

S: What I am interested in at this point is trying to begin to think about African American's various experiences as they began to realize there was this thing called segregation and I am thinking that everyone has an experience they can go back to, just as we can remember where we were when JFK was assassinated. Everybody remembers that, everybody can talk about how they felt, what happened around them and how everyone responded and I am thinking that each African American who grew up within a certain time period would have the same experience with segregation.

F: If I may respond just to that, the conclusion or the presumption might not be as well founded as it appears to be, particularly if you recall that environmental circumstances in different places might have led one into believing generally and feeling that the way that society was, was indeed the way it was supposed to be, which means that there might not be a single cataclysmic event that struck one as the moment when he or she was aware that there is Jim Crow, that there is segregation in society. I am sixty-one and it is difficult for me to put my finger on any single event and I have thought about it in the light of the conversations we have had.

One of the earliest instances came to me when I was a youngster. I grew up in Durham, North Carolina and used to go to the Carolina Theater. Of course we had to go into the colored or Negro part of the theater and the entrance was around on the side from the main entrance. Not only that, but the Carolina in Durham was a really magnificent theater as were many of the theaters in the southern cities in the 1930s and 1940s. When we got where we were supposed to be, we were way at the top of the theater. Not a mere modest balcony but it seemed light years [away]. One of the first recollections I had of separation was that tied to space as well as the fact that we had to go there. I am looking at this huge on Saturdays when we used to go to the children's programs. We were there and it was almost like looking down at a basketball crowd in a contemporary amphitheater, so much so that from time to time we mischievously would throw things down on top. Now that is an awareness that was not translated strongly into other things except when I walked up and down the streets of Durham. When I went shopping with Mom I knew that we could not eat anywhere downtown.

My mother worked for North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and one of my greatest memories of joy is going to the movies with her. She would take me to the movies sometimes in the afternoon. If we had to get something to eat, we had to go to the lunch counter at United Department Store in Durham or Belks or Woolworths and it was always at the end of the counter. There were no stools at most of these. You could stand up and buy something. I was aware of that difference but that made no great impression upon me because we were going to do something and I was with my mother and I did not care really whether I could sit down and eat. So

later when the sit-ins came with the Greensboro event at the lunch counter there, those were years after my childhood experiences.

Durham had a good school system. I got a good public school education. I grew up in elementary schools and went to Hillside High School. We had athletic teams and a newspaper. I was active in events like that. By this time, of course, I was aware of the separation in a more thoughtful way. I am saying that had I been in another town or place than the one I grew up in, there might have been other things that stimulated or provoked my thinking. Being in a society where signs--Negro and white and colored and white--were all over the place.

S: You spoke of your mom and having enjoyed the afternoon theater and trips to the restaurant. I am wondering, did you ever have occasion, maybe in high school, to ask your parents to explain to you any of these signs that you saw? Was there ever a time when you had a discussion about this?

F: Not at all. I think that whatever there was, I understood those things instinctively and through the instinctive part, of course, is the acculturation. The other part is the reading. My dad had not gone to college but was an avid reader and loved art and music and I grew up in that same sense. So as far as knowing about the history, the segregation, the law, I cannot ever recall asking Mom or Dad why this was the way. When I was editor of the high school paper I was writing editorials by that time strongly protesting any evidence of discrimination or the fact that when the superintendent of schools came to our commencement, one of the first things that he expected to hear was a Negro spiritual being sung by the group there. I remember believing that was inappropriate. Not that the music was inappropriate but his expectation that he was on this black high school campus and this is what he would have given him.

S: Did you mention these concerns you had to anyone? Did you write lots of editorials?

F: Yes. I wrote an editorial.

S: How was it received?

F: Very companionably. The papers went to the school system as such. We were part of the Durham city schools. But I never got any response. I would have response from either teachers or friends or students there who could say, "Ronald, that was a good piece you did and that is right," or what have you, but nothing to create any great displeasure on the part of anybody or any great response.

S: When you moved on to college, where did you go?

F: I went to Hampton [Institute] in Virginia.

S: You would have found there some of the same conditions you left, would you not?

F: Yes. The situation pretty much was the same in terms of the town of Newport News, Virginia. The town of Hampton, where the institute is, is one thing and we used to have to go to Newport News to do some shopping. I got my haircuts in black barber shops in Newport News. But once again we had a self-contained campus with all the things we needed and you were aware of the outside world and its practices when you went to the bus station to go home or when you went to restaurants. The restaurants were black restaurants in which we were served. I am talking about the mid-1940s now so there were few instances where we had any kind of flow of protest based upon some determination that things were as they ought to be in terms of fair or ethical or legal behavior.

World War II came to an end just as I went into my undergraduate career. Some veterans who returned and some of whom came to school were older and brought with them some currents of thought and action and speech about the general body polity, the general society, discrimination being in the general society. Some of these things of course affected conversation, writing, and I suspect affected what people thought their goals were and should be.

