

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: J. Leslie Cosby

INTERVIEWER: Joel Buchanan

DATE: July 23, 1985

J. LESLIE PARKER-COSBY
FAB 32AB

FIFTH AVENUE BLACKS, ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEWER: JOEL BUCHANAN
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: GAINESVILLE: FLORIDA
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J. Leslie Parker-Cosby is a third generation of Parkers who have lived in Gainesville. Her mother was Delhia Ella (Merle) Parker and Dr. Julius A. Parker, Sr. Her mother raised a family of seven children and returned to teaching school; her father was a successful dental practitioner and pharmacist in Gainesville. Mrs. Parker completed her primary and secondary education at Lincoln High School in Gainesville, and graduated from Fisk University in Nashville in 1946. She continued her education at Meharry where she received her certification as a medical and radiation technologist. She later was also certified to teach school and became the first black academic teacher in Alachua County.

This interview with one of the most prominent black persons in the Fifth Avenue community describes her life growing up as the child of important and educated parents. She tells of her educational experiences at Lincoln High School and of being the first black academic teacher in the early days of integration. She and her family were active in the Civil Rights movement in Gainesville, and she discusses these activities. The members of her family were pioneers in the community and much of the text of this interview explains the efforts of this family to improve negro life in Gainesville.

B: I am doing this interview in Mrs. Cosby's television room. Good morning Mrs. Cosby.

C: Good morning Joel.

B: How are you this morning?

C: Just fine and you?

B: Fine thank you. Mrs. Cosby tell me something about your family. Let's go back to create the Parker family.

C: Parker's family, my mother and father were married on December 27, 1916. They had seven children. Carolyn is the oldest one, she was a research physicist upon her death. Mary, retired as a math teacher. Martha, retired as a librarian. Juanita is still working as counselor. My brother, Julius, is a Richler's Chemist at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I had one sister to die at a very early age, Gloria.

B: Now, Dr. Parker's name was Julius A. Parker?

C: Julius A. Parker, Sr.

B: And your mother?

C: Delhia Ella Merle.

B: Now how did the Parkers get to Gainesville or were they Floridians by birth?

C: My grandparents were Floridians by birth, my great, on Parker's side came from some place in Georgia, I don't remember. I talked with my mother about it and she said we were from Georgia.

B: From Georgia?

C: Yes, the Parkers were from Georgia. The Merles were from South Carolina.

B: Now are there any Merles in Gainesville now?

C: No, the only living descendents of the Merles are in California.

B: What type of physician was Dr. Parker?

C: Dental practitioner.

B: Where was his office?

C: Well, a number of years his examining room was in the room that we are sitting in. And the room to the west of here was a waiting room. During office hours the living room had sliding doors and it was kept closed.

B: How many years did your father practice medicine in Gainesville?

C: Daddy practiced medicine, I'm not exactly certain because when he left Meharry, he went to Oklahoma for several years before coming back to Gainesville. I'm not sure the exact number years he was in Oklahoma. I would have to find that out from my sisters.

- B: Do you recall being around the house when your father was a doctor?
- C: Yes, many a time he practiced here at the house until the late 1930's. When I went away to college, at that time he was practicing in Dr. Ayres's old office.
- B: Now where is that?
- C: That's the building they just razed for Mt. Pleasant's parking lot. The two-story building on Second Street, it was Pleasant Street. Now you understand that daddy had a drugstore.
- B: Where was that?
- C: The drugstore was downtown where Rice Hardware is now. That is on southwest First.
- B: What was that called then, when the drugstore was there?
- C: I have to think of it. I can not think of the name of the street.
- B: So he had a drugstore there?
- C: Yes, see at the time my father went to Meharry, he also was a registered pharmacist.
- B: And was that opened to the general public or was it strictly for the Negro customers?
- C: Well at that time everything was segregated. Colored establishments at that time never refused to admit white customers in the front door, but blacks, or Negroes, or colored, whatever, were never allowed in the comparable establishment, except through the alley.
- B: What was the name of your father's drugstore downtown?
- C: Parker's Pharmacy.
- B: Parker's Pharmacy? Did he sell anything else in the drugstore besides medication?
- C: He also had an ice cream parlor. At that particular time drugstores were a place where you go sit down and have ice cream or coke or something. George has restored part of the chairs that was in grandfather's sundry shop.
- B: Really, how delightful, I would love to see that. Approximately, if you can recall, when did the pharmacy close?
- C: I don't know, this is just something that has been related to me. Since I am the youngest child I would not know this.
- B: You don't recall?

C: I don't recall the exact dates.

B: What did Leslie do when she was a little girl besides run around and do nothing?

C: Run around and do nothing. Boy, if that had been the case. We've always lived in this home, except for three years span that my daddy lived in Tampa. In the morning we had a ritual, my oldest sister organized us so that we got up in the morning and we were not allowed to go outside and play until we cleaned the house from top to bottom and cook the meals for the day, then we could play and do whatever it was we wanted to do.

B: That was your first responsibility?

C: First responsibility, everybody had a day, either had a day to cook, which was the responsibility to cook the meals, or to clean-up and wash the dishes, or to help in cleaning the house. My brother's responsibility was to clean the yard. My daddy felt that his son should not work inside, nor his girls outside.

B: Did you ever have to work in Dr. Parker's office?

C: In the later years, but never other than in the reception room. We were taught very early to answer the telephone, take messages and things of that nature.

B: Did Dr. Parker work in the hospital here at all?

C: No, Dr. Parker was never admitted to the hospital staff.

B: Where did he do surgery?

C: Surgery that he did was performed in the room that we are in, in the early years of his practice.

B: Did you ever discuss with him why he was unable to work in the hospital or did he never discuss that with you?

C: No, this was never discussed, it was just a matter of we just knew why.

B: And you never questioned why?

C: It was a way of life, we never thought one way or the other about it.

B: What did Mrs. Parker do?

C: In about 1930 she started teaching. She was a classroom teacher before she married my father, and in about 1930 she went back, first substituting and then when she came back here in 1933, she became a classroom teacher. She taught at Rochelle Elementary School for thirteen years.

B: Where is Rochelle?

C: Eight miles east of Gainesville.

B: Did she ever teach here in Gainesville?

- C: Yes, she left Rochelle and was transferred to Orange Heights, later to Waldo, and then she retired from Duval Elementary School.
- B: Do you think that is the reason you went into teaching?
- C: No.
- B: It isn't?
- C: No, that's not the reason I went into teaching. I went into teaching because there was not fair employment practice when I came to Gainesville. I am a registered medical technologist and my chosen profession is medical technology. At the time there was not fair employment practice and so I went back to school and got an education. I am a pre-med chemistry major with a certification by the American Society Clinical Pathologist as a medical technologist, as well as being qualified as a radiology technologist.
- B: Well do you have any desire at this point in your life to change and go back to what your profession is?
- C: Not at this time. Well, at this time I am almost in retirement and when I retire, I will retire from the teaching profession and that will be it. In early years I guess I might have been bitter, but I am past that stage now.
- B: That is really difficult to have been trained and not be able to get a position in the area that you have been trained in.
- C: Well, you decide what it is you want. My husband was in Gainesville and he was doing very well so far as the community was concerned. He was active in community affairs and he enjoyed the aspect of living in Gainesville. Our children were doing well in the school system here and for me to get a job would have necessitated his leaving, so I chose at that time to go back to school and take education.
- B: Where did you go to school? By being the daughter of a physician in Gainesville, did you go to a private school?
- C: That was unheard of at that particular time. The only school open at that time to us here in Gainesville from grades one to twelve was Lincoln High School, which is now A. Quinn Jones Learning Resource Center.
- B: So you got an education there?
- C: Yes
- B: And you did graduate from that school?
- C: Yes, I graduated from Lincoln High School, first in my class. And obtained the highest average for the last four years. I graduated May 2, 1942.
- B: Do you feel that you got an adequate education at Lincoln?

