

M: This is Matt McKenzie and I'm interviewing Mayor Gardner of St. Augustine. First I'm going to start off with some basic biographical information. When and where were you born?

G: I was born in Schenectady, upstate New York.

M: When?

G: In 1937.

M: What is your educational background?

G: I have a bachelors degree from the University of Rochester, New York in Political Science with a minor in English.

M: When did you first move to St. Augustine?

G: We moved to St. Augustine in 1988 from a little town of five hundred people in southern Vermont where we lived for fifteen years. That kind of gave us, and gave me, as I got involved in the community here, a strong sense of community.

M: Why did you first move to St. Augustine?

G: We loved the four seasons of the Northeast, but that fourth one was a bear.

M: When you first moved to St. Augustine, where did you live?

G: We lived in the historic district.

M: Can you describe that area? What were your neighbors like, what was the area like?

G: Actually, it was a very nice little neighborhood. Now, this is right in the core area, which has a lot of tourists. But our particular block or block and a half, lets say, had what our historic area was originally designed to have, and by code today, is designed to have, which is mixed use and residency. A good mix of shops and full time residents. Shop downstairs, residence upstairs. In fact, my wife and I opened a shop. We lived there for about ten years. Four of those years, we had a toy shop downstairs and lived upstairs. Probably a majority of the eight or ten buildings in our block and a half that I am referring to as a neighborhood had residents, either tenants or owners, living upstairs or in the houses. We got along right from the get-go, got together for parties and chatted on the street and so on. It was the kind of thing that sadly America has pretty much lost today, this sense of community within a city framework.

M: Do you still live there?

G: No. We sold the business and the building in 1999 and we moved to North City, a northern area of St. Augustine, which again, is a typical earlier American neighborhood of sidewalks and trees and kids and birds and cats and dogs and the whole nine yards. We've lived there ever since.

M: You said you came here in 1988?

G: Yes.

M: How were race relations when you first came here? Did you notice you notice anything adversarial or was it pretty [untroubled].

G: No. Having been born and raised in the Northeast, I have an extremely liberal approach. I did not look for racial difficulties. I didn't seek it out. It was not, as it were, on the front burner as far as city affairs were going, as far as my life was going, so I really didn't form any impression of [tensions].

M: Now that you're mayor, have you noticed anything different in present day?

G: Well, I got involved with the city. After college, I spent sixteen years in newspaper reporting and editing, primarily in municipal affairs. When we got down here, although at that point, I had gotten licensed in real estate and that was primarily my profession, I got involved with the city by appointment to a vision project, which was created in the early 1990s, and then the mid-1990s with the Citizen Code Enforcement Board and Planning and Zoning Board. Through our toy shop business, I also served a term as president of the Downtown Area Merchant's Association. That was pretty much the extent of my involvement in civic affairs. We put together a lot of good plans, primarily dealing with tourism and development during that period. It was probably in 1999 when we made our move to the north city that I decided I'd done my bit and was retiring from that end of it. In 2002, it was very apparent to a large segment of the community that there was a separation of citizens from their government, from their City Commission. That the Commission was not listening to them and basically, I felt that I might be able to do something to turn that course. I was part of a group that wanted to see change and I was ready to support at least two other residents who were thinking of running. When they backed out, I said, I guess I'm the only guy left standing. So I ran. My first goal, and still my major goal, was to get the citizens involved, that great silent majority that we felt we brought out during that election to keep them involved, keep them knowledgeable of city affairs. One of the first missions or goals I set for myself was to visit as many churches or houses of worship in our community as I could. [The] reason being, it's a good start for a solid foundation of community in our churches, to get out there and let people know that elected officials are people, too. That the only thing separating the elected from the average citizen is a qualifying fee and a campaign. Otherwise, we don't gain any great particular wisdom or whatever. As a part of

that, I began attending a good number of black churches. Our community, I think at last count had something in the range of fifty black churches. Some [were] very small, others [were] large. I developed through that some great friendships within the black community, learned more about the black leadership and gained a better understanding of the relationships. I keep trying to curb myself today from saying 'The Black Community' because community means a unity of people and the blacks are not a separate community, they are neighbors within the whole community. That's just a technical thing. One of the first things I heard from a leader in the black community after getting to know her pretty well, was that St. Augustine is still very segregated. It surprised me. As I said before, I am focused on it. St. Augustine has a reputation of being a warm, friendly hometown kind of community and I hadn't really given it that much thought. This older black community leader was very clear that she felt the segregation was still extremely strong. In going to these churches, and I'd be asked to get up and make a few remarks, and usually among my remarks was what the black neighbors were very familiar with, that the most segregated time in America is one hour on Sunday morning. I agreed with that up to a point, then after months of visiting various churches, I said, you know what, it is no more wrong for black citizens to black residents to meet on a Sunday morning collectively than is the Presbyterians in the Presbyterian Church, and the Catholics in the Cathedral or anything else. Within community, we are grouped as people with common interests. I felt I had to get off that tack, and I mentioned this at a number of black churches, I had to get off that tack, but where it counts, is in the public realm. There should not be that separation in the public realm. Let me stop at that point, because I know you have questions, but your question was how I see the relationship today, and that is the background that I've gained since being mayor. As to whether I'm anticipating one of your questions, as to whether I've seen improvement, I think there are a number of areas of improvement and reason for hope. We haven't gone near far enough as a community.

M: You mention you ran because you felt citizens had a disconnect. Was that especially prevalent among blacks, do you feel?

G: Very definitely. Very definitely. Again, in that community sense, I think probably the idea of black exclusion came up strong along with the general disconnect. Three like-minded candidates were elected in that election, that's a majority of the five member commission, so it was going to shift the attitudes of the commission. One of those three is a black man.

M: Errol Jones, right?

G: Errol Jones. I think the black neighborhoods joined the bandwagon of, you know, we needed change in that election. I think, to a great extent, the white community said, this is a healthy thing, this shows a melding of community, to have black representation on the Commission. Not that we hadn't had it before, but we

hadn't for a number of years. This was just the right time for it.

M: When you first came here, how often did you interact with someone of a different race, and what were the interactions like. What contexts were they in?

G: I would say probably in the visioning process, which involved about two-hundred and fifty residents, there were some, although all too few, blacks involved. On the Code Enforcement Board, in the Planning and Zoning Board, there were occasional applications or situations involving black property owners. In our operation of the toy shop, of course, we had black patrons. If I reflect on it, none of these were particularly outstanding inter-relationships. They were more casual relationships and far too few incidences of inter-relationship with us, which is what continues today.

M: Has it changed significantly over the last decade or two?

G: I don't think so, but I was giving some more thought to that. In one sense, how can we expect the black neighborhoods to intermix more as part of a community when our own neighborhoods are isolated themselves. The developments we're building today are gated, walled communities. Television is saturated with, there are very few warm fuzzy shows. They're all death and perverts and muggings and in that context its extremely difficult to get people to look as we used to in America in terms of going down to the plaza to watch a concert or having a community party of some kind. It's sadly a development of our modern age that transcends race, color, creed, whatever. Its an isolationism that is built up. I think part of my job is to try to bring all elements of the community together, and try and find a community center of interest rather than try and focus on one particular race or belief or whatever. It does affect us all.