S: So you would suggest then that these gentlemen who had returned from the war and began to talk about different places they had been, things they had seen--this information that they brought back began to make you re-examine, re-think, and move in another direction while you were in college? Or did it just cause conversation? Did it move you?

F: Yes, but the notion of moving in another direction itself presumes that there are points in our lives when we do that. That may be true. My notion is, though, that the direction that one is moving in itself is generally set with the way and the priorities and the thought that one has; these things are changed. I knew very few people who moved in some "new direction" if you were to think of it in terms of a sign or an arrow. They might become more of this or they might say, "From now on one of the things that I will do will be to do so and so." Information about what the military was like and about what fighting and dying and having choices to make, these were the kinds of things that affected the thoughts of some of us. We knew that anyone who went off and was asked to die for his or her country certainly ought to be accorded all of the privileges and all of the rights, since the obligations were going to be imposed upon all. Theoretically, you do not have to have a war to understand or discover this but when somebody comes back who has told you about seeing a buddy die and talks about something somewhere else, it changes you. This is what happened. I do not want to suggest that tons of former soldiers came to Hampton;

they did not, but there were enough. They were usually older. While some might be in the official sense conservative, many of them had seen and done just enough to have a bigger view of the world than those of us who had left our high schools and gone straight up to Hampton, Virginia and gone on to school.

S: Let us go back to the Hampton experience for a few minutes. Can you think of the greatest gift Hampton gave you?

F: Oh, yes, without question. [I had] the best instruction, the most thoughtful and considerate teachers, and literally the most exciting time of my life in terms of growing up with peers, having friends and being exposed to all kinds of ideas. As far as I am concerned my instruction ended with my baccalaureate work at Hampton. I had faculty and professors thereafter who were very learned and so forth, but Hampton was my traditional idea of what a college had been: a place where people had regard for young men and women and who encouraged them and simply made them feel good about learning.

S: Could you tell me about one of your favorite professors? There is always someone.

F: I had several, but one of my favorites was professor C.S. Lewis, who was just a remarkable person. He was a combination printer and tradesman expert. He knew printing equipment and could take down a linotype machine and put it together and move a piece of equipment from one building to another. He was an English and journalism teacher. He was everything that a teacher should be. He represented the practicality of ideas, the delight of reading and so forth. He always extended what we did. I used to go to his home. I was welcomed into his home and went over a couple of times in my last years and sat while he and his wife would be off somewhere. They had a young daughter and I can remember now sitting on a comfortable sofa reading with an opportunity to have a drink of milk from his refrigerator or whatever. It was just marvelous.

Saunders Reading, my professor in the English department, was also a very companionable man, very stimulating, very responsive to the student. I enjoyed my studentship with him. Highland Lewis was a social science teacher and just an extraordinary gentleman. I appreciated my work with him. Faith Jefferson Jones was the dean of women for a short while and while I was doing my dissertation research years later, I saw references to her in *Chicago Defender* in the 1920s. She was one of the first black ladies to receive an education at a particular college in the Chicago area and I always wondered at Hampton she had such grace and poise and charm and was so nice to people. When I read something of her young adult days, it just confirmed what I knew about her and thought about her. Nancy Waldrige was a very fine teacher of mine in the English Department at Hampton. I had world literature with her. [She was] very outgoing and very responsive to

students. All in all my teachers were just extraordinary. That is why I remember them with such delight.

S: Did you go to Hampton with the intention of majoring in English?

F: I went to Hampton with the intention in majoring in journalism. I wanted to be a newspaper man; that is what I wanted to be. In fact, the Hampton academic dean put in a year's advanced journalism course for me and some friends of mine. It was not in the catalog and we took the elementary journalism and then we wanted an additional course and they did not have one, so they instituted one. Right after my class took it, it was dropped again.

We had about four or five fellows who were really gung ho on journalism, really fine writers. Tom Sims was a Georgian, I think from Sparta. He was a year or two older than I and a fine writer. He left Hampton, went to New York, and worked for a public information firm [doing] audience research. Golly, I am trying to think--Warren Gardner was the editor of the Hampton Script. Warren left Hampton and went to New York City and worked for Our World magazine, as an editor. There were some others but these were the students who were there.

We took our journalism seriously and we took the paper seriously. [The] Hampton Script, along with the Maroon Tiger from Morehouse [College] was one of the first two black college papers in the country to be denominated All-American award papers by the Associated Collegiate Press at the University of Minnesota. This was a tribute that we took seriously. So we took the matter of putting out a paper competently, well written, and well edited with very serious delight and charge. English was as close as I could get to journalism; they had no journalism major. In fact, in those years I think Lincoln in Missouri was the only black school that had a journalism major.