- C: Well, I would say for the times and for my horizons, yes. But in looking back then, I would say no. But then I could say no because I had to take Latin as a special student from the University of Florida because the only college that I was interested in going to required Latin as an entrance. And at that particular time Latin was no longer offered at Lincoln, so as a special student from the University of Florida, Dr. Little agreed to teach me Latin, and if I passed it, then it would go on my high school transcript from Lincoln High School.
- B: So you took courses on campus at the University of Florida?
- C: No, at that particular time Dr. Little had an office over in what's now the Segale Building.
- B: And you took courses there with him?
- C: Yes, with him as a special student.
- B: Was it one to one?
- C: One to one.
- B: Lincoln High School when you were there was the same facility that is there now, the same building.
- C: It's not the same facility because when I was there it was just the two-story building. The others have been additions later added.
- B: And the principal then was?
- C: The principal when I went to Lincoln and when I graduated from Lincoln was Mr. A. Quinn Jones.
- B: Now, being a student at Lincoln, did you all have social activities that schools have now? Because I was told that back in the early days, the church, the school, and the home life was the bulk of what blacks did and that the school was the basis for most of the entertainment. Is that true?
- C: True, at that particular time the school sponsored dances after games, they were allowed to have assemblies at that particular time. We attended our school dances because I remember we could get name bands to come down, you know Cab Callaway has played here? We had all our dances upstairs in the Govis building. We had all our dances up there: Freshman hop spring festival, junior-senior prom. Your junior year you gave it and your senior year you attended.
- B: Since you all did not have your dances at Lincoln, was there an auditorium or gymnasium?
- C: There was no gymnasium, there was an auditorium for the single purpose of having programs. Once a week we went to the auditorium and the elementary went in the morning and the senior high in the afternoon and we had programs. The auditorium wasn't large enough during the day to seat all of the students. We played basketball outside in the area that when my children were there was the lunchroom.

- B: Now you mentioned after the game, where were the games played, the football games?
- C: Citizen's field.
- B: Did you change classes during the day or did you go to the same teacher to teach you everything, now how was that done?
- C: Grades one through sixth, we had one teacher. However in later years we might have had a music teacher but when my family moved back here you went to one teacher, and that teacher took you outside for recess. They didn't have a lunchroom at the time. You had three options: either stayed at school, carried a brown bag to school or you might carry some money and go to the neighborhood store or a lot of kids went back home for lunch.
- B: Did you go home?
- C: Many a day I came back home for lunch.
- B: How long did they give you for lunch, about an hour?
- C: About an hour I'd say. The whole school turned out and everybody had lunch time and we had what's today known as open campus. You could go wherever you wanted to go.
- B: Was Leslie in a lot of activities at school?
- C: No, in high school we had clubs, we had high wire club or you may have had a math club or a club of that nature, or you and your little friends got together and formed your own club. I was talking with Joyce and I was telling her that some of the same people that I am in the club with now were in the club at that time. Duvall Williams was our sponsor, and we met in the summer time just for entertainment.
- B: How interesting, what was the club called?
- C: We didn't have a name.
- B: You didn't have a name then?
- C: No.
- B: Was there ever any student from Lincoln High School visiting other parts of Gainesville for projects? Like did you get a chance to go to Gainesville High School or did you get a chance to take tours downtown? Was that ever possible, did that ever happen?
- C: No. We went to Lincoln and we stayed on campus until lunch time. And we left at lunch time and did whatever we wanted to do and we went back and at the end of the day we went home.
- B: And, now was school nine months?

- C: No, school was not nine months. School was from the first day after Labor Day until the first of May.
- B: What did the Parker family do after school days? Did you all travel, or were you here?
- C: Well, my mother would take us all with her when she went to summer school. She would rent a cottage and take all of us with her. But, no we didn't travel.
- B: Now where did she go to summer school?
- C: Bethune-Cookman in Daytona Beach.
- B: Do you ever remember being there and seeing or visiting with Mrs. Bethune?
- C: Yes, many a time. We would go up on campus. Every morning we'd get up and if we felt like it and after we had cleaned up, we would go on campus and just spend the day around. My sisters would enter sometimes in the gymnastics activities and since my brother was the only boy in the family, some of the fellows on campus that knew the family would take him around, keep him from being with those girls all the time.
- B: Now, can you share an experience you had with Mrs. Bethune, that you can recall?
- C: None other than just going to the house or sitting down and talking to her.
- B: Was she as impressive as people say that she was?
- C: To us Mrs. Bethune was just like anybody else because we knew her so well. You see I know you and to me you are just my daughter's classmate, but others that don't know you, they sit in awe of you.
- B: Mrs. Bethune was just a friend?
- C: Yes, she was just somebody that we knew.
- B: Then you had an experience that many people would like to have, because she was definitely an outstanding person supposedly.
- C: Yes, that's true. But having the parents that we did, we were not in awe of people because not realizing it, we just never thought in terms of, well this is a great somebody because we thought we were great.
- B: I understand. You mentioned about your father being a senior. Was his father a doctor?
- C: Yes, daddy's father was a doctor also.
- B: Was he?
- C: Yes.
- B: Now did he practice medicine here in Gainesville?

- C: Yes, I don't know dates.
- B: So now you are what, fourth generation here in Gainesville?
- C: No, I am third generation. My children are fourth generation.
- B: After you finished high school, where did you go to college?
- C: Where else, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. My daddy graduated from Fisk University in 1899 and my oldest sister graduated from Fisk University in 1938. I only applied to one college, because if I couldn't go to Fisk, I wasn't going anywhere.
- B: What was it like being on Fisk campus? Well, first of all how did you get from here to Fisk?
- C: Down Main Street Where the Florida National Bank is, was the railroad station and we went down there and got the train, and went from here to Jacksonville, changed in Jacksonville, and got on the L & N and went to Nashville.
- B: Now you said on Main Street.
- C: Main Street, at the First National Bank.
- B: Yes.
- C: That was the train station, where the bank is now.
- B: Was the car separated, did you have to sit in a certain section to travel?
- C: You sat in different cars.
- B: Tell me something about your school, did you wear uniforms?
- C: No, we didn't wear uniforms, we just were not allowed to wear pants except on Saturday morning.
- B: And you lived on campus?
- C: I lived on campus in the dormitories for the four years that I was there.
- B: Now wasn't that kind of hard for you, as a young lady, leaving and going so far away from home?
- C: No, because all my life that's what I knew I was going to do. When I graduated from high school I was going to Fisk University and in four years I was going to graduate from Fisk University.
- B: And did it happen just like that?
- C: It happened just like that.

B: And what did you major in?

C: My major subject was chemistry, with pre-med. See at the time you didn't have pre-med as a major, you majored in a subject. I majored in chemistry and satisfied pre-med requirements for entrance into Meharry, where I was going to become a medical technologist.

B: Now how long were you at Meharry?

C: Two years.