M: Your answer kind of segues into my next question. Talking about communities and where people live, when you first moved here, were there any black residents of the historic district you lived in. Are there any where you live now?

G: No. Actually, historically, in this I go back to the 1800's, after the Civil War, and you probably know of our early history, that Spanish St. Augustine, the oldest settlement in the United States, I can't say did not believe in slavery, all cultures have had and condoned slavery to some extent. Basically, Spain said allegiance to the crown and to the Catholic Faith are paramount. If you pledge those allegiances, we don't care who you are and what you are. Early on, blacks had much more of a level field with whites. In the 1800's, there were blacks who, this had developed into a tourist town, we had a great number of hotels, of course the Landmark Hotel, which is the Ponce de Leon, but we had maybe a dozen or more huge hotels. These required a lot of service people. Actually, as well as wealthy Northerners moving down and building winter homes in St. Augustine area. The core area, the streets in the core area and just north of the core area,

where smaller little cottages still exist, these were predominately at one time black neighborhoods of workers who worked at the various hotels and the tourist functions. Over time, of course, the value of that property increased and was taken over by whites. Today, there is still some mix, but very small. My own neighborhood, I'm ashamed to say, was originally called White City, and I understand it was specified that only whites could live in that, we say White City, we mean a subdivision that was created [exclusively for whites].

M: Redlining.

G: Yeah, whoever the developer was said this is just for whites. It was probably created in the 1930s or 1940s, which was a very strong period throughout the South of segregation. Lincolnton, which after the Civil War, Lincolnton is closest too and in fact a historic register district by itself. Lincolnton developed as an African community. It was a very successful African community, and I've dreamed of resurrecting Washington Street, it was the commercial center of the black community. It had everything that you'd expect from a downtown. Then I realized the reason that was there and was prosperous is the blacks couldn't go in to the white stores or the white restaurants. So they developed and are today still very proud of the commercial district they built. Lincolnton was the predominately black area. West Augustine, which is west of US-1, the western area of our city, actually within city boundaries, its not that much area. Beyond it is the county area, so when we say West Augustine we're including city and county, it's a large area. That was just there, it wasn't identified as a particular class area or anything else. Lincolnton in recent years, and again I would say within the last five years probably, especially with the current market and the rise in real estate values, which is out of sight, but Lincolnton, I think in part because it has the greatest collection of Victorian homes in our city. Over time, many of them have fallen into disrepair. They became bargains for newcomers who enjoyed the city, wanted to live here, couldn't spend a whole lot of money but were willing to put in sweat-equity and spotted these beautiful Victorians and grabbed them up and began renovating. As I say today, its almost totally gentrified. The current real estate market, it's a good thing economically, it's a bad thing socially. We have folks who have lived in the family homestead for generations. They may be older, they're lower income, and they pay virtually nothing in taxes because they've owned the property for so long its come down through the family, the original investment might have been eight, ten thousand dollars. Someone comes to their door and waves a hundred thousand dollars in their face, cash, and they say, gee that's a good idea, and they grab it and run, but once they're outside the door, they look around and say where am I supposed to go. That is the social downside to this, that we see these signs along the highway, 'Don't let your house go into bankruptcy,' 'Don't let your house be foreclosed. Call 1-800.' What these guys do is come in and throw some money at them and say just sign over the deed so we can protect you and they minute they miss a payment they foreclose on the owner and now they're pushed

out the door. Fortunately, we had that up on the screen and we're trying to address it, but it's a matter of education and people generally, not alone blacks, not alone the poor, but people generally getting into legal stuff and they'd just soon not deal with it, so it's a scary thing. I think that covers that area as to what is happening. With Lincolnville's gentrification, West Augustine is now the last remaining area of focus for the blacks, the poor, and so on. One of the greatest things we're doing, I feel, and this is not city but community-city effort, is a very strong focus on West Augustine, where now, the predominate drug culture and prostitution and crime is focused. The West Augustine area has a CRA, community redevelopment area, which through increased taxes, is creating a pool of money that will provide infrastructure improvements, utility, streets, and so on in the West Augustine area. That area was recently named a Weed and Seed Community. This is a federal program to weed out crime and seed elements of good community; education and recreation and so on. The strongest part of the Weed and Seed program is that it's operated by the Attorney General of the United States. What it means, is the guy who is selling crack or using crack or whatever on the street corner, instead of being dealt with at the local level with modest sentences or a slap on the wrist, is going to be facing a federal court, federal prosecution, and extremely stiff sentences. It is a strong threat against crime to weed out that element. At the same time I say it's a seeding effort. One of the good things that I see there is that we have whites and blacks involved equally. They continue to stress that it is a community thing. It is not the white community coming into the black community and saying, patronizingly, we're going to help you and give you a few candies and then we are going to leave. It is a total involvement and it is dependent on the residents themselves. As in so many of our neighborhoods, but particularly in our poorer sections, residents are always suspicious when "the man" comes in and says, you're going to do something. They'd sooner trust an 800 number than their local government. We have to constantly push for residents to be involved, that this isn't going to work unless you make it work, you want it to work. Finally in West Augustine, an element that is encouraging, the success of both of these programs, is the West Augustine Improvement Association. This was developed within the community. Just as it says, it is a neighborhood association for that whole area. One of their major projects has been a cemetery clean-up of a couple of cemeteries that have long since overgrown and just about disappeared [under the growth of] all the weeds and foliage and trees. They've been working on that for a number of years. Linda Murray is one of the folks with the West Augustine Improvement Association, a spearhead of the cemetery cleanup, and she also does a column for the *St. Augustine Record*.

M: I'm sorry, what was her name?

G: Linda Murray. If you check the *St. Augustine Record* and do a search on writers, Murray should come up with neighborhoods. [It is] one of the neighborhood columns that is in the *Record* regularly, which is so great.

M: You've mentioned some things about West Augustine; the CRA, you mentioned, [is] raising taxes. Where are taxes being raised? Is it county-wide or just in the community?

G: The county assessor, the county property appraiser assesses properties throughout the county, and that includes the corporate city such as us. With the tremendous increase in values throughout the area, the demands of the market to buy properties and so on, the value of properties is rising. Whether you're selling your property or remaining there, that assessed value of the property is still going to go up. What the CRA does, is once it is established, it creates a base year, and I'm not sure when the CRA was established for West Augustine. For the sake of argument, let's say it was established in 2003, two years ago. From that base figure, you have an evaluation for the entire CRA area. Whatever that value may be, the next year, 2004, with a reassessment by the appraiser, values are increased, therefore taxes based on those values increase. Whatever the figure for taxes in 2003, the increase in 2004 goes to the CRA fund. Then in 2005, that increase from 2004 goes into the CRA fund. Basically it's completely taking money that the county would normally get in its general fund. The county commission has to endorse a CRA. Generally, they're happy to do it if it means improvements. If there wasn't a CRA to fund infrastructure improvements, county had to do it anyway. This is simply a way for one area of the community to focus on its needs and get it done. The county is involved, but the county is not directly responsible. It's the people themselves.