In my senior year I went over to Norfolk to speak with Mr. P.B. Young, the editor of the Journal and Guide, to get my post-graduation job lined up. I went over and I went to stay in 1949, the year of my graduation from there, and spoke with him about beginning as a reporter for the Guide and he said yes. He said he would be happy to have me work and then we began to talk about salary. He told what the guild had agreed to as a salary scale and I cannot remember what it was but he said something about a starting salary of thirty dollars a week and I said, "But I work in the Hampton public relations office. I write practically all of the sports copy and a good bit of the regular copy and when you run stories from Hampton, you are running things that I have written. I have been editor for two years, on the staff for four years. I was sports editor for two years before I was editor-in-chief for two years. I can write. I should get more than thirty dollars a week." And he just shook his head very sadly. So I got back on the ferry and went back over to Hampton and decided in my own mind that I would not go to work for a paper. I had some other

inquiries, I knew people in other cities, but that crushed me and at the end of that year when I finished, I went home.

I went to graduate school immediately. I had not really planned to but I lived about three blocks from North Carolina College so I just walked over there one day and told them I had finished. In those days you did not have to be examined with a GRE score from the top of your head or anything else. I had a good undergraduate record and I began graduate school that summer--three classes. [At the] end of the next year I got my degree and that next September began teaching as an English teacher at Shaw in Raleigh. That is how I got into the whole business as a teacher. But I would have been a journalist if Mr. Young had been able to say, "We will give you thirty-five dollars a week to start as a reporter."

S: That brings us up to the beginning of your teaching career. I am going to pick up with your experiences at North Carolina College in Durham where you completed your masters work.

F: Yes. I was in graduate school there. I went to graduate school in the summer of 1949 when I finished Hampton and went into the English program; at the same time I got a job in the publicity office. That is what it was called but it was the information and services at NCC. I took a full program of courses that summer and enjoyed working in the information office. The man who was the director was on leave. He was ill and a veteran, and I ended up being the acting publicity director for the college. The next fall I found out the director was not coming back and I would be the acting director for that part of the year until Dr. Charles Rate, an English professor, came back. He eventually became the director. Just as an aside, I remember going to the president, Dr. Shepphard, and asking for some more money because I was being paid--I cannot remember what I was making but the figure was ridiculous. In essence he told me no, that that would not be possible and I continued to work that next half year. In January, I believe Dr. Rate came back and he became the director of the publicity office. My work then was focused on athletic publicity. I did all the sports information stories.

S: Now this was at the same time that you were in the master's program?

F: The same time I was in graduate school as a master's candidate. I was taking classes right along. Dr. Richard Parksdale had just come to North Carolina College and was the professor of graduate English, and also my advisor. I was working on a thesis on Tabia Smalley under Dr. Parksdale's direction. I had taken a course in prose fiction the summer after I had come home from Hampton and had not had a course like that at Hampton. I found myself very interested in eighteenth-century English literature and when I encountered Tabia Smalley, the irascible Scotsman, he just sounded like the funniest, most humorous quirk-filled person I had ever

heard of. I just fell in love with him and decided to do my master's thesis on Smalley. So that is what I was doing that year. I was working in the office and doing my course work and gathering data for my thesis. Everything went well and was on time because the next June, 1950, I had finished my work and had my degree. That is when I went to Raleigh to begin teaching at Shaw.

S: That sounds really exciting. So you did go off to Shaw in Raleigh and you were teaching composition.

F: Yes, teaching everything--composition, world literature. I think the typical load was five classes and I think I had four composition classes. As the extraordinary course I had a course in world literature, and I have a joke that I carried on from that day until this--I have said I have some papers I have yet to grade but I am going to get around to them. I have not thrown them away from Shaw. I carried them all when I left. It is pretty hard to keep papers flowing, classes with thirty-five students or so and to do what one wanted but I enjoyed that period of my work. Of course I was not much older than many of my students but there was curiosity among many of them and energy and I simply enjoyed my exchanges with them. That was a really good year of my life.

I worked there one year and the next year I went home one day and found a draft notice, selective service, saying that I was going to be called for military service. This is 1950 and the draft board in Durham had told Shaw that it would not give me a deferment, that I would be called up for military service if I was fit. So I lost the job I had at Shaw and sat waiting in Durham to be called for the regular draft. I did something that I thought would be expedient. I went down to the selective service board and found I might speed things along so I volunteered for the air force. I remember going down to the recruiting station in Durham and going over to Raleigh with, I think, one or two other fellows and being examined. I had taken the intelligence test, whatever it was, and passed that well and got over to Raleigh, where the examining headquarters were at that time, for the physical exam, and did not pass the physical because of my eyes. I went back home and went downtown and told the selective service board in Durham that I had not passed the physical. They said that did not make any difference, I still had to wait for the regular draft.

So I sat around until January of that next year and went over to Raleigh. I came with a large bunch of guys and the same team was doing the examining in Raleigh that had been doing it when I went as a volunteer. The same sergeant examined me with the same results. I did not pass then either.