B: Two years. During the years that you were there, you were in a bachelors degree program in 1944.

C: I graduated from high school in 1942 and graduated from Fisk in 1946, and graduated from Meharry in 1948.

B: Were any of these campuses integrated then?

C: No, we had white students from foreign countries, as exchange students, but I wouldn't consider it integrated.

B: Did you have any desire to go to the University of Florida, being right here in Gainesville?

C: No, my daddy graduated from Fisk and I was going to Fisk. I never had any desire, never thought about going to the University of Florida. I worshipped my daddy and my older sister and that's where they graduated from.

B: Now did any of your sisters, you were the youngest of the girls, teach you during your schooling?

C: Yes, my older sister Carolyn. I remember when I was in seventh grade, she was my Sunday school teacher, she was my math teacher and my homeroom teacher.

B: So, she kept you straight didn't she?

C: That's right. Now when I was in about tenth grade, tenth and eleventh grade, my sister, Mary, was my math teacher as well as my homeroom teacher.

B: And this was at Lincoln High School?

C: At Lincoln High School here in Gainesville.

B: Now are you the only one of the family that's still in Gainesville now?

C: Yes, they have all moved away.

B: Did you come back to Gainesville in between the years that you graduated from Fisk and before you went to Meharry, or did you go straight on?

C: No, I went straight on. I graduated from Fisk in May of 1946 and in September of 1946 I went to Meharry.

- B: Now after you finished at Meharry what did you do then?
- C: Well, in 1947 I married E.A. Cosby, so when in 1948 I graduated from Meharry, since he was going to St. Louis as an intern in Oral surgery, I went to St. Louis and stayed until 1950.
- B: Now you met Dr. Cosby, your husband, at Meharry?
- C: No, I met him at Fisk.
- B: Oh, but you married him after you were at Meharry.
- C: I married him after I was at Meharry.
- B: Before we discuss marrying Dr. Cosby, did your parents or your father approve of you getting married at that point in your life?
- C: Yes, we were married in June and the Christmas before he came down and in those days the gentlemen would still ask the father for the bride.
- B: So he had no problem?
- C: He was scared to death, but he came anyway.
- B: I can imagine that he was.
- C: But he came down anyway and they liked him. They had met him prior to then but then he came down and asked for my hand in marriage.
- B: Marriage?
- C: Yes.
- B: What was the wedding like?
- C: Well, the wedding was a very beautiful affair to me. I can see it now, two of my sisters wore pink, Martha and Wanita, and two cousins, who were daughters of my mother's brother, they wore blue and my maid of honor, who had been my roommate four years at Fisk, she wore yellow, and I was married at Mount Pleasant Methodist Church by Reverend McClain.
- B: And where was the reception held?
- C: The reception was held right here at 405 Grove Street.
- B: What time did you get married?
- C: 6:05 pm, June 10, 1947.
- B: And where did you go for your honeymoon?
- C: Honeymoon, we came down between break at school and so we went back to Nashville. We were both in school at the time so we went back to Nashville.

- B: And you would spend 1947 to 1950, no, you met him in 1947 correct? What happened in 1947?
- C: We married.
- B: You, excuse me, okay you were married in 1947 and you were gone until 1950.
- C: Yes.
- B: And that's when you returned to Gainesville?
- C: Yes.
- B: Okay, so Dr. Cosby started dentistry here.
- C: Dr. Cosby started practicing dentistry in August of 1950.
- B: And where was his office located?
- C: His office was located in Dr. Stanford's old office, over the garage in Mrs. Stanford's backyard.
- B: So this is the, now that's on Seventh Avenue.
- C: That's on Seventh Avenue, Northwest Seventh Avenue.
- B: So he started practicing dentistry there?
- C: Yes.
- B: And what was the new bride doing then?
- C: The new bride was home taking care of her children.
- B: Oh, so you had the children at this point?
- C: Well, I had one child when we came here in 1950. My oldest child, Carol, was born in St. Louis.
- B: Oh, and now tell me how many children you have and their names.
- C: I have three daughters. Leslie Carolyn Edwards, who is living in Miami, and Joyce Eyvette Cosby, who is living in Gainesville and is in partnership with her father, E.A. Cosby, a dentist, and Edna Jean Cosby, who is in Kansas City, Missouri.
- B: Now your three daughters, where did they get their college educations from? Carolyn was at school with me, Joyce is the one that is in dentistry right now. Where did they get their education from beyond high school level?
- C: Well, Carolyn graduated from Oakland, Joyce from Princeton, and Jean from Harvard.
- B: Nobody wanted to go to Fisk?
- C: Nobody would go to Fisk. Well at the time, I asked Carolyn about it and she said no. I asked Joyce, she sent for a catalog, I asked Jean, and she made

- C: an application, rather she started making an application, but she never did finish. So that's as close as they got. It was a different day at that time that they finished. Then they could go anywhere where they were accepted. So their father told them that they could fly to three schools, nothing west of the Mississippi because they would want to be coming home. And they'd apply to one that they were sure they would get into, one, then the other two thought of. We always have a feeling though, well I know if I apply to this school I'll be accepted, I might like to go here, if I can't go to my number one choice. So your second choice is one where you feel you would like to go. It was really very exciting when they finished because they got more letters than football fellows do. After they took the National Merit Examination, Joyce got letters from twenty-eight schools. Twenty-eight schools invited her to make an application to their school. We've kept all these things.
- B: Excellent. Did Dr. Cosby have any problems coming here and setting up for a practice as a dentist?
- C: Yes, when he went down to the bank to borrow money they said well we are sorry, if you can get Mr. Chestnut or Mrs. Parker to come down and sign for you we might let you have \$500.
- B: So that was his mother-in-law that they were speaking about. Or Charles Chestnut, Sr., who is the grandfather of Charles Chestnut III. Now how did he feel about being a qualified doctor and still having to have one of those persons?
- C: Well, he felt it was very insulting really, that here he was with all his degrees going to establish himself in a place, and he wanted to borrow money to establish credit and to get himself started in the field and they tell him, well if you bring your mother-in-law down. Well, you know what that does to a male.
- B: Well, of course. What did he do?
- C: He swallowed his pride and took his mother-in-law down. What do you think he did.
- B: I don't blame him. Well it was a good thing that she was his mother-in-law, let's say that she hadn't been, it could have been difficult.
- C: Well, it would have been extremely difficult, Dr. Cosby wasn't from here, but it was the same thing that any other black, colored, negro whatever they were called at that time. He'd go down to the bank and they'd say well, if you bring Dr. Parker down or if you bring Mr. Chestnut down, those two names they'd call we might consider it.
- B: Why did you choose to come back to home to live, or was that your choice?
- C: That was Dr. Cosby's choice.
- B: And why do you think he wanted to come to Gainesville?