M: Also [to ask more] about the Weed and Seed program, the seeding, does that include tax breaks on incoming businesses or work training?

G: Yes, there are economic programs, there are social programs, there are education programs. It does open up opportunity for federal grants that might not otherwise [be available]. Federal grants are more responsive to organized programs. This is an organized federal program, so they're more responsive to funding it. There is a business element, and again, for each of these areas or elements, committees are developed or task forces are developed to get right down and focus. If we're going to do a park, where are we going to do it? We want to incubate a business or a number of businesses, where are we going to focus it? They are there for residents who come in who may have an idea or a plan for a business and to assist them.

M: When you first came to St. Augustine, or even today, do you hear or experience or see any racial tension or discrimination?

G: No, I don't see any outward discrimination. It's one of the thing that I've harped on within the black churches and neighborhoods, that we have, thanks to the efforts of the movement of 1964, before any Civil Rights Acts, laws are in place that make it pretty stupid of someone to attempt any kind of obvious

discrimination, because the penalties are very severe. The laws don't, and shouldn't demand that white citizens get together with black citizens every other Saturday or something like that. That's unfortunately where the weakness is. Again, responsible governing is not designed to force people into situations that are not in their own choosing. As far as [witnessing any] outward discriminations, no. Let me say there are perceptions, and I'll cite one incident where a black man was arrested by police and handcuffed and he was a very large man. Apparently the handcuffing, I don't even want to judge on the cause of it, but he ultimately died. There was an element of the, and now I will say the black community, because it involved outside influences as well, who said police brutality, picking on black. Blacks are treated differently than whites when they're arrested. Whites are told to sit quietly and blacks are handcuffed and thrown on the ground, all this kind of stuff. That particular incident was followed almost immediately by a community meeting. Everyone who has any racist bent at all, black or white, was there to say how terrible the world is. I attended that meeting. I didn't speak, but I attended that meeting. I wrote a column afterwards saying that this was a group of people, a minority, not a black minority, not a white minority, but frankly a racist minority who were trying to stir the flames. Historically, that's always been the case. They have nothing better to do. If they have no self-respect, they have low self-esteem, they have got to have someone to stand on. They have to have someone under them, so pick whatever you need. If he's a black, he's going to pick on a mean white cop. If it's a white, he's going to pick on the no good black and so forth. In this case, basically the sheriff said we're going to do a complete investigation and make a determination from that, and that's what we did. It fell off the screen. It was scary to me, and I say scary to me because I hadn't seen it before, but this popped up. It's always in the background when there is an incident which has no racial or general police abuse, intent is interpreted that way. I keep reminding myself that it's not a mass of people who believe it's a matter of abuse, it's a few rabble-rousers who stir the people up. The column I wrote afterwards was basically saying that.

M: What year was that, do you remember?

G: I was mayor, I would say 2003. It had to be 2003 because the new sheriff was elected in 2004, the sheriff of long-standing twenty years or so, Neil Parry, was retiring, so that had no relationship with his leaving office. Our own police chief, David Shoar became the sheriff. David is a very religious man, a very community conscious man. He did great things as police chief in ridding the Lincolnville area years ago of crime. I anticipate he is already making moves to focus on community relations and improvements as sheriff. It's a long struggle. One of the things that may or may not fit in at this point, is [to mention that when] I'm asked to speak to a black group or go to a playground or go to a black church to speak, (I know I don't have any problem with it, but my audience has difficult

accepting it), it's difficult for me as a white to say [to them that] probably a major part of the responsibility lies with you. You kids with your families, with your moms and dads, with your pastors, your teachers, [the responsibility rests with you] to bring yourselves up. The governments of the United States and state and local have put in laws to end overt discrimination. Beyond that, they've created the opportunities, you have to take the initiative. Just yesterday I attended a Women's Day celebration at a black church, St. Paul's AME. The speaker was an engineer, assistant director of the advanced physics laboratory at John Hopkins University, a black woman. She hit on the theme, and the most recognizable element of that theme is Bill Cosby's statement about the attitude of black youth and his condemnation of it. She hit on that theme. Here is a woman who is tremendously successful and basically she said, hey, I made it, there's no reason that you can't. During the 1964 anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement in St. Augustine, one of the speakers was Hank Thomas. Hank Thomas was one of the sitting demonstrators in the 1960s. He got arrested, put in jail, got out, demonstrated, so on. Today, he is a millionaire franchise holder of several McDonalds and Marriot Hotels in Atlanta. He came back to address some of the anniversary events. I got a copy of his speech because it was just so great. Just a part of it, he said, 'Prior to the 1960s there was no statistical black middle class. Less than five percent had income in the class known as middle class. Home ownership, a bellwether of economic well-being, is minuscule.' Today, he said, seventy-five percent of all African American households are middle class or better. The thing that continues to ring in my ears, and I heard it again yesterday from the speaker from St. Paul's, he said, 'young people who are mired in poverty and the under class are, for the most part, victims of their individual poor choices,' fueled by a failure, take advantage of educational opportunities and a lack of focused self-discipline. To lower the poverty level requires a commitment of the individual. Make no mistake about it, it is your responsibility. Legal barriers are gone. The governments provide the educational opportunities. You must provide the individual motivation. Your opportunities are unlimited, you must choose it. To have individual responsibility is to be politically correct. It's okay to be an honor student. It's okay to be black, proud, and smart. Yes, being smart is a black thing. One of the popular phrases that I've heard today, and I've heard it from a number of black speakers who echo the sentiment, is being smart is a white thing. Being popular is a white thing. These guys are really focusing, as I said before about West Augustine, the success of the programs out there have to depend on the people themselves wanting them. You can't just go in and put a fresh coat of paint on it. You've got to maintain it. It's the same thing here that it has to be the black leadership who gets up and says to the youth and to the families, it is your responsibility. I have tried, and probably not hard enough. My wife was reminding me today, she's been such a great to me support throughout this term, that one of my missions when I went out to the churches, particularly in the black community, was to encourage attendance at city commission meetings and to encourage application for citizen boards, basically get involved. That has not happened,

but I have to remember that if I wasn't there, if in 1999 I said, that's it, I've done my service to the community, I'm going to relax now, unless someone is going to build a bar next door to me and it was going to be for the city commission, I wouldn't necessarily have any reason to go to the city commission.

[End Tape A, Side 1.]