So I went back home and then from January until, I guess, May I worked on and off part-time at North Carolina College with Charles Rate in the publicity office. At the end of that year I decided to try to get a regular teaching job and I called Dr. James

Colson, who had been at Hampton when I had been a student. He was president at Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee and I asked if he had a job out there that I might take. He happened to need a public information director so I remember borrowing bus fare from one of my dad's friends, Mr. Walker. I think my father was out of town and in May or so I was on the bus on my way out to Knoxville College to begin work as the Director of Public Relations and I was going to be a teacher of English in the English Department. I got there just in time to handle the commencement news programs. I remember that Judge Hasting was the speaker for the commencement at Knoxville College. This was 1951 and I worked out there that summer and in the fall (they did not have summer school at Knoxville College) I resumed teaching English and journalism and was a public relations director. I worked there for a year.

S: Let me back up just a touch to the draft period. Was it common practice then to have people released from their employment to wait for draft notice?

F: Yes, there was no tie. If you received a deferment for what they called a critical occupation that you were in then everything was okay and your employment went on. But for some reasons, and this had to do both with politics and military needs, you might lose the deferment classification that you had and thereby the employer was notified--Sam Smith will not be classified for whatever it was. I do not remember the classification figures or names but I had been deferred in a "semi-critical"--that is my word, semi-critical--occupation. I was a college teacher at Shaw the first year. The next year the draft board in Durham told Shaw I would not have that classification again. That did not mean, "Okay, I am ready. I want to go in the regular selective service." I could not go until the board made its own determination as to the group I would go with to Raleigh to have my physical exam. That is why I tried to join the air force immediately. I did not love the military at all; I just wanted to get it over with.

S: In essence that was a year that you waited until they decided.

F: Yes, it was a year. In January I went over and found out that I was classified 4F; I was medically not eligible. Then between that time and the time I went to Knoxville I was sort of at loose ends, but I was living at home with my parents and I went over to North Carolina College and worked a bit. I helped them with a student newspaper and so on.

S: Let us go back to Knoxville then. How long were you at Knoxville College?

F: I was at Knoxville for two years and really enjoyed my stay there. Knoxville was an interesting community. Unitarian Church had a very strong unit in Knoxville. I remember meeting Unitarians and being invited by people in the community to do

some things--encounter some groups, have some cultural interests, have some social kinds of things--that I was surprised to find were available and I enjoyed them.

S: That is the first time I have heard you mention any kind of social activities. So would you suggest Knoxville was a bit more progressive than Durham or Raleigh?

F: Not really. It is interesting though. I grew up [in] Durham and Raleigh, that is my bailiwick. In Knoxville I was a person who had come into the community to do a job, ostensibly trained to do it. There is always a difference between how one is seen and how one interacts in the community away from home sometimes and how one does at home. Everyone at home had known me from babyhood and Knoxville was different.

But there was another factor that made Knoxville interesting and it had to do with the fact that Oakridge, Tennessee was down the road from Knoxville. Oakridge National Laboratory was in Oakridge and a lot of the research going on with reference to atomic energy that later came to be very important was in its founding stage at Oakridge and Oakridge itself was a community literally built from very little. It had become a community of twelve, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five thousand people fairly rapidly. There were people at Oakridge from all over the country with extremely wide-ranging backgrounds and I got to meet some of these people and their contact between Oakridge folk and Knoxville folk. I remember going to the music program of the Oakridge Symphony Orchestra but in a community like that and with people who were interested in theater, people who were from everywhere--the west coast, the east and out of the country. Their view of things and people simply was not a "traditional" southern view, if you will. Although I do not want to suggest that there were not people in the South who were very catholic in their tastes and interests, but Oakridge was a special place.

I had a lady friend who was a nurse who worked at the laboratory at Oakridge and through her I met many interesting people in Oakridge and Knoxville. Knoxville itself was just a fascinating place, a lot of combined historic ways of behavior and speech, a lot in insularity in terms of some families who have been there forever. You know what the geography is. It is not a place that one would just run through en route to somewhere else. When you go there, you go there. Knoxville College was an old United Presbyterian related school. The music program was small. James Colson, who was the president when I went there, was a builder in his life as a president and that is what he was trying to do at K.C. as it was called.

I enjoyed fishing. The countryside was beautiful. I remember going around fishing at Fort Loudon and Lenore and TVA lakes and there was a great sense of peace about the place. Of course the mountains to the east of Knoxville, the Smokies between

North Carolina and Knoxville, were simply beautiful. It is an impressive region in terms of its geography and its majesty.

S: It sounds very exciting, particularly for the times. You were there two years?

F: Yes, I was there two years.

S: And you then had a better opportunity?

F: Let us see what I did. I went off to school. I decided that I was going to go off and study at New York University and I went to school there a year.

S: This is 1953?

F: This is 1952 or 1953, and I lived with my aunt, my dad's only sister, and studied English. I went to work for B. Altman's department store in the middle of the Christmas season and enjoyed that. At the end of the year I had an opportunity to go down to Tuskegee Institute. Some people there who had known that I was there asked if I would be interested in coming to Tuskegee to join the English faculty so that is what I decided to do. I went down to Tuskegee. This was 1953.