- C: Well, part of it was his admiration for my father. Dr. Cosby has always been one that he felt could learn something from other people's experiences and knowledge, just by listening and talking with him. He recognized the fact that my daddy was a very intelligent person. My father was an M.D. and my husband was a D.D.S. There were things that he felt that he could learn by being in the same vicinity with him.
- B: Now when you all moved back in the 1950's, did you all move back here to the homestead?
- C: Yes, we moved back here to the homestead and occupied the front bedroom, and the guest bedroom upstairs.
- B: Was Dr. Parker still practicing medicine then?
- C: Yes, he was still practicing medicine at the time.
- B: Did he retire from medicine before he passed away?
- C: Yes, he was in the process of more or less retiring when he died in 1954.
- B: And when did Mrs. Parker pass away?
- C: 1973. One of the things we have observed about our family, my younger sister died on April 17, Carolyn died March 17, my mother died June 17, and my daddy died January 7, and everybody in my immediate family has died on a number ending in seven.
- B: That is interesting.
- C: It is just one of these things, when my mother died we went back to the bible and we just happened to notice it coincidentally.
- B: Now are they all buried here in Gainesville?
- C: Yes, they are all buried here in Gainesville.
- B: Back to the history, it says, of course the family life and the church life is very important to the black family, that's all we had. Was Dr. Parker very active in Mount Pleasant Church?
- C: My mother was. My father, he went to church when he could but he was on call twenty-four hours a day and practicing medicine and so there were times when he just did not attend church.
- B: I can understand that, but did Mrs. Parker serve on any of the boards, trustees, or student boards at Mount Pleasant?
- C: My mother was a Sunday School teacher. We all grew up in the Sunday School and in the church.
- B: Living in this area where you are on the fringe of the Fifth Avenue area

- B: or this whole area you call the Fifth Avenue community and you hear unpleasant things about it, you were raised here, went to Lincoln High School, left and came back, has that been a true statement about this section of town?
- C: Well I understand that this is supposed to be the crime center. We have been fortunate. Many a time I have come downstairs and found the front door open, when we have forgotten to shut it or something of that nature, and we have never had a robbery here at the home or any violence or anything of that nature, other than maybe a car wreck outside in the street going by. I remember we had a dog that we all loved that a car hit, it killed him, but that is about the only violence in this immediate neighborhood. I imagine that there are parts of it that maybe you might not want to live, but to me right here at 303 is all I want.
- B: Has it been a pleasant neighborhood to live in?
- C: Well growing up was very pleasant, and it is now. I am fortunate in that my house and my yard sort of keep me at a buffer from too many of my neighbors so that if it was unpleasant it would be alright, because of the size of the lot and everything. The lady across the street, nobody could want for a more picturesque scene when they look out of their front door at the lady across the street, my neighbor next door, I mean they are always fixing up and everything so it's just really beautiful.
- B: Excellent. Now, has there been a street on both sides of you, in front and on the side of the house always?
- C: Yes, always.
- B: And this was Grove in front?
- C: It was Grove in front, Arredondo in the back and Court Street on the side.
- B: Now tell me something about your teaching experience that you've had. You have taught school, you've been a classroom teacher for twenty-five years. Have you been here in Gainesville those twenty-five years?
- C: Yes, all those twenty-five years I have been in Gainesville. The first six of them were at Williams Elementary School. As I said, it was not fair employment practice, so I went back to school and took education and when I didn't get a job at a senior high school for various reasons, my mother went down and talked with the then principle of Williams Elementary School who was also a Fisk graduate.
- B: Who was that?
- C: Mr. Gaston Cook, a Fisk graduate so he said well if she finished from Fisk I'll give her a job provided she go back to school and take elementary education. So I went back to school, took elementary education, taught at Williams Elementary School from 1960 to 1966, and Mr. Tolbert came out to my room one day during preplanning and asked if after preplanning I would go to one of the previously all white schools and he said I am not talking about elementary school. I made every excuse in the book to tell the man that I couldn't go because I am black. And I told him that

- C: well, I am taking this course in Triple A science and they say that I have to come back and do these experiments in the classroom and if I go I can not get my certificate. And he said well I'll make that alright and I said no, my daughter is graduating and I can't afford to go. But then before spring break he called me and said I am going to send somebody out to your classroom and I will never forget I was sitting on the floor in the back of the room with this group of students and the other kids were off doing something. Mildred Wanger had walked in my classroom and since I was busy she said, I'll just have a seat at the desk over here, and she sat at the desk and she waited for about an hour until the end of the school day. She told me that Mr. Tolbert had sent her to talk with me and try to prevail upon me. And so she said that you have your pick of schools and with your certification you can either teach math or science, whatever you want to do, at whatever school you want to go to. Well, after thinking about it, I said well, after talking with her and I liked Mrs. Wanger who at the time was teaching two classes at Gainesville High School but she was the math curriculum specialist for the county. So I talked with her and I liked her, so I said well I'll go to Gainesville High School and so the Friday before spring break I went out and talked with Mr. Joe Hudson and he said, well Mr. Tolbert said we want this integration to work. You will have college preparatory math and they said that I would have algebra II and geometry. Going from second grade classroom to teaching algebra II and geometry. When I got over there in the fall of the year they had changed and I taught five classes of algebra II and that's where I met Ruth Wallace. She was also an algebra II teacher as well as chairman of the department at that time. She taught four classes, one less than all the other teachers and when she wasn't using her classroom, then I used her classroom and then I went through her office to the next room so that during my travels I wouldn't have to go out into the corridor and be faced with students. I went through the office into the next room so that was my experience and for three years I was the only black academic teacher at Gainesville High School.
- B: The only black?
- C: The only black academic teacher. I was the first black academic teacher in Alachua County. I had gone from a previously all black school to a previously all white school.
- B: I did not know that. My goodness, what a delightful experience. So did you have any problems at all?
- C: Problems, well, the Sunday before I was supposed to go for pre-planning I had a nightmares. I will not go into my nightmares because I don't remember everything. I dreamed I was on this motorcycle, I've never been on a motorcycle, and it started raining and I had to go back and change my clothes, so all kinds of reasons. But after I met Ruth Wallace and everything and they had mapped out certain things that they would do. They had decided at that year that because they felt that there would be extras from my class okay my students. That year if you signed up for a math you could drop the math class but you could not change to another math teacher. That was the only way they decided that this would work because otherwise everybody

- C: might have changed. So for that year you could not change because you didn't like the teacher. You were assigned to a math class, you could only drop the class.
- B: Why would you drop the course if you could not change the teacher?
- C: Well, if you just could not stay with your teacher you were given that option.
- B: Are you aware that there were many students who wanted to drop the course?
- C: I don't know who requested drop/transfers, but they weren't granted, so I don't know.
- B: Did you have a good year the first year?
- C: Yes, surprisingly the day before the students came I didn't have any problems, it was just the day before I went out there first of all, but by that time I didn't have any problems. I was very confident in the fact that I knew my subject matter and if you know the subject all the courses that you can teach, take on how-to-do this, all they say is know your subject matter, get in the classroom and teach. That's about all anybody can do. You learn how to teach from experience. Nobody can teach that for you because each year it is going to be a new experience because you have new people, new personalities.
- B: Well how did the black educated community accept the Parker's daughter being the first academic teacher in the white society?
- C: Well, my name was put on the street before I was approached. Because I heard this long before I was actually approached officially. In other words, I felt that they had done this to find out the reaction to this before I was approached. And evidently there was no negative reactions from any group, so therefore I was finally approached because I wasn't approached until school opened and it wasn't the first day that school opened somebody came to me, but I had never heard by the grapevine before school opened that would be.
- B: And was it?
- C: Well you know the strategy was, if there is going to be any reactions from anybody, we want to know it before she is approached evidently. Because I remember talking with my principal and he said, well I can't do anything, I haven't even been asked, I haven't even been approached.
- B: Your principal.
- C: Right. I asked him, so he said that there was nothing that he could do because he had not been approached.
- B: Weren't you very honored that you had that opportunity?