G: If events or agenda items don't affect you, you're not likely to be there. [In] smaller communities, [or] communities of yesterday, people were involved because things on the agenda did affect them. The smaller the community, the greater the affect. Today, not only do you have the larger areas that our commission and the county commission are covering, but you have distractions. You have to decide between spending two hours at the city commission meeting in the evening or watching the newest release on prime time t.v. Generally, people are not there. We have a black commissioner, Jones. Frankly, I don't think that he is perceived as the token black. That was popular at one time, the idea of, we've got to get a token black on this. He came to the table with a lot more "meat on his bones" than that. I don't think it is perceived that way. However, that thinking still exists in the community. One of the theories that I had, because, to really try and make in-roads into the lingering segregation racism, requires going a lot further than just looking in your own community. You've got to look at people, you've got to look at human nature, you've got to look at social interaction. There are two areas that I've developed my own thinking on it, and believe me it's an ongoing project; one is that it's a matter of human nature for people to want to have control, to be the top dog. I'm thinking that there may be some in the black area of our community who are leaders, who are examples, who are role models, and are not particularly, how did I put it down, might favor keeping segregation alive to maintain control of their segment, to be the big fish in a small pond, rather than losing to a broader spectrum of equality, where all of a sudden he's a small fish in a big pond. I'm not saying this is a predominant black thing, but that's a matter of human nature. Another thing that occurred to me, and as I say, it's an ongoing process, and I consider it a challenge that I want to try and meet, another thing, without trying to sound like the anthropologist, Margaret Mead, is when we consider that the church, in the black social context, has historically been the center of the African-American universe, the slaves had nothing but the church as the bright spot in their weeks. The services are long. The one yesterday, including lunch, was three hours. But historically, that's all they had. They didn't want to leave that church. They didn't want to leave that bright spot. They have maintained, from their tradition, those services. Today, with greater opportunities and greater freedom, the black church is a community center. That's where they get together, that's where they have their events which focus on the church. They have created in a sense, their own insulated community. I think a lot of our black residents could be saying, why do I need to go to the city commission meeting. Unless they're planning to bulldoze my neighborhood, unless it's a direct impact, I have my

world right here and I'm very comfortable with it. It's probably more the whites than the blacks that feel we need to end segregation. They're very happy. I remember when I was in college, it was the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement and this would have been around 1959, 1960. I don't know whether it was Alabama, whether the Rosa Parks incident, or school integration I think was the issue at that time, and one of the radio networks was interviewing people and they interviewed an older black woman. She said, you know, why doesn't everyone just leave us alone? We know our place, they know their place, we're very content in the situation we have. Why don't they just leave us alone. In a sense, it's bad. In a sense, it's logical. I see the whole question of ending segregation as a step at a time kind of thing. If there is never any more than four percent representation on the city boards and involvement in city affairs in a community which is four percent African-American, it's not a bad thing. I don't think if we had three black commissioners that it's going to end segregation.

M: St. Augustine is fifteen percent black.

G: Yeah, I appreciate the update.

M: That's the 2000 census at least.

G: Of course, that's all the more reason that we need to see, not necessarily need to see, but we need to check and see whether we have that similar representation in our city affairs and city boards. That's the city part of it. As far as I'm concerned, I made this kind of error one time, I think I was reading a proclamation for some group and praising the work that they had done and so forth and I paused and I said, you know, this recognition and recognitions like this that we do are probably more important to our community than any laws or any debates that we can have in a city commission, because this is the people. This is what makes our community. In just a general kind of theme setter, if you will [I will tell you this]. I was introduced the other day before a classroom public administration by the professor who is a very astute political observer, I was introduced as having been elected as a populist mayor. I thought, hey, this is not bad. I count among my greatest achievements the establishment of a neighborhood associations program for the city, which included the establishment of a city staff paid office of neighborhood coordinator, which turned out to be sort of an ombudsman for individual citizens as well as neighborhoods. To me, one of my favorite quotes is [from] Teddy Roosevelt, "The government is us. We are the government, you and I." My feeling, and we've run this through all our various programs since 2002, is if the people are not a part of it, it's not going to work. That's what happened, that was the key in the elections of 2002. The Commission wanted to build a parking garage right here. A few people objected and the Commission ignored them. The next meeting a few more came back. Before it was over, there were 150 people who were at the Commission and who yelled at the Commission, and the elections came up.

The Commission refused to get off the dime, they said, no, we're going to do it, we think it's the right thing, yada yada. It was not a battle for a garage. It was a battle for public involvement in their city's affairs. This brought people out of the woodwork. I gave you the example, if it's not my neighborhood, what do I care?

But this brought people out. Not because the garage was going to impact them, but because they had a Commission that didn't care. We have since involved the public through workshops on the major projects, through neighborhood associations, constantly getting their input. I said during that first campaign that everyone has a right to be heard and whether the decision goes their way or not, they have a right to understand the process through which it was reached, which means we involve them. That was the setting. A lot of what I do, I hope, is creating a good example for people of all colors and races and elites to follow.

M: You mentioned black leaders. Who, in St. Augustine, are the black leaders? What are their agendas? What are they trying to get passed?

G: As far as their agendas, you'd have to talk to them, but I would list among the black leaders certainly Otis Mason. He's a former school superintendent, [and an] extremely popular black leader. Linda James has lived on Kings Ferry Way in Lincolnville for years and years. She has never run for office, but she is one of those people; we call her the mayor of Lincolnville. Whenever I call her on the phone I say, "Linda, this is the *other* mayor." We have an excellent relationship. She's a great lady and has a real pulse on the community. Lorenzo Laws has run the Lincolnville Fest for years. I think he is finally bowing out, but that's always been a popular festival, but his bowing out goes over to another problem we have in the city, that with everything going on these days, that element of community where people volunteer to run events or to assist with events; it's like pulling hen's teeth. It's really tough. People get tired. They do it for years and you just get tired. The church I attended yesterday, St. Paul's, the pastor is Oliver Simmons, he and his wife and their church are very strong. In West Augustine, New St. James Missionary Baptist Church, and I'm trying to think of the pastor, Nathaniel, I'm trying to think of Nathaniel's last name. I haven't been there for a while. I have to get back over there. Pastor Eugene Israel is another, and he has been involved in committees and groups in the community and the Weed and Seed and so on as well as Nathaniel Jackson. Gwendoline Duncan, Gwen Duncan, 40th ACCORD. Believe it or not, and this astounded me, when the anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s was being put together, the 40th anniversary of 2004, two groups developed. The St. Augustine Civil Rights Committee, Gerald Eubanks, he's another good leader to have, headed up the Civil Rights Committee. Gwen Duncan developed the 40th ACCORD. ACCORD is an acronym, I'm not sure what it is, but all colors something or other. It's basically a joining of whites and blacks and so on. Each group came to the City Commission, in fact, that same night, asking for the Commission to support the creation of a Civil Rights Monument. I