S: How did you find Tuskegee as compared to Knoxville College?

F: The difference was in terrain and attitudes. I was now in at least part of the black belt. Georgia of course might be but this is the cotton belt. I had never seen so much land around Tuskegee with so few trees because a lot of the land was clay and was cotton land. The only way to describe the heat is to say that you would have to be there. The heat was just intense. And at the same time, the young men and young women whom I met as students struck me as the most graceful folk I have encountered anywhere. I have long said that I think it is the truth that the most graceful and gracious women I ever met were Alabamians. There was something special. I do not know what it is about Alabama. But both young men and young women were dutiful and respecting of teachers and elders in that day and ready to be stimulated. Not everyone, of course--not everyone anywhere is--but so many of them were ready to be stimulated to go beyond their environment. A lot of them had not been out of Alabama, had not been to other places in the country and to tell them about what was possible and what might be learned and what might be experienced was a great treat. I thoroughly enjoyed the three years that I was at Tuskegee.

During that period I was married. I married a young lady whom I had met when I was in Knoxville. She was a student at Knoxville College, Ann Laville. I took Ann with me. We went to Tuskegee and began our married life in Tuskegee for a brief period.

Then after three years at Tuskegee I was recommended by Tuskegee for an Eli Lilly Fellowship. I left Tuskegee and went up to Illinois and entered the mass communications program there. That is where a great bit of my time was spent getting through graduate school forever and ever and ever.

S: Particularly, I would imagine having to go up North. Let us talk about Illinois a little bit. I know that was another fairly large jump culturally. Would it have been?

F: Well, I do not know exactly how to respond to that because somehow or other in my own mind it seems that I always was on the lip of cultural interest and variety with reference to what people were doing. I had grown up on college campuses and of course I had worked in New York on occasions before. I worked in New York Hospital one summer, I worked at Lundy's restaurant on Sunday. I was familiar as a teenager with getting around the city and so Champaign-Urbanna was a twin community with a big school and a lot of people I had already seen as far as I was concerned. I met many folk like that and of course was also delighted to discover once again the variety that a school like that had. I was very much helped by a professor there, Dallas Smide, who was a Canadian and my entree into the doctoral program in communications. He had been an economist with the Federal Communications Commission at one time, he was a graduate of California Schools. I think it was the University of California-Berkeley. But just one of the nicest human beings I have ever met. He was genuinely sincere and interested in people. Just a good person. He helped me to get situated in Champagne-Urbanna with housing. I remember I stayed in his home a few days until I had some housing arranged. I got off on the right foot.

It was an exciting time in Illinois because the communications program was under way in good order and students who came into it came from a wide range of backgrounds. I was an English major and I am going into a mass communications program. There were people in it from journalism who had done their undergraduate degrees in journalism, social sciences, liberal arts, and so the mix was simply exciting and really sharp, competitive and companionably competitive people. We were gung ho on all the macro and micro theories of communication that were the big deal in that period.

I of course always loved libraries and the University of Illinois has one of the great libraries in the world and it was a delight to be a student there because practically anything I wanted or needed, the University of Illinois library had. I got a job as a writer (the title was editorial assistant) in the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, which was on the campus. I remember I held that job the whole time I was a graduate student there. I never had a graduate student's appointment of any kind. I can recall when I would go to register at the end of semesters, I was always in the short line because the line that had the graduate students who had the appointments and

assistantships was the long one and every time I would show up to pay some aspect of my fee, the person taking the money would look up at me and just say in disbelief, "You are not a graduate assistant? You do not have a graduate appointment?" I would say, "No. I am an employee of the university. I am a graduate student," and that is the way I managed it.

My wife, Ann, got a job teaching in the Urbana public schools. This was one year after I started here. She earned her masters in education then went to work teaching. I think this may be why I was there so long--there was some money coming in and it was pleasant in the community. I met a lot of interesting people. The people in the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations were truly world-wide in interest and scope. There were faculty then who were regularly going to Japan and doing studies on the whole business of Japan's exploding economy, labor relations, factory development and so on. There were students who came from everywhere, mostly to earn masters degrees in labor and industrial relations. I had a very good boss. The woman who ran the editorial office where I was employed was named Barbara Dennis and just an excellent writer, a very nice person. I enjoyed working with her. It was comfortable. At the same time I was able to see some beginnings of what we might now say were progressive or activists or gently militant notions of improved relations involving more black people as graduate students and more black staff and faculty. This is so gradual and gentle as to defy any misrepresentation at something that was very stern and going on vigorously. Over a period of time, and I am talking about a long period, mostly between 1960 and 1968 when I received my degree from UI.

S: I wanted to ask you, you wrote your dissertation on race records and I was wondering how you happened to become interested in that topic? Was it a difficult topic for a dissertation to have your committee approve?