C: Well at the time I never thought of it as an honor, at the time I thought of it as being uprooted. I thought about being put upon frankly.

B: Did you?

C: Yes, here I was, happy doing what I was doing, and I felt that I was succeeding. So I had never thought about it, after a time that I didn't get on in math or science, I was happy to teach second grade. Little children at that time were the sweetest little darlings.

B: After being at Gainesville High School for a year or two, did you ever enjoy it, or did you feel that you were able to bridge the gap that was needed?

C: Well, I have always enjoyed teaching at Gainesville High School. It was just the apprehension, but once I got there I found that there was so much more freedom than there had existed in the situation that I had and it was just an eye opener. The materials and the things that I remember when I was teaching at Williams and if I wanted to run off something on the duplicating machine I was asked how many students did I have and they counted out the number of sheets of paper that I was given. At Gainesville High School they had a room with just paper from floor to ceiling. Here I was, I had twenty-eight students I was given twenty-eight sheets of paper if I wanted to run off an assignment.

B: I guess it was like day and night wasn't it?

C: Well, I got problems with you when you say day and night, but yes I guess I can live with that.

B: Why do you have problems with that?

C: How do you think in terms of day and night?

B: Black and white.

C: Well I have problems with people always referring that which is bad as black. I mean I have problems you know.

B: I understand because I have that same problem too, yes I hear what you are saying. Were the students more eager, you hear constantly that minorities or negro students didn't get a very good quality education and they were not eager to learn, and you had just mentioned that when you were teaching elementary at Williams that the children were cute and sweet. Were they eager to learn and were they there because they really wanted to be there?

C: Well, I never had any problems. I wasn't given the top group of the second graders, but I didn't have any problems with anybody just acting up or anybody just plain old not wanting to do.

- C: Now everybody just seemed to want to, and this business of not wanting to do, that is something that is today. But from the time I was in school and the time that my children came through, Carolyn came through an all black situation, from first grade because she went to kindergarten in Germany, but from first grade on through ninth grade. And Joyce from kindergarten through sixth grade, and Jean from kindergarten to fourth grade. See things were beginning to change. I sent Carolyn away to college preparatory school in Stockridge, Massachusetts in tenth grade, but Joyce and Jean were accepted at P.K. Young Laboratory School so Joyce went first to Buchholz. Joyce went to Buchholz during the first thrust of black students going from previously all black schools to previously all white schools. This was the Buchholz that had been the old Gainesville High School on University Avenue that's now a parking lot for the medical complex. Joyce's year at Buchholz is almost like a horror story. The first two weeks, city police had to bring her home. Her daddy dropped her off at school and it wasn't convenient for him to pick her up because of his office hours. And so the police escorted her home. Now after then, and this is just about four walking blocks from my house, that child stayed at school until I could leave Williams Elementary and go pick her up and bring her home. I had to bring that child home every afternoon and she came home and she cried, for a year.
- B: Was it that difficult for her, was it the atmosphere?
- C: The atmosphere. But one thing that we didn't do, we didn't tell her that those people were prejudiced. She knew they were, I never allowed my mother to say, baby they are doing this because you are black. My mother would have, but I said no mother we are not going to have anything like that. I feel that was how she had the nerve to be among the first class of females to go to Princeton that had been a previously all male institution. She was in the first group that went to Princeton.
- B: But now having a daughter who graduated from Princeton, and one from Harvard, and you being the first academic black teacher in the city, I guess in the county. There had to be some animosity among the other people of color in Gainesville. Was there ever any of that feeling that there was a negativism about it? Did you ever feel that people in the community thought you were being upity?
- C: No, I have always gotten a feeling from the community that they felt this is what we should do. I remember asking one young lady if she was going to send her daughter at that time to Howard Bishop and she said no, I am going to wait and see where your daughter's accepted.
- B: Why do you think she said that?
- C: You know just like you say, was I in awe of Mrs. Bethune, I got the feeling that a lot of people are in awe of the things that we did. They were not envious, because if they were they could have done the

- C: same thing, but they said you go do it. You know, have you ever seen this commercial where they say let Mikie do it?
- B: Yes.
- C: Well, I got that feeling, let Leslie do it and if it's all right, I didn't get that impression at all. I think that was why I heard long before I was asked to go, so to speak, across the railroad tracks, that my name was in the community to see how it would be received.
- B: It could have been because the quality of the person that you and your family have been.
- C: Well, that too, but along with that, Mr. Tolbert felt this, that as long as a person was intelligent. And what he had done, he looked at my transcript and he looked at the fact that when I got my certificate, you had to take an examination that was called the National Teachers Exam. He looked up my score on that. That's the first that I had taken it, I made above the magic 600. They had what they called merit pay then, purely on the basis of a grade on that examination. If you scored more than 600 on that examination then you were given a bonus of \$300 and since they had to pay me the \$300, that was purely the reason that I was chosen. Because of my academic record, because of the course that I had taken, and in the grades that I had received in these courses. So, that was the basis for that.
- B: Don't you also think that he also approached you because you would have the stamina to be able to handle the situation?
- C: Well, I felt he approached me because he felt that if it was too much for me it wouldn't be a financial burden if I just went home and quit my job.
- B: I never thought about that.
- C: There were any number of reasons why I felt that I was chosen. If I had been so destitute that I needed to work, the years that I stayed home with my children, I would have been at work then.
- B: I understand. So that could have been the reason, there could have been a variety of reasons why?
- C: Well, but who can second guess. I am just thinking you know the fact that if this gets too much for me that I can go home. I really think that they had done their research well on who they had chosen.
- B: Now that you went there and you are still at Gainesville High School.
- C: I am still at Gainesville High School.
- B: So you must feel that it is the perfect place for you.

- C: Yes it was, it wasn't at the time because it was the unknown, but I have no qualms about it and in hindsight I really enjoyed it and am not sure that from what they tell me at the elementary school that I'm not better off being forced to go to the senior high school.
- B: How did Dr. Cosby feel about you being the first to go there and then also about your daughter Joyce being at Buchholz?
- C: Well, we asked the children, Joyce and Jean that is, after they call you a nigger what are you going to do? We had to find the answer to that, because if they said that they would retaliate then they would not have been ready. They have been taught that fighting is a sign of ignorance and so it's no point to verbal or otherwise, and at that point they could not answer the question correctly then we would have seen. I don't know that we would have sent them anyway, but it was just one of these things that we would like for them to know, that we are willing to go.
- B: So you actually dealt with what could happen here in the house.
- C: Yes, we actually dealt with what could happen or what would happen here in the house before we sent them. It takes a lot of soul searching to do that.
- B: Yes, I can imagine. Would you do it again if you had to do it all over?
- C: Yes.
- B: You would?
- C: Yes.
- B: Let me ask you about your involvement in the community. Has Dr. Cosby or Mrs. Cosby been very involved in the activities in the community?
- C: Well, I sort of say that the town's not gonna have both of us so until recently I have not been particularly involved in things. Cosby has been on the Human Relations Council and he's gone to any number of civic meetings and been involved in voter registration all these kinds of things that I'm just now getting involved in because I felt that if they had my husband that I could be home with my children. So, yes I think he's been very active.
- B: I remember during the integration period in the NAACP, Dr. Cosby was very active.
- C: Yes.
- B: You took a part. Why was it that you would elect your daughters to be the first many times to do things?

