "Can I help you?" And she started telling me what to do and I started, pulled my coat off and threw it down, and I helped her with him there. And the doctor came, worked on him a little bit there in the room and rushed him to the operating room and operated on him for about over three hours. His wife and little child--a girl, probably three years old that time--came to the hospital. And I sat with his wife and helped that child while he was in the operating room till he came out. But I didn't have knowledge of that. And I had no knowledge of the National Guard coming in there until I happened to pass by the National Guard Armory which was just behind the A&T College at that time. And I saw some activity, and I found out about that.

GJ: So the governor made the decision with the National Guard? Or was it the mayor who made that choice?

WJ: I couldn't answer that. I don't know.

GJ: You just knew, once you saw it, that that's when it was going to happen then? So you think that was a big reason in that violence caught you off guard, that there wasn't this contact with--

WJ: My opinion, a great deal of it, yes. But there was another man down there who was running this situation that was no where near the character of an individual as Jesse Jackson; Nelson Napoleon Johnson supervised that, and he is still around here, and in my opinion he has never been any good. Never will be any good. He is a detriment to his race. And he was the ringleader at that down there.

GJ: Did he basically not even seek you out, then? When he--

WJ: Oh, no. No, no. Nelson Johnson was avoiding me any time he got a chance he could.

GJ: So was your attitude, then, "If he wants to come to me, he can come to me--"

WJ: Certainly could. My office was open at any time, day or night, to talk with anyone who wanted to. I never have failed to answer my telephone at night here. I never failed to go where I was asked or I thought was needed to go.

GJ: Did--what do you think kept the situation then from getting worse than it could've gotten, once violence had been--

WJ: We made several key arrests. We arrested the president of the student body and some others there.

GJ: Right. What led to their arrests?

WJ: Their conduct there and at Dudley High School.

GJ: How did the trouble get spread to Dudley High School--the demonstration?

WJ: Through Johnson's instigation of sending people over there to stir those children up, because he wasn't getting the backing from A&T that he thought he should have. He was also a student at that time at UNCG [the University of North Carolina at Greensboro]--a day student, one or two classes. And it's my opinion he was enrolled in those classes to give him a right to be on that campus--to stir trouble. And there was a white instructor at A&T who I first encountered at a meeting at UNCG. And at that time, all in there, the communists were infiltrating A&T. This man made some remarks at UNCG that made my hair stand up. I had never heard an American stand up and make such remarks. And I made a note, a mental note, as to who he was and what he was. And they finally got him involved in break-ins, where he had his students doing break-ins for him. He was arrested and left here, and the last time I heard from him he was in Chicago. I don't know where he is. And there was a young radical here named John Philip Sousa, a great-great-nephew or something or other of the band leader Sousa. I don't know if you've ever heard of this boy or not. He committed suicide and was caught up in an investigation not too awfully long ago. He was involved there. He went to Chicago and he got involved in trouble with this same man. But he was not involved in the things at the school at that time.

GJ: What were some of the reactions you got at Dudley High School among the administration and the teachers at Dudley?

WJ: Teachers and the administration at Dudley High School--you couldn't have asked for better. You couldn't have asked for better. The principal down there was the ideal individual to work for. He did not interfere with you. He did not want what was going on, and he worked with you, and he was an ideal individual.

GJ: What was his name?

WJ: I know his name but I can't think of it right off hand right now. But following him was a young lady that worked there, [Linda] McDougle--I believe she's with the Greensboro schools now in the administrative office. And I never did know her, but I would like to have known her. I followed her work, and from what I've been able to understand and what I'd read, she was an ideal person, and created an atmosphere at that school that was second to none. I could--from what I know of her--and I wouldn't know her if she'd walk up here--she's bound to be a very admirable person.

GJ: Okay. Going, then, to another major incident: '68, when Martin Luther King was assassinated. Did you say that a curfew was imposed in Greensboro--as there were curfews imposed all over the country, in cities all over the country at that time? Were there any problems after imposing a curfew or--?

WJ: No, no. Not what you might say problems. I believe that's where they--one group came to the courthouse on Market Street and burned in effigy somebody--I don't remember who it was. There was no trouble, no trouble. Martin Luther King, in my opinion, in Greensboro, never had whole lots of influence. The last time Martin Luther King was in Greensboro he held a meeting, a town hall at the coliseum. And they passed the sand buckets for collection. These sand buckets were about a gallon, six-quart buckets that the children use on the beaches. They passed them and they passed them and they passed them. And when they were coming out they were still taking up money, trying to get money. A very good friend of mine, a black man here in this town, who's still living, turned to me, he said, "Martin Luther King won't be back to Greensboro."