F: Oh, no. It was absolutely not anything difficult to have the committee approve and if you go onto any campus in this country today and talk to someone about folklore or talk to someone about laborlore--I did not make that word up, it is a genuine word--and mention the name Archie Green you are going to get a response of recognition. Archie Green is one of the genuinely invaluable persons connected with encouragement of studies in labor and folk history in this country. Archie was the librarian at the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations when I began work there as an editorial assistant. He himself was an older fellow who had served in World War II and had done his study in library science but was ultimately going to go back to Penn and get his Ph.D. in folklore during the time that I was a student at Illinois in mass communications. Archie and I became very good friends as anyone would become a friend of Archie's who has ever met him; he was just a super guy. He was interested in hillbilly music, among other things--the development of the recording industry in the 1920s, the expeditions, and the country record series of

Columbia [Records]. I was interested in Afro-American music and the two of us (his office was right down the hall from where I was) talked everyday about a variety of things.

We worked on reconstructing numerical catalogs together. The catalog that is on microfilm out at California now and some other places is the one that I helped him to put together and collected the catalogs and we talked about hillbilly. I know as much as I do about hillbilly music because of Archie. He knows, I presume, as much as he does about race rackets and Afro-American music because I talked to him about it.

The dissertation topic, jazz and race records of the 1920s and 1930s, the period of the Depression, was just a great subject for a thesis in mass communications because of the dependence that one would have to put upon use of periodical materials and the way one could look at how periodicals might have influenced both attitudes and affected the amount of information available about this material. So I did not find anything except great exuberation. I said this is what I wanted to do my dissertation on.

Ted Peterson, the dean of the College of Journalism there, was my advisor. I inherited him because my advisor had left to go to Penn to become dean of the school there. Names are running out of my head. George Gerbner is the gentleman I am speaking of. He was my advisor and the man who encouraged me and when he left to go to Pennsylvania, the dean of the College of Journalism at Illinois, Ted Peterson, became my advisor. He was a super journalist and editor and advisor and he was the one that got me through because at x-point he simply told me I was going to have to turn out chapters on this basis. I was collecting data forever. Up one end and down the other, all around the world writing letters to everybody and I would still be there collecting material if he had not said, "I want you to get through and this is the schedule that you are going to have to work on," and that is what I did. But that was a delight.

There was not anything put into the work or into the research that really did not belong there. I looked at files and newspapers from the turn of the century through the 1940s. The things that I needed, journals like the Talking Machine Whirl which the University of Illinois library had, anything I needed, they got. It was the most inspiring intellectual and research project that I have ever had and it just happened to be the thing that I did for my degree. It was like being thrown over in the ball park and given something that you would not ordinarily expect anyone to give you. It is like teaching. I am being paid to teach and I love it. It is like, "I do not believe that this is going on." That is the way I remember those years.

I can recall--and this is just an aside, but it relates to how we think about facilities and so on--I had had a course once in Tudor prose. When I took the course I recall

becoming interested in the history of the Reformation. I remember reading about some eighteenth-century works that had to do with the history of the Reformation, but I never saw the books though. Even though I was in New York, I never saw some of the references that I recall reading about. When I got to Illinois, I was in the library one day on the second day, as I recall, way down near the bottom floor in the stacks and looked up and here were all of the history of the Reformation in England, of all stripes. Books sitting there in the original, marvelous leather bindings. I was not doing anything with that. I did a paper on that for the history of the theory of freedom of the press, one of the graduate courses I took. But right then I had no need for those books but I checked all of them out. I remember having something like fifteen, fourteen different volumes of things just sitting on my desk because I was so astounded that they did exist somewhere. That was the delight of doing research at Illinois and of being able to get things that one used. I enjoyed my period there. It was a good community. Students were friendly and the place had enough activities to keep anyone interested. We all know that when you are in school, that is not the time that you really can afford to do the things you ought to. Then you say, "Well, right now I know what to do. When I get out, I know what I am going to do." We found out that you do not do that either but being on a college campus that is a major college campus is a delightful sort of thing.

S: That sounds like it was more of a pleasure than it was any kind of hardship.

F: Yes, it was. I tell students now and I do not mind telling them because they need to be reminded. I had setbacks. I did not sail through my comprehensive exam the way we would all like to. I had to go back and do some more of that but the reality of the situation is that I did get through. I had a good academic record and I got through though I did not pass sailing through the first time. I have told many students the same thing--you do not give up. If you have got the ability and if you have the talent and you have the encouragement, you are going to make it and you cannot afford to be turned around when things do not go perfectly the first time and I had people who encouraged me there and I have not forgotten that. That is why I think it is important to keep those continuities going. This is why I am so upset when I see people who are speakers as if they had just flown down from outer space and that they are the only ones on the face of the earth who know anything. I know it is not true, it is ridiculous. I realized long ago that the best, the smartest, the sharpest, and the most supportive folk are that way because they are not out there parading this extraordinary hope and knowledge.

S: This section of the interview begins by looking at the Green book on Durham, North Carolina. Do you see anything there under Durham that you recognize?