- B: Was it because of your feeling that it was a necessity or was it the support that was there from their father and mother?
- C: It was the support that there was from their father and mother. You hear so much today about the role models and this, that and the other, but we never thought about in terms of role models. There were any number of people who, sitting back and watching to see what you were doing, and we just thought, a combination of well, this is something that we believe in, this is something that we would like to see happen and well, they are sitting there watching to see what you are going to do anyway so you might as well go ahead and do it anyway. It's this attitude that I am realizing now, but it's not one that I thought of at the time. It is just something that we knew was right to do so we did it. But when you stop and consider your rationale behind having done something you realize what your motives were. You know how they say 20/20, hindsight is 20/20 vision, but you know when you sit down and analyze something later then that is not always true.
- B: How did Mrs. Parker feel about what was going on with you and the children at that time?
- C: Mother had mixed emotions. I remember during the time of the picketing, I was taking a class, and I came home and they told me Carolyn had been arrested and my mother was almost hysterical. Nobody in her family had been arrested before, how was this gonna look, and all this and that and the other. Though it's criminal in a sense, it was a moral obligation to do this and so Carolyn was arrested. But to her, here's my grandchild putting this spot on the name, why nobody in our family has ever been arrested before. You would have thought that she committed murder. I remember when I walked in and Charles was here, Charles Chestnut, because he was with the group that were picketing at the time and he was here and most of them, they just arrested them and let them go. Now I do feel that they felt they had to make an example of my child. They had a trial and everything, remember?
- B: Yes, I sure do.
- C: And I remember that the judge said, put her on probation. He said she couldn't leave, that was the summer before she was going to Stockridge, and she was supposed to get permission to do this. I remember they were supposed to go to a Sunday School Convention over at Edward Waters College. Well, they got permission to go there, but when it came time to go away to school I said Cosby, I don't care what you do we aren't asking anybody for permission because if they say no she is going anyway, so I'm just going to send her anyway.
- B: And you didn't ask permission?
- C: No, I didn't ask permission! Why should I ask permission, I felt it was unfair in the first place.

- B: It sure was. You know I was one of that little group too.
- C: You were, what did they do to you?
- B: Probation. That's why you had to ask to do this and that, we were not allowed to be out after 9:00 in the evening.
- C: And you weren't supposed to leave town?
- B: It did not make sense, it was totally stupid.
- C: You weren't supposed to leave town. My daughter had been accepted at Stockridge, Massachusetts, and she was going.
- B: I don't blame you.
- C: Why should I ask somebody if she could go.
- B: The thing about it now, it just doesn't make sense what happened in those days concerning negroes and whites.
- C: Well, I just felt that it should have been thrown out. I felt that having the trial and everything that had achieved the purpose. But to say my child couldn't leave town, no way was I going to keep her here. Because the only reason I was sending her away was because they said she couldn't go to Gainesville High School.
- B: That was to better herself. Did Dr. Cosby, by him being in practice ever get any pressure with him being active and the children being active, did he ever get any threats. How did the community deal with that?
- C: I don't know that, he was never threatened, not that I know of.
- B: In being the first to go from Williams to Gainesville High School, and now I guess you don't have really that much to share about black school because you left the negro school so early. How have you seen black children or negro children change over the years?
- C: When we had Lincoln, we had classes of college prep math. My daughter Carolyn, she left from Lincoln and she went to Stockridge, Massachusetts, she had no trouble at all in going from this situation to that. She wasn't retained in grade, or put back or anything. As a matter of fact she did so well in the tenth grade that she was chosen as an exchange student to go to Switzerland. So I found out after I had sent her away that, so far as that was concerned, she was getting adequate. However, I didn't feel that she had been challenged sufficiently. So I sent her away, I was just concerned when she finished high school would she marry, would she be able to go to any college that she wanted to and be able to compete with other people from all over. So I had made applications for her to go away to high school, however, the year that she went, she was accepted at P.K. Young but by that time I had already made

- C: arrangements for her to go away so she did go. Now I could tell differences when Joyce went from A. Quinn to Buchholz. Joyce was having problems with her math so she came home and the reasons she was having problems with her math is because we had gotten the textbooks after they had been taken off the adopted list. Those were the textbooks that were sent over for us to use which means they were using a newer edition textbook and she just had not been taught to do her work the way that they were doing it. And all I had to do was take her book and show her, baby instead of adding two, eleven and eleven and just writing twenty-two the way we had been taught you write eleven and eleven and you write twenty plus two. You are writing in expanded notation and all kinds of stuff. In a newer textbook the language they had that was the only difference and when I could point this out to her, but then just do it like this and that was the only problem. We got the textbooks that they discarded you see. When they got new textbooks we got the old textbooks.
- B: So you always were that distance behind?
- C: We were that distance behind.
- B: Now when you got to Gainesville High School you got a chance to be exposed to so much, but your first several years there, you didn't have black students.
- C: I had one, maybe two.
- B: One or two. Are we taking the quality material now that students were taking maybe ten years ago?
- C: No, I still have one maybe two, sometimes none in my college prep classes wherein, as I was about to say before I got off on this. You had teachers like Mr. Hightower teaching classes or college prep math at Lincoln. Before he left, I just don't know the names of the other teachers that have had classes of this when there was Lincoln. They had classes of this, otherwise we wouldn't have to have math teachers, but now the college prep you have, I can remember one year out of 150 students I had two. Two, and Ruth Wallace had three black students. She had one less class than I did so she would not have had 150 college prep students she would have had around 120.
- B: Do you feel, are the students being told that they need these courses or they don't need them, what is the problem?
- C: Well, I don't wish to criticize, but it's my opinion that they are just not being funneled into these courses. When you get to senior high school you take certain courses in math. It is not like English, you take language arts every year and so you take this in first grade and you take this in second grade and you take this in third grade and on up. You take seventh grade English and eighth grade, ninth grade, and tenth grade.

- C: Math beginning with about seventh grade, if you are not challenged into doing the best that you can, seventh grade is usually about the magic time. That is when the teacher recommends you for Algebra I. From seventh grade on is teacher recommendation. So if you have black students that from all through elementary school making satisfactory grades in their math classes and in the seventh grade making satisfactory grades and in the eighth grade they are still funneling in general math. It is because nobody told them that this is the time that you start this. That you can try this, you can try a higher level if you don't succeed then you can come back. They are just as mature and they could try it the same as anybody else. It is just if they don't try these subjects in eighth grade or ninth grade and by the time that they get to senior high school then they are still recommended for general math.
- B: A problem.
- C: A problem yes. If you got A's and B's, everybody else is recommended for this so why shouldn't we?
- B: That's very true. Since they've had the closing of Lincoln and they merged two schools together, do you feel that was a positive step for our students to be able to be exposed to what we have not been exposed to before, or did we lose something or did we get both?
- C: Well we have lost far more than we have gained. Academic wise, yes.
- B: How do you mean that?
- C: I mean the fact that at Lincoln it was an automatic thing that after you went to a certain level you didn't have any people graduating from Lincoln that hadn't had anything but general math all their days. That was unheard of. Everybody got exposed at one time or another to college preparatory math and they took these courses and they passed them. I can only speak for math because I am a math teacher.
- B: I understand that.
- C: From that standpoint I would say that we have lost. If the system has not continued to do with us what it did with them before now, then we have lost.
- B: If the system doesn't continue to do what they did with them before and now we've lost?
- C: Well, yes.
- B: I understand that. That's a very true point. Changing away from the school system for awhile. Being in your home that was the family home that you were raised in, are there many items that were maintained or kept that was a part of Dr. Parker's lifestyle? I mean like paperwork, his papers, documents, photographs. Was there a lot of those things that are still a part of the home?
- C: Well, there's some things that are still part of home. There are some of his books in the bookcase right over there. Those are some of his books, some of his books have been donated to the University