recommended that we form a committee of these two groups as well as an objective architect or sculptor, whatever you want to do, or an appointee by the City Commission, to sit down and decide what you're doing. Then we would come together. This was a control thing; each group wanting to be the one in control of recognition of the Civil Rights Movements. It continues to this day. This is not a black and white thing. These are blacks within their own accord. I was absolutely stunned when I first heard of it. They said to each group, what are you thinking? For generations it has been blacks against whites. Now you have a chance to celebrate a victory for civil rights and you're fighting among yourselves. If you think there's segregation out there, what do you think these races who are keeping segregation alive are going to do with this information? You can't even get along with each other. The breach never healed. It has continued. The Civil Rights Committee has come up with some great ideas that are things they are working on. They are not as active as the 40th ACCORD. Gwen (again with most groups, it's one person who keeps the torch lit), whenever she picks up on something that she thinks can be presented locally; we just recently had a first day issue of Civil Rights commemorative stamps. We had a ceremony at the St. Augustine's post office. That was the 40th ACCORD who organized that, put together fliers and packages, ten dollars for the stamps and information and everything else. It was a fund raiser, it was also a commemorative thing for people. It was very well attended. I will say the 40th ACCORD, little steps, is a mix of whites and blacks. The Neighborhood Association of Lincolnville, Crime Watch of Lincolnville was a model for me in creating the Neighborhood Associations. They would get together. Crime Watch is a national program through the police department. I said, why don't we make the Crime Watch a neighborhood association? They said, no, under charter you can't. We still had two groups. That Crime Watch, one of the meetings I sat in on early on, they talked about problems with a drug dealer on this corner and the guy with the boom box at full blast going through the neighborhood at one o'clock in the morning that are police things. Then they began talking about the elderly gal that lived next door and there's a tree limb hanging over her house that looks like it's going to fall and she can't afford to get somebody to cut it. Is there a way we can get some help for her? They began talking about neighborhood concerns. That, in part, was my inspiration for the creating of the Neighborhood Associations program. [My inspiration in] that it gets people to get together to a greater extent. Lincolnville is a good example of neighborhood association and Crime Watch. As I say, it's gentrifying now, so you do have a good mix of whites and black. My wife says, if we weren't invested in our house in North City, I'd love to live in Lincolnville because there's a greater sense of community there. We've come to know and love people of Lincolnville, black and white. It's a great example of, if we could expand that ambiance to the entire community we'd be enriched.

M: You mentioned when you ran for office you went to black churches. Was there anything else you did to win the black vote or any issues they were very

concerned about?

G: When I ran for office, I wasn't supposed to win. I had sixteen years of newspaper work, I'd been involved with this city as well. One of my first bosses, [who was] a bureau chief in newspaper work said, it is a lot more fun being the power behind the throne than being on the throne. To be outside and making commentaries on the actions of public officials was a lot more in my pen. When I decided, hey, no one else is standing up to the challenge, I'm going to have to do it, I picked the toughest candidate to challenge. Being a newcomer and under our charter (we're going to have a referendum change in the next election), I had to get elected as a commissioner and as mayor. I had to tell people to vote twice for me on the same ballot. Politics 101, you don't do that. I picked the toughest opponent I could find, who was the incumbent commissioner and mayor to assure that I wouldn't win. I just wanted to get the items on the table. I wanted to have an opportunity to kick them around. During the campaign it got a little nasty. My campaign people said, you have got to respond to this. You have got to knock this guy down, yada yada yada. I said, no, if you do that, you just legitimize all the stuff they're throwing out. So you don't want to do that. The calmer I was, the more frenetic they got. By election day, they were right up here and I did get elected. My thinking was, okay, I am not starting a political career at this age and stage of my life. But it's interesting, I was elected mayor, you might call reform mayor on the ninetieth anniversary to the day of my grandfather's election as reform mayor in Schnectedy, New York. He was a younger man. He went on to serve four terms as mayor and a term in Congress and a term as Lieutenant Governor to the state of New York. About the time he was assigned to the public service commission in semi-retirement he was at the age that I was when I first ran for mayor. I said, I'm not looking for a career in this thing, I'll just go after things that I think need correcting. There were some basic day-to-day things like tourism, parking, traffic, things of that sort. Then there were the more social things as I mentioned, like the neighborhood associations and reaching out to the community in any way I could. I shouldn't focus just on churches. I made it a point to go to as many events as possible and ceremonies as possible, basically show up. No doubt, people then and people now figure, he's still campaigning. One of the greatest inspirations for my deciding to go to churches was during that first campaign, a group of us, about five candidates, went to St. Paul's on a Sunday, a few weeks before the election, and apparently it was a tradition there. I was a newcomer to the actual workings of campaigns. Apparently it was tradition that the candidates who come to the church, and the pastor would recognize them to make brief statements in the course of the services, to give their campaign pitch. Each of us gave our campaign pitch. As we were leaving, I overheard one of the congregants say to another, that's the last time we'll see them for a couple of years, till the next campaign. I think that was the first church I visited after the

election. I was recognized by the pastor, and I repeated that story and went into the spiel that we need everyone on board to make this a community and all that stuff. The kicker with that and the other churches I've gone to, and yesterday is the greatest example. I went in, by this time you know you get emotional people there, they went through the entire service and then the pastor was wrapping it up at the end of the service and he said, I do want to recognize that our mayor is with us today. Mind you, it's not even an election year and he's back with us. He's truly one of our own. Other ministers have said that. I'm very grateful for it, but I'm sure the perception is wow, he's campaigning all the time. I just think to a greater or lesser degree this is what everyone who holds an elected office should be doing. You can't isolate yourself. That sort of American politics, for the most part, is a battle for control between special interest groups, whether they're Republicans, Democrats, anti-abortionists, gay rightists, whatever. In smaller towns like ours, businesses, residents, tourism industry, out west it's the ranchers and settlers and whatever that stuff was. We went on board as a commission majority in 2002, immediately people had to snap that into a special interest group. In 2004, my opponents said that we had created a cultural elite group. Those were the people who wanted a solid traffic management plan, who wanted neighborhood associations, who wanted friendlier city commission meetings. It was all what I consider good stuff, [but] they had to put a label on it. They're the cultural elitists. They're against the business interest, and they're against yada yada. I guess my goal is for the inclusion and not to the exclusion of the black element of our community, it is that we have a unified community. It's a never ending battle. Yesterday, I went to the church service I mentioned, and then went to the Colonial Arts and Crafts Fair in the Colonial Village. Then I went to the local Opera Association reception. Then I wrapped it up at a Neighborhood Association meeting last night. When I walked into that Neighborhood Association meeting, the president of the association was telling her constituents in the neighborhood, that this resident parking permit program was not a friend of the citizens because the government has set it up in such a way that [the government is] going to get [the program] whether [the citizens] like it or not. I got with her afterward, I said, where the hell did you get that? For God's sake, I've been working for three years to make sure that the people are making the decisions and not the government. [She said] Well, the way it's written... I said, you're going to have to show me where it's wrong. If it is wrong, I'll correct it at the commission level. See, there will always be people out there who will not get off the tradition, call it what you will. Something like that is always a reminder to me that probably the battle will never be over. The best we can do is make some degree of inroads. Rather than just spend three years telling people they should be involved, the first thing we did was create a Neighborhood Associations program. That is something I'm very optimistic will continue. The traffic management plan with its keystone being the multi-modal parking facility or building, I held my breath until the shovel finally went in the ground. That is something that a new commission two or four years from now isn't going to be able to change. Sebastian Harbor is a project which actually

will be a benefit to West Augustine as well. That's an eighty million dollar project that has been hemmed and hawed for two decades. We were able to put a contract together and close on the property. The developer had his ground breaking a few weeks ago. The shovel is in the ground. That's not going to change. He, incidentally, and as far as predominantly black areas of our community, there's an edge of Lincolnville that runs past this. It's going to provide physical improvements along that area, and it's going to provide jobs for people of that area. Trying to climb a ladder of accomplishment for the community instead of going up one step and falling back two steps. Can neighborhood associations help end how segregation is really perceived? Certainly. But they weren't created for that. They were created for that larger picture of community. They also serve as an opportunity for all mixes of people to come together. There are a great number of other things that I would like to see. Sally said today when I was telling her we were going to meet. . .