F: Yes. I recognize all of the names--Dechazar's Hostelry, which of course is a marvelously pontifical name for a black establishment.

S: Is it still there?

F: Good heavens no! I cannot even remember when it disappeared but [it was at] 809 Bedville Street. This is in what was called Hatie. That was the name of the section of town that represented the black business area and a couple of insurance companies, barber shops, at one time a food store, some shoe shine parlors, pool rooms--they constituted the business part of Hatie. College Inn restaurant was away from Hatie going out toward North Carolina College, 1306 Bedville Street is going east and was a favorite meeting place for people. I was about to say college students. It was called College Inn but people met there. It served beer and sandwiches and so forth. I can remember I mentioned Dr. Parksdale as my advisor at North Carolina College. He was such an exceptional person--very affable and genial and some nights after class we would go down to the College Inn Restaurant and have a beer after his class in history of the English language, which I remember I had with him. Biltmore Hotel was an old establishment in Durham. I am certain it was there when we moved. Our family moved to Durham in the 1930s from Tennessee and it too is now gone. It has been long gone in Durham. But Durham had its share of cottage motels. The word "motel" is probably too elaborate but places where a traveler could get room and board or at least a room for overnight. [There were] not very many elaborate hotels in cities the size of Durham or Raleigh or Greensboro in this period we are talking about.

S: After you left the University of Illinois, did you come immediately to Florida?

F: No.

S: [You] went back to Tuskegee?

F: No, [I] went west to Bloomington Normal, to Illinois State. I had a friend I had met, Charles Morris, who was a math teacher at Illinois State and he had done his work at Illinois, UI, and I had met him and he was on the faculty there; in fact, he expressed the belief that Illinois State wanted to hire black faculty at that time. He got an invitation extended to me to come over and meet some people and view the campus. So I remember going over in January. I finished in mid-term of 1968 and I went over in January and had the typical tour of departments and offices. I got back to Champaign-Urbana and in a day or two I had an offer to come over [to Illinois State] and join the faculty and become an English and speech teacher. I had a joint appointment because the journalism/communications segment was in the speech department and of course that is what they were looking at--my degree as being mass communications. I ended up teaching some courses in journalism and also traditional courses in English again. I enjoyed that school. This was in 1969.

That school in that year was undergoing a tremendous period of movement and an effort to upgrade itself to become more competitive with, of course, the University of Illinois, their flagship school. The other schools in the state--Southern Illinois, Carbondale, Northern Illinois and Illinois State--were almost always running distant seconds and thirds. There was a great hubbub of activity, a great bustle of activity in 1969. They were interested both in minority faculty and in upgrading academic programs to perhaps begin to offer doctorates in areas that they had not. We had a son, Everett, born in 1967, so Ann and I took Everett over to Normal. Any day on that campus you could look up and there would be someone escorting a prospective faculty member across campus. I have never seen such a bustle of activity involving prospective faculty. Blacks were among them.

It was an exciting year. [I met] Harry Shaw, a staff member who~ himself was in the middle of his work at Illinois. We became very good friends very early. We were involved very actively in Afro-American things on that campus. Harry was the chair of the Afro-American studies committee prior to my going and as soon as I went and was hired as a person who had finished his work, I became the chair of the task force on Afro-American studies and worked actively to look at curricula and the whole business of beginning to add faculty for the specific purpose of having Afro-American studies courses. All kinds of things went on. While I was there the next year (this was winter of 1969-1970) at Illinois-Wesleyan, which was a private school in Bloomington, there was a demonstration by students for an Afro-American studies center and they wanted Afro-American studies courses and black faculty so I was asked if I would come over to Wesleyan and teach a course there. Of course it would have to be [on] a part-time basis. I agreed. I went over there and taught a course in the English department three times a week, a composition course. I also stayed active at ISU, Illinois State, in the kinds of things that were going on there.

I remember one example--Jesse Jackson came down from Chicago and spoke on campus the year I was there. Gwendolyn Brooks [American author, poet, first black woman to win Pulitzer Prize for poetry, 1950] came down. I remember introducing her at a forum on the campus the year that I was there. That was the year, the winter of 1970 or the fall of 1969, when there was debate on the campus at Illinois State about naming a building in honor of Malcom X. There was a great amount of dispute and so forth. This was also the time when the police in Chicago invaded one of the homes of the [Black] Panthers and shot and killed some folk there with the result that there was a protest against the active Chicago police and there also was the notion of whether flags should be lowered in acknowledgment of the deaths and there was protest in the community of Bloomington-Normal which defied the idea that flags should be lowered and I can recall a photo that was seen I think around the country, probably carried by Associated Press, that showed some of the physical plant trucks ringed around the flagpole on the campus of Illinois State protecting that flag from outsiders. The campus was of one mind and the

surrounding community was of another.

S: There was also Kent State; was it in around that area?

F: Kent State, certainly, in Ohio.

S: Well, that sounds like those were really moving times.