- C: of Florida, they are in archives over there. Some of his medical books and things. We were just becoming overrun with things and some of my oldest sister's books have been donated to the University of Florida, as a part of their archives.
- B: What about ledgers, things that he might have kept notes on that he might have left here. Medical supplies or records, are any of those things that are still a part of the home.
- C: Some of them are still a part of the home. You realize that with passing of time that you had to make space for me to come along with me and my children. Now my children come along with their children, and you just get overrun if you try to keep everything. We have not kept all of his things.
- B: Is there any one of the fourth generation that is coming, that will probably end up wanting to be in the home here also?
- C: I was thinking about that. I think Joyce is attached, but I don't think that I would like to saddle her with this. I don't know how she is going to feel about it. She is attached to this place. She is getting married in November and will be moving on. I know it is a dilemma for her as to this and I'm the kind that I wait and see. I am going to let her tell me what she is going to do. Yes, I am very good at waiting.
- B: Is that the best way out?
- C: I don't know. To each his own.
- B: Now was the home built for Dr. Parker, Sr.?
- C: No, it wasn't built for him because his mother lived here.
- B: Oh, so his parents lived here?
- C: Yes.
- B: Did he get his schooling in Gainesville too?
- C: Such as it was, but he left Union Academy in eighth grade and he went to what is now Atlanta University. He finished high school at Atlanta University. His mother sold Avon products in order to send him away to school.
- B: Avon products were around then?
- C: Avon was around then, yes, it was you better believe it.
- B: Isn't that interesting, I was not aware that it was that old.
- C: Well, it was, his mother sold Avon products.

- B: So Avon has been here for a long time.
- C: Avon has been around.
- B: Since the tape we are taking here is for historical reasons, is there anything that you haven't shared that you would like to share? Can you give me the names of people that have been here in Gainesville for years that were very involved in the past? I guess, part of the education system or the ministry system, or the business system? Just some old families that you know that have been here for awhile when you came along. Also I would like to know about where the black businesses were located since your father had the drugstore downtown. Were there any other black businesses there?
- C: Downtown, yes. There was barber shop downtown I know as late as in the 1950's.
- B: Where was that located?
- C: The barber shop was across from what was Robinson's Market.
- B: That's on First Avenue.
- C: That's now a parking lot down there. There was a barber shop down there, and a grocery down there. That was called Union Street, now that I think of it. That's because on Saturdays folks would come to town and they would go down there and unite. That was the meeting place, that was the Union.
- B: And did it go further than it is now, because I think right now it's about two blocks deep. Did it go all the way through?
- C: Union was from Robinson's Market down to the courthouse square, because there wasn't a street from the courthouse square. Now that street didn't go through down there at some point. Union street was about three maybe four blocks at most.
- B: I see. Now on talking to Mr. L.M. Jackson yesterday, he mentioned about the Duval Shoe Shop, now where was that located downtown?
- C: Do you remember where the bus station used to be?
- B: No.
- C: Way out, you don't remember where the bus station used to be?
- B: Where was the bus station?
- C: Down from the post office. I can't remember what's there now.
- B: Well you have the post office and you have the parking lot.

- C: The backside of that parking lot down there by the post office was the Greyhound Bus Station.
- B: Oh, and he said Duval Shoe Shop was somewhere where the bank was, where the plaza is.
- C: Yes, on this side of the plaza. McCrory's was facing what was then East Main. McCrory's was facing East Main and around the side of McCrory's, right there on the that side of the street, was where his shoe shop was.
- B: Now you mentioned something about East Main. Was there East Main and West Main?
- C: Yes. Northeast First was East Main. North Main Street was West Main Street. And the tree lined street, that was Northeast First, that was East Main.
- B: Now I have heard that was where you had your division between your negroes and your whites, is that true? A difference between the Main streets?
- C: I couldn't say that because it depends on what part of town you are talking about. Now back over behind where Winn Dixie was on Main Street, back in that area back up in there. That still is black.
- B: That was on the other side of Main Street.
- C: That was on the other side of Main Street and that's in the heart of town. So now downtown around the courthouse square, blacks have never lived, this is the closest house to downtown the blacks have ever lived. You mean south side of Court Street which is Third Avenue, that was all white all along there, and on the east side of Third Street, which is Arredondo, that was white over there.
- B: So are you the closest home that was right there?
- C: Yes.
- B: Excellent.
- C: See now my family has always owned this block straight through they've always owned this.
- B: So you all have been here for years.
- C: Yes.
- B: When was the house built? Are you aware of that date?
- C: No, I am not aware of the date. The house to sit on the other end of the property.

B: Oh really?

C: The house used to sit on Arredondo. That's why the water meter is down on the other end of the property. It faced down there, but when my father got married in 1917 the house was moved from Arredondo to Grove Street.

B: That's interesting. Do you have copies of the deed?

C: Yes.

B: They should be interesting because they date back from several years. What street was the main throughfare for the negro community, was it Pleasant Street or Seminary Lane?

C: Seminary.

B: Seminary, so that's where you had Glover Field Hall for your dance.

C: Yes. The churches were along Pleasant Street so therefore the places where people congregated, the theaters, the dance hall, and the grocery stores were on Fifth Avenue. The church was on Pleasant Street. Then you had the Union Academy and the only two schools then were Lincoln and the academy. Then when there was no longer Union Academy, then there was Lincoln. They didn't have Union Academy and Lincoln, they had Union Academy, then Lincoln.

B: Now the school that is west of your house, the St. Augustine's school, that was a church?

C: Yes, that was St. Augustine's Church and my children went to day care down there in 1950-1960. They were still holding the service on half of the church.

B: Now that was an Episcopal Church?

C: Yes.

B: Black?

C: Yes. Father White came over from Jacksonville as the minister of that church, whatever they call that church.

B: I think more two story houses were owned by whites in this section than any other part of the northwest section. Why was that, are you familiar with why? I think there's at least eight or nine within walking distance from your home.

C: Yes. Well, this is because this is part of the town where blacks lived so naturally you would have and this is the old Gainesville really, this is where Gainesville was. With later construction people didn't put up two story homes, and so the houses that you see that are two story, have been here. They have been around.