M: Sally is. . ?

G: My wife. Sally said, how many white people were at St. Paul's yesterday? I said, I was. That was it. She made the point, she said, why don't the black ministers and black congregants invite someone they know from the white community. It might be a friend, it might be someone they know casually. Invite them to attend a particular event. She said, why don't you call a number of the black ministers before a City Commission meeting, a couple of days before, and ask that they send someone simply to be there. [Those are] not bad ideas. Maybe a forced integration and effort to show by example, it doesn't matter how those black folks got into that white church or those white folks got into that black church, the fact is that they're there. It might be good for your project to put down the name, the St. Cyprians Historic Church. Reverend David, I'm trying to think of his last name now.

M: I can find out on the internet.

G: St. Cyprians and he is black, he's actually English, born in England. That church is filled every Sunday, it's not a huge church, but it's a beautiful little church out on Martin Luther King, is probably the best example of an integrated community church. There is a balance, and this is the Episcopal church, to what extent that makes a difference, I don't think it does, it's the nature of the preacher and the congregation, but that church is to me the greatest example of a truly integrated and community church. As I say, I have mixed emotions on the churches. Generally I've attended churches that have invited me to various gatherings and so on. A lot of churches have agendas, and I'll shy away from that. There's the conservative, primarily Baptist, I think, movement pro-life and things of that sort. They get rabid about it. Those are things that I just stay away from because I don't think it's proper for a local official, that's why I'm glad we have non-partisan elections, I don't think it's right for a local official to have to carry the trappings of

the Republican or Democrat or some other national party.

M: Those issues don't really concern you.

G: Right. What's your stand on abortion or gun control? I really don't need to muddy the waters with that.

M: Moving on, in the previous few decades, African Americans primarily worked low level jobs like janitorial and manual labor. Has that changed any in the last twenty years that you've been here? Have you seen an increase in black professionals?

G: As I say, I've met the full spectrum of blacks. Those that I listed for you are good representation of community. Those are only a few when I think about it of numerous ones. We are a tourist economy, and a tourist economy is based on a workforce in the \$16,000 to \$20,000 range, clerks, service alike. I don't see as many blacks as I'd like to in those service industries. I don't know if you'd see any along St. George Street clerking the stores and so on. I would be encouraged to see more of that. In our colonial Spanish quarter, we have at least two, probably more, black interpretive staff and full-time staff, which is really imperative, because if you're representing, in this case, the 1740s civilian life of St. Augustine, that's what it was, much more so than today. Without batting an eye. Again, there are things of that sort that I would like to see improved. I hated that even in my own mind, [like] when that gentleman just went by who is one of our newer maintenance people on staff here. We have an excellent relationship. I think I've been to his church. I hate myself when I see someone like him newly employed, and immediately think, we've got another token [African American] on the staff. I wouldn't be able to think of that and other people wouldn't either if it became a commonplace kind of thing. As I say, if you go out to St. George Street and every fourth or fifth store there's a black clerk and there's a black cop riding a bicycle and patrolling and things of that sort. We've got to rid ourselves of this idea for our part that every time a black is employed in a visible position that it is the token effort, that he was hired as token, not because of ability. In the black community, as I said, when Hank Thomas said and yesterday's speaker, Jackie Lloyd Bryant from John Hopkins and Bill Cosby, there has to be a little effort on that side. During the campaign of 2002, racial relations came up, necessarily because Errol Jones was running. It was an obvious question to be addressed. I think during the campaign and after the campaign, for better or worse that didn't stay high on the screen. Both during and after the campaign, I would address the question because normally they were saying that City Hall was mostly white. Why aren't there more black employed at City Hall. I would answer by saying, how many blacks have applied? Bring me a black who has applied who has filled the criteria that everyone else has fulfilled and has been denied. Give me something to work on and I'll be happy to do it. That's the part where the individual to fill the position has to make a little effort.

M: Actually, that segues perfectly into my next question, I talked to Nancy Rawsen, the HR manager here and she told me there are no African Americans working in the police department here. For two decades before in the 1970s and 1980s there was only one [African American] working. Is there any particular reason or [that] nobody applied?

G: Did you ask her that question?

M: I did not ask her that question, no.

G: That is a question she would have to answer. I remember calling at that time, that's why I drew a blank on the name at first because the previous HR director recently retired, but that was a question they threw in. What percentage of black, white? They said, we can't keep records like that because of discrimination. I said, okay. Again, I think that goes to what I said during the campaign and after, show me who's applied and let's track it from there. When they made application, were they qualified? Did they go through the steps everyone else has to? We'll take it from there. I'm trying to think, firefighters, I don't know if we have any...

[End of Tape A, Side 2.]

G: . . . The Sheriff's Department] has a number of blacks, both deputies and officers. But the sheriff's department is like 275 employees. The city police force is, I think, forty-nine employees. We're talking about a difference there in the mathematical probability of something happening. Throughout my term, I have not drawn geographic boundaries around the city of St. Augustine. I know there is a passion and caring among the people for St. Augustine who happen to live over the city limit and outside the city. There's a lot of wisdom and expertise and everything else. When I think in terms of the black employment or representation experience, I tend to look in the broader area. If law enforcement period in our area didn't have any blacks or representation of blacks, that would be something to be concerned about. Fire department, school teachers, the whole thing. A good number of the black population are teachers. I'm thrilled to see that because that is reaching to the level of the kids as they grow. It's so important that whites as well as blacks see a role model like that. Again, I continue to have to rely [on satisfactory non-discrimination policies] when they get specific about job positions and particularly visible positions that people have when blacks are well represented, I don't think they are. But someone's got to prove to me that they aren't because the predominately white population doesn't want them in that position or that they have not made the effort to move to that position. I can't see Jacqueline Lloyd, who's got two honorary doctorates and is now going for a master's in ministry as well as her engineering position and huge variety of community events in Maryland, if she were to move to this community

and apply for something, just about anything, from store clerk on up, I can't see her being refused.

M: She is the person who spoke at St. Paul's yesterday?