F: These were exciting years. Students were very outspoken, very expressive and very defiant of past tradition or past ways. I can remember Harry Shaw and I were at a meeting of black students on the top floor of Adlai Stevenson Hall. A very tall building. We were there and I can remember it could have been a movie scene and Spike Lee simply would have had to bring his camera people to film it. A black woman who had on an Eisenhower type jacket who was raising her right hand and explaining what it was, that we were not going to go through any longer. It was the kind of scene that just did nothing but give one goose bumps for the enthusiasm that courses through students in that age and though numbers were small at Wesleyan--there were very few black students there-- there were more at Illinois State. Numbers were still small but there was no question that something had happened that was changing the way people thought about themselves and how black folks are themselves in educational settings.

S: Let us jump decades and bring ourselves here to the University of Florida. How did you happen to choose the University of Florida? How did you find it when you got here?

F: I was at a program at the University of Iowa in December 1968 and was invited to participate in a summer workshop for teachers that Iowa had that next summer, the summer of 1969. When I went out to Iowa City that summer I met a faculty member from the University of Florida, Stephen Conroy [Assistant Professor of Social Sciences], who is here now in American studies. He asked if I would be interested in examining a job possibility at Florida. He said Florida was seeking to develop an Afro-American studies program. I said sure, I would be interested, and promptly forgot all about it. The next winter, in 1970, I received a phone call from Steve here at Florida and I was freezing twice in Illinois. He said, "Would you like to come down?" and I said sure, so I came down, found out that I could take off all of my clothes after I left the plane, walked around here, and met some very stimulating folk in Gainesville. The dean was Dean Al Stahmer [Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Professor of Religion and Philosophy] and Herman Spivey [Acting Dean, College of Arts and Sciences and Professor of English]. Herman Spivey was a remarkable man and Al Stahmer was a very energetic person and they were refreshing, and I met other folk. [I met] a few black folk who were here, met some people in the community and some students, black and white.

It just seemed to me an opportunity to do some of the kinds of things that I enjoyed doing in the company of--once again-- gracious folk whom I admire and enjoy so much, southerners. There was an opportunity to do that and to come to Florida and so we entered into conversation and I remember giving a lecture and I talked about folk music once again with some comments about white and black folk music. Apparently the folk enjoyed what they thought I might be able to offer because shortly after that trip we were in negotiations about coming down here. I decided that the family would come down and we came down in August 1970. That was the beginning of a very long stay here--twenty years now. Some of the people who were here at that time are long gone but I think I was impressed by the possibilities that were offered by some of the folk who were here then. There was a mood of much greater militancy here then. This really was on the lip of interaction.

S: In 1970?

F: Yes, in 1970. There have been swings from that time up and down in accord with a variety of things. That was in 1970. In 1971, black students were arrested on this campus because of their refusal to leave the president's office in Tigert Hall during a series of meetings during which they were making demands for a black cultural center, among other things, and were invited to leave and did not and were arrested by local police. We have not had anything that remotely approaches that since that period of time.

S: How do you find the university now twenty years later?

F: Often in a state of somnambulism. So much so that there are people here now who have not the foggiest recollection of what this university at least sought to appear to be trying to do twenty years ago. We have more black students, obviously. We have more black faculty. Sometimes we go places, faculty and staff go to meetings and go away and people are amazed at the size of the "Afro-American" faculty and staff at this University now. It is not what we would want it to be but in comparison to some places, it is up there.

S: So you would think then very favorably on your twenty years here. You have enjoyed it.

F: Oh, the twenty years I think very favorably on because the twenty years I am focusing on in relation to my contact with students and the public; as far as building an Afro-American studies program, no. The truth of that matter is, if one were to say, "There is a program here; it is equivalent to the program at UCLA," the truth of the matter is that it is not. I would not fail to say I bear some of the responsibility for that. I would say this, though--that if I had really wanted to do that alone, I would have long been gone. It has been my tradeoff. I long ago decided what I was not going to be able to do was, according to anybody's yardstick, make this place

develop an academic program of the kind that an academic program in a field really ought to be. I decided though that what I was going to do instead was encourage and let each student with whom I came in contact understand that this public university belonged to that student. That everything ought to be used to the maximum advantage by the student while the student was here. This is the part that I have not been unhappy about. I have students call me from all over the place--every week, every day, each year that goes by and that is the part I am very happy about. I am also happy about my contacts with state agencies in behalf of the folklore enterprise. I have been doing that now for fifteen years. That part is good. As far as the academic program, I wish things had happened differently but they did not.

S: I think that as you have already stated, you have made your presence felt. I think that is the issue. Well, we are going to, hopefully, add your interview with several other African-American faculty members here at the University of Florida and put those in the archives because Dr. Proctor found that he had not covered the interviews of African- American faculty, so we are looking forward to interviewing others as well. I think that your initial interview that I played for the class a couple a weeks ago, I think that was the reason for that. They found there is something here.