- B: Something that I've always wanted to know, but never have been able to find out, the big white house that's on the corner.
- C: Over here?
- B: Yes.
- C: Whistock.
- B: Oh, Whistock, what does he do? Who was he?
- C: Well, I don't know what Whistock did but that was just a rich family. You could tell the construction, the Whistock property, because the house across the street, and the house next door and then the house on the corner. Now that had been there evidently almost from the days when blacks lived on the property. But in the back yard over there, between the two houses and it has not been so long ago that somebody just burned him down was where the people who took care of those houses lived like.
- B: Now was Wood, is it Woodstock?
- C: Whistock.
- B: Was he a white gentleman?
- C: Yes, he was from the Colonel Sanders era.
- B: Oh, and so there were servants quarters that were convenient. The house is very stand out because it is so huge and there is so much ornate woodwork on the house. What would Mrs. Cosby like to leave as a major point that she would like to share with us that can be her statement or her point to young people or to what that could be there for the tape, for whoever listens to it in the years to come?
- C: Oh, how would I know. Well, I just have grown up as a part of a family who has been interested in education, not just the learning part but actually the grease on paper. My daddy was an older gentleman when he got married, he was in his forties you know, that was old then. He had these children and I remember him saying many times that he would be content to die if we all had a college education. And upon his death, I felt that he was satisfied because all of us had at least one degree from a college in something, and many of us had, let's see, Carolyn, Mary, Martha had the equivalent of two degrees, Wanita had two, Julius and myself had one. I do feel that a degree opens many doors for you. It is not the zenith but I do, what I'd like to think of.
- B: If Leslie Parker-Cosby had to do it all over again would she do what she's done or how would you do things differently if you had to?
- C: Oh, who can say, but you can see that I believed in my father's philosophy because my children in turn, and I'm saving my pennies right now to make sure that ___?___ and Quincey have their chance when they get older. Those are my grandchildren.

- B: So you have two grandchildren?
- C: Two grandchildren at this time.
- B: And the big day of Joyce's wedding is soon?
- C: November 30.
- B: Do you think that she will have the reception at the home?
- C: No, there's going to be so many people at the reception. The only out-of-town person for my wedding was people who came over from Jacksonville and my roommate from college. Joyce is having so many out-of-town people and there is going to be so much family, it is going to be a reunion and there is going to be so much going on here at my house. We are going to be overrun with people. But we are having a family reception at the house, but her public reception out.
- B: Is Joyce the first black female dentist in Gainesville?
- C: As far as we know.
- B: So then she's following the trend, she's being the first again.
- C: It just works out that way. It is not something that we planned, that we'll do this or we'll do that. It just happened to happen.
- B: What did Leslie do for entertainment coming on, I mean you talk about your organization, what is the club that you are a member of now?
- C: Dignitaries Club.
- B: When did you become a member of that?
- C: When I came back from Germany sometime in the 1950's, I'm not sure of the date of that.
- B: And what was the club organized for?
- C: Well, our motto is Leisure with Dignity. Our club was really organized for social purposes as well as civic purposes. We sort of need to have a club that would help in the community. We have taken on different projects and scholarships, things of that nature.
- B: Was that a method that blacks developed in order to make sure that they had things to do or were able to travel or for entertainment because they could not use facilities in the city?
- C: Now that you think of it I guess yes. We went from house to house and then we did this because that was what it was for us to do.
- B: Never questioned?

- C: Well, I won't say that you never questioned, sometimes we would sit down and we would laugh about some, I mean we actually made jokes of certain things, you know of how we could go to the show for a nickle but then they had to pay more.
- B: Oh, they did?
- C: Yes, and we would go to the shows in Nashville and we could go for a nickle but then of course we had to go down the alley and go upstairs but then certain days we could go for a nickle but then they couldn't go for a nickle.
- B: Now say that to me again, when you were in Nashville you were able to go to the white theater?
- C: Sure and you went down the alley and went up, sat upstairs in the balcony.
- B: Oh, so they had another area that you would go in?
- C: Yes.
- B: Because I was not then here that was not true was it?
- C: No, we didn't go to the theaters here.
- B: I never heard that, that you could go to the theaters, but just sit up in the balcony.
- C: Sure.
- B: What was your first experience?
- C: You could go up to High Springs and go up in the balcony.
- B: Oh, here you could go to High Springs and go to the movies?
- C: Yes.
- B: Did you have to go in after the movie started or were you able to go in right before, how was that done?
- C: You had your separate but equal entrance. Your entrance was in the alley.
- B: Did you ever have any problems going downtown to shop, buy clothing of that nature.
- C: Well, I noticed that stores did not let colored folks try on the clothes in the store. They didn't stay around for too long, not that we boycotted them, but they just didn't make it.
- B: Well, you had such a large wedding, I think if I recall you had five people in your wedding, were those gowns made or were they bought?

- C: They were all made.
- B: Do you have anything from the wedding that you still have as a part of your possession?
- C: My wedding gown, did you ever see it?
- B: No, I didn't, do you have it?
- C: I have it.
- B: Which one of the young ladies, of your daughters do you think is going to wear it?
- C: Well, Joyce is not, because Joyce is just too tall, she is built different. But, Carolyn would have been able to wear it but she didn't want that, it's satin.
- B: Oh, she didn't want the satin?
- C: No, she didn't want the satin, she didn't want all the satin and lace that I had, but if Jean ever decides something she'll wear it. When we finish this tape I'll show it to you.
- B: Oh, I would love very much to see it. I would like to come back sometime and look at some of the things that you have in your collection that have been a part of the family. I think they would be valuable for young people to see something that has been a part of Gainesville from as early as 1900. Well, thank you for allowing me to be in the home of Dr. Parker and in his examining and operating room. Was there ever a hospital here for blacks?
- C: No, blacks were admitted to the third floor of the hospital no matter what, whether you were delivering a baby or what, my daddy just couldn't take you. Blacks were admitted to the hospital, but you were not treated by a black physician. Whatever your condition was, whether you were male or female, you all went to the third floor in Alachua General Hospital.
- B: Now would the physicians see you on a regular basis or would they see you when they took time to see you?
- C: You only went in case of emergencies and I imagine that you know if it wasn't as emergency you didn't go to the hospital. If it was anything daddy could treat, but it was something that he recognized that he couldn't do then he would send them to the hospital and it was out of his hands. It was turned over to someone else.
- B: Have you ever recalled what a fee was when they made house calls or visited the home?
- C: Yes, I remember daddy was charging three dollars for a house call in the daytime. And I remember one night this lady, she didn't ring the bell, beating on the door, "doctor, doctor, doctor come quick, come quick, come quick," . And so he came downstairs and he's talking with so he said what's happening, she said my husband he's sick and he needs a doctor

- C: so he said you know this will be five dollars don't you? She said well tell you what Dr. Parker, it would be cheaper to bury him.
- B: Did she really?
- C: She really did because he told her that it would be five dollars if he had to come out at night.
- B: My goodness, did he end up going?
- C: No, he didn't go.
- B: Can you remember if there were a lot of people coming in the evening times, coming to the house, disturbing the family?
- C: We were never disturbed because you see there was an entrance there.
- B: Oh is that what that entrance is for?
- C: Yes.
- B: So this was the office part, like part of the house.
- C: Yes, you could come in, there's a screen door there you could come in. You could come in here or if he was busy then you went around and had a seat here. So this part and his pharmaceuticals that room out there where he would store stuff, you know his pharmaceuticals or what have you whatever you wanted to keep. Now we still own the scales that he had, in the late 1960's we, I don't know what happened to it, but we had his medicine cabinet restored and we donated that for part of Williams Elementary. They had a little clinic and we took that out there for them to keep cotton swabs and things in there. If the kids came in. At that time you could give them aspirin or something like that, that was before you couldn't give them medication. You know we didn't have any medicines or anything like that in school other than maybe a kid came in, cut up knee or something you could clean it up or something like that if it wasn't real serious. They had somebody there that would treat them.
- B: Well, thank you for sharing this interview with me and I know this is going to be a very busy time with Dr. Joyce Cosby getting married, but if there are members of the family here that I could sit down and chat with I would very much appreciate that.
- C: My sisters will be here and I am not sure about the other members of the family.
- B: Thank you for allowing me to be in your home.