I said, "What do you mean, Martin Luther won't be back here?"

He said, "They haven't got enough money for him."

Martin Luther King never came back to Greensboro. The following spring after he was here, he was supposed to make the graduation address at Bennett College. And the president of that school was a young woman who was outstanding [Willa B. Player]. Black. And had a head on her shoulders like nothing anybody could want or desire more. She knew where she was and where she had been, and where she was headed. And I set up the security situation for Martin Luther King at the school. And the time came for him, and he wouldn't show up. She left and she came back and she stated to me they had airplane trouble in Atlanta and can't get out. And she went to the stage and delivered the address herself. When I went back to my office I contacted the airport authorities in Atlanta. There had been no plane delayed because of trouble. So my friend's statement was still true even then.

GJ: Okay, this question--the next question is going to probably do more with you being an ordinary citizen of Greensboro. How much change did you see the black community getting on its own during the sixties? I mean, from the Greensboro's black community itself, how much did you see them getting done?

WJ: Very little. Very little. They didn't accomplish much. The ones that accomplished anything individually, quite a few. Some of them [unclear]. But the majority of them, just exactly like they were.

GJ: So did you notice any--

WJ: They wanted--the majority of them appeared to want you to bring it to them, rather than them to seek it. And those who seek were able to find. And I know some that are in this town today that came out and have made gradual headway, just like anybody else in the community.

GJ: Do you think the demonstrations, especially the ones in the early sixties that were nonviolent, helped changed some attitudes among the white community?

WJ: Yes. To accept them, yes, I honestly do. I believe that.

GJ: So you think it was a little easier, then, to accept federal intervention, when the federal government said you were going to have to integrate the schools? Maybe, looking back ten years earlier, they were a little more comfortable.

WJ: The people here had no trouble with that. They had no trouble with that.

GJ: Did--what changes were starting to be made in the police department, say, during the 1970s? Was there any more awareness of maybe bringing in more black officers?

WJ: Sure. Sure.

GJ: And how did this--did this come through? Did--were more black officers hired in the seventies?

WJ: We were--from the sixties to the seventies--we increased in our size of manpower tremendously. And there were lots of blacks brought in. And there was lots of blacks promoted. And they were supposed to have had a promotional system work through competitive examination, evaluation, seniority, on a scale. Seniority only counted, I think, probably ten percent. They began to push the black. And as you look today it is still being done.

Now they have a black chief of police [Sylvester Daughtry]. That black chief of police was a good police officer. He was a gentleman. And he was a man. And when they selected him from the group that they had, they didn't make a mistake. There was no mistake there. He--if I was there and been pushed to select a chief of police from the group that was there, I would've selected him.

GJ: All right. Well, this question--

WJ: In fact, I went as far enough to go to him and tell him if I could help him, I'd be glad to. And I was sincere when I told him that.

GJ: So you did work with him while he was on the force when you--

WJ: Not directly worked with him. I knew he was there. He worked in one division and I was in another. He never worked under my supervision, but I knew he was there. I knew who he was and I knew what he was doing.

GJ: All right. When did you retire from the police force?

WJ: May, 1976.

GJ: May, 1976. Have you noticed since your retirement any changes? Have you kept up with any changes that may have occurred with the police department?

WJ: Between the blacks and the white things?

GJ: Right.

WJ: No. I couldn't say I did, because I don't go there often. I don't go there often enough. And I do know that it is not the same type of place it was when I left there. But as far as the conflict between the black and white, I couldn't say there is any. I don't know. From what I've been able to see and understand--read--I don't find but very little fault in what the chief of police has done. And you know you can always do a little Monday morning quarterbacking and come out better. So, I can't fault him. I can't fault him whatsoever.

GJ: How do you see the overall situation now, in Greensboro, as far as racial issues?

WJ: How do I think the overall situation--the overall situation is better than it's been in my opinion. The things they had when the Ku Klux Klan and the shootout they had down there--in my opinion that was an uncalled-for situation.

GJ: Right. Well--the future, then. What do you see--how do you see the future, then, as far as race relations go in Greensboro?

WJ: I see--as far as the city is concerned--that they are going to have to start seeing people as people, not blacks and white, and emotional situations and assignments on people, rather than races.

GJ: Do you think we're on the road to doing things that way?

WJ: Do I think we're on the road to it?

GJ: Right.

WJ: I think if we don't get it--if we're not on the road, and don't get on the road, we're in trouble.

GJ: Thank you, Mr. Jackson.

WJ: You're welcome.

GJ: We'll stop there.

[End of Interview]