G: She spoke at St. Paul's. There aren't enough [African American] examples in visibility, [or] of good examples, [which] would be a good thing. [For instance] Otis Mason as superintendent of schools, a great role model and great example. There are black role models who encourage through example and through messages to the young people [that prove] that they can do it, too. Unfortunately, there are others who should be role models who rather are saying, look at me, I got here, you didn't. That sort of thing. Unfortunately, that is not helpful.

M: Are there people in St. Augustine saying that?

G: Saying what?

M: I got here, you didn't.

G: Yeah, I think probably there are some. I'm not going to name any in particular. Obviously, that doesn't serve any purpose. Again, that falls back to a matter of human nature. All of us have it. I have it. Hey, I'm the mayor, you know? Leadership, someone once said, it may have been Eleanor Roosevelt, it's not so much in taking the reins yourself as it is in training those below you to be leaders. Bring others up with you rather than go on without. I think that's terribly important. Again, in any social context you're willing to consider it, that good role models who take the time to bring others along who delegate responsibility to give self-esteem to others is important. Basically to realize that if you're so great, too bad because you're not going to be here forever. I joked with the city manager. Sally and I went north for a high school reunion a couple of weeks ago. We were gone for about a week. It's the first break of any length that we've taken since I got elected. I got back and scanned the newspaper and talked to the city manager and he said everything was fine. I said, that really hurts me. He said, what do you mean? I said, I went out of town, and the town continued to function without me. It can't do that. They need me. He said, yeah right. To me, good leadership is recognizing that we have a responsibility to the future, not just the here and now. The politician is worried about the here and now, me. What is my next step in self preservation? I think leadership is saying, hey, I'm not going to be here forever to the extent I'm doing it and good, I want to make sure there are people who are going to be prepared to continue doing the work.

M: You talked about the St. Augustine police arresting a person and that person dying.

G: That was the sheriff's department.

M: Do you know of any other incidents or charges of discrimination or racism in the city?

G: Actually, there was another one a couple of years ago, and that was in the city. A local night club, there was a disturbance. The police were called. The police found several guys fighting in the parking lot of the nightclub. They broke it up. One of them continued, as I recall it, to be belligerent and the police had to restrain him and handcuffed him and got him in the patrol car. Somewhere along the way, his neck was broken. Routinely they got him medical attention and took him to the hospital, not knowing what the situation was. He turned out to be paralyzed from the neck down I believe. No, I think he can use his arms, but he's wheelchair bound. I've met him since, [he's] a nice young man. I met his family. [He is] a black man. The nightclub is actually on Davis Shores, predominately white neighborhood. It's probably a good thing for integration that there were black people at this night club. That's probably one of the, for better or for worse, one of the bastions of integration nowadays. Everyone is focused on drinking, not each other. Anyway, the family sued the city, the police officer, and won a two million dollar award, I think, which the city is paying, a couple hundred thousand dollars a year. As I say, I've met him, attended his church, met his mother, his family, [learned] his history. I believe he was a young professional. The only difference between this and 1,000 or 100,000 events like it as far as fighting in a bar goes, across the country every day, is it was a black man. Again, those voices that are always out there immediately said the police did this because he was a black man. The early incidence with the sheriff's deputies. They guy was handcuffed because he was being pursued by police, I don't know if it was a brake light out or suspicion or whatever, but he was trying to escape police. Either his car broke down or he stopped it and got out and then began to run. Police reacted they were trained to react. As I said in the case of the gentleman who ended up paralyzed, it was another case or incident, now I can't remember the result of the investigation, but if you talk to the sheriff or even police chief, they'll remember. He was a heavier man who was handcuffed. As far as the man who was paralyzed, it was a bar fight and it was the wrong place, the wrong time, and the wrong turn of the head or arm or whatever might have done it. In that case, it happened. There's always that risk to police officers. I don't know if these folks were black. It was either black or poor. Something that gives that particular element in the community the opportunity to say, they're there beating on the downtrodden. There were three people driving in a pickup truck driving along. A pickup truck had been reported stolen. The police were on the look out for it. They were checking plates on pickup trucks. They found this one truck and found that the license plate on it did not match the vehicle. They threw their lights on and pulled them over. I

think [they] ordered the folks out of the truck, and as this was going on, two or three other cruisers came on the scene. This happens very often. It turned out, and I think the folks were handcuffed, it turned out they had just purchased this vehicle from someone else, they had taken the plate off of their old car and put it on for the time being, but they hadn't gone to motor vehicles and registered the change at this point. That was the reason for the stop. Immediately there was a great bru ha ha, these police treated us like criminals and it was all an innocent mistake. I do a regular email newsletter that I send out to about 400 people in the community as well as columns in some of the newspapers, and I wrote an item which I haven't used yet, but commenting on that incident and incidents like it. When police are alerted or see something that is suspicious, when they're pulling a car over with one person, a driver alone in the car, they don't know whether it's a little old gray haired lady going to her doctor's appointment, or a drug dealer with an Uzi [submachine gun] on the front seat loaded with cocaine and drug money and everything else. They have to assume the worst case scenario. In this case they did it and the criticism here was that after it was all over, the officers didn't even apologize. My God, if your adrenaline is pumping and you're trying to come down, sure the proper etiquette is to apologize, but for God's sake, let's look at the situation. That's how I tend to see things like that. Again, as I say, my background, having been raised in the North, is best described in a family trip we were taking when I was probably nine or ten years old. We were traveling down south. We got in Virginia or somewhere around there, this would have been in the 1950s, late 1940s, and we stopped at a restaurant, and as we got out of the car, I immediately headed toward the door that had a sign that said, colored bathroom. My mother said, where are you going? I said, I'm going to the bathroom. Well, you don't go to that bathroom. What do you mean I don't go to that bathroom? I want to see the colors. That's all I knew about it. I have that background where I guess I like to say I'm color blind. I focus on community, and community should involve everyone. No, I haven't spent the majority of my time trying to push the whites and blacks together. But I've been doing things that I hope may have more permanent impact down the road.

M: You're just trying to get citizens involved no matter what, no matter who they are.

G: Yes, get citizens involved, particularly the young people. Maybe there would be just one young person, and God love the black people in the communities, part of their heritage is taking care of their kids. That's why the Hank Thomas' and the Bill Cosby's are upset because they know that's the heritage and they know that so many of these kids are falling by the wayside because the parents are separating or sucking crack or whatever in sadly increasing numbers. I often think in terms of if just one kid who's six, seven, eight, ten years old, sitting in that congregation every Sunday, sees me maybe once a month or every two months attending their church and speaking, he's a white man, he's in a black community. He sees whites rarely if ever. If he does see them there's no

connection. There's no talking directly, communication, anything like that. Here's this guy, and I guess he's important, too. They say he's the mayor, and he's here. He gets up and talks. He's not a bad person. Maybe someday down the road he remembers that and says, you know, you told me there's no reason I can't do this, that, or the other thing. Again, it's trying to set examples and be a role model. If we made it work for even a couple of kids as they grow, it's a good thing. Adults are the same way. I wish there were more evidence of success in the things that I personally am trying to do, and I don't mean to say that I'm the White Knight or Don Quixote or whatever frame I might be in, the City Commission has been excellent in developing a number of overall plans including the neighborhood associations. For myself, if I can make a difference with even one person down the road into the future, it's worthwhile.

M: This question is kind of shifting to another direction. In the 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movements were happening, the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Council were very active in the St. John's County and St. Augustine. Do you see any organizations like that anymore? Are there people who still have those feelings who are very vocal about them?

G: No. Actually, back in the 1960s, I'm told in order to stage an impressive rally, the Ku Klux Klan had to go out to Palatka, but now [they have to go out] in the backroads of northeast Florida and northern Florida to bring people in. In other words, there was not a large local group of that sort. You know the history with Hoss Manucy and so on, again, it is what I said is part of the human nature, the social context, and the political nature of America, that special interest groups form and want control. Some are good, some are bad, and it's all part of the mix. Hoss Manucy and his gang, if we had been able to paint red the demographic of people who were hard-core racist Ku Klux Klan, white supremacy, the whole nine yards, out of the entire population, back then, we'd probably would have seen a little handful of people. I think the same is true today. They are not actively meeting in barns and trying on hoods and sheets and things like that. I'm sure today that there are people who if the situation evolved where the call was out to gather everyone and thinks the wrong people are taking over America, that they would jump on the bandwagon. The nature of our society today, I don't believe [will] ever let that happen again. It'll be behind the scenes, so the closest we come to something of that nature, of let's say, a racist court in this case, is a community meeting I mentioned after the one black man was handcuffed and later died of apparently heart condition. It was at New St. Jame's Missionary Church that they had the community meeting, and they filled the church. Probably seventy-five percent of the people who were at that meeting were there out of curiosity. They wanted to see a good fight. [Of] the other twenty-five percent, I saw and heard ministers who were trying to calm people to get a level feeling. It was led by a national director of the NAACP. He asked people to give testimony. It turned out not to be testimony of this particular incident but just a general gripe session. What bothers you about the

system today? In between each speaker, and some speakers were relatively mild and others were all worked up, but in between each one, this NAACP director was spouting these statistics and figures on the number of black people in prisons and the number of black people below poverty level and incidents that have occurred in other cities. To me, his mission there was to inflame people. Those people are still out there. I can't remember his name, but he was part of Martin Luther King's inner core in the 1960s and was here along with King.

M: I don't know his name, but I know who you're talking about.

G: At that time, Reverend Bolden? Something like that. He was the more radical. King had to hold down a lot of guys who were [the] 'we fight back' [kind of guys]. This guy was one of King's more radical lieutenants and he was here for the anniversary of the 1960s. I attended a gathering where he spoke briefly. It was predominately a black audience. He said, we're all preachers. The black preachers are absolutely awesome. They work up to a frenzy. I have a lot of respect and admiration for them. They get the point across. Well, in his case, he was getting himself worked up. He said, we marched here in 1964. We marched against the police, we marched against the sheriff's deputies. Is it any better today? Of course, a few people in the audience go, no! No! Do we need to have another march in St. Augustine? Yeah! Yeah! You know, starting this work up. I thought, what purpose does that serve outside of trying to cement your position as a leader regardless of what circumstances you're establishing? The guy was visiting here. He hadn't been here for forty years or so. [Then he came and] popped that up. Those kind of things still exist and I can only say that I am very happy that they exist in the background and in the minority rather than the majority.

M: I know this isn't really your jurisdiction, but there's a very big difference between, say, Nease High School and St. Augustine High School in quality of education. Would it be fair to call the system integrated, and would you say the educations are equivalent between the two schools? Because one school is almost 100% white and the other one is quite a bit more integrated.

G: It's mixed, yeah. You're right, it's out of my jurisdiction. I don't know what the numbers or figures are. I do know that a short while ago the school board was contemplating bussing kids from, I think it was a Julington Creek area to schools in the Hastings area and in the St. Augustine area because there wasn't enough school space in Julington Creek. Julington Creek and that area, and most of our newcomers today, are building big homes. They have big incomes. They're predominately white. The perception was, they're going to bus our kids to mix the black schools. Obviously, no one's going to say that, but that was the concern. That factors into the question you had, does it still exist? The whole purpose of your paper you're putting together; does segregation still exist? How are we doing with integration? I know and respect Dr. Joyner, the school

superintendent. I know the members of the school board. I know if I were a member of the school board, I would certainly say, wait a minute, there's a tremendous disparity here. Why is that and how can it be corrected? I know the answer would probably be multi-faceted. Because this school was a lower record, has many poor non-white kids in it who are not doing as well. They're not doing as well in part because they don't get a square meal at home before they come to school, because, and not for all, but among the elements, because their parents may not be educated or even care to the extent of helping them with their homework or disciplining them as to going out on school nights and things on that sort, which other families handle differently. Where does that come back to? It comes back to what these folks who I admire so much, the Hank Thomas's and Bill Cosby's are saying. It is the responsibility. I can still here Ms. Lloyd from yesterday just screaming it at them. It is the families, it is the mothers, it is the fathers, it is the teachers, it is the pastors, but it begins with the family. There's the answer. We did force integration. We made that gesture. That's fine. As far as I'm concerned, get rid of all the school busses. Instead of making these isolated campuses out in the wilderness that you've got to bus to, it's the only way you can get there, put smaller schools within communities and let black kids and white kids and poor kids and rich kids and families as well mix. We used to do that. That used to be America before we invented suburbia and fell in love with the car. Today we're paying the price for that. Yeah, we could correct that by taking Nease's level and St. Augustine's level and bringing them to a mid-level which is not that bad but not that good by cross-bussing or just saying, okay, these kids are doing poorly at St. Augustine. Let's put them on a bus and bring them up here. I don't think that's any kind of answer. We just have to continue. They have gotten so technical today with the SATs and FCATs and all these things that I don't know if I could pass the darn things if I was given them. It's just going way out of control. Again, I mentioned before, some of my good friends in the black community are teachers. I have met white teachers and black teachers. My hat goes off to those teachers who size, shape, style, color, anything else doesn't matter, they have a passion for teaching kids and it rubs off on the kids. Probably we don't have enough of those. I know we don't have enough resources to take each individual kid who is on the low end and do a track and find where the problem is. Are his mom and dad separated, is his dad abusing him, is his mom abusing him, are they feeding him poor food, are they discouraging him doing his homework? You have to do that with every single kid. We have 28,000 students now, the estimate is we'll have 78,000 in another fifteen years.

M: Is that in St. John's County or St. Augustine?

G: That's St. John's County. We need to get a handle on it. The school system, as you probably know, is a county school system. We do have elementary schools that got in the city because they were built back when cities meant something. They are all operated by the county school district. Again, as I say,

it is not a simple answer, but there is no question that our youth are our future. If we're going to make changes in integration and social status and poverty levels, we have got to start with the kids and making future responsible citizens.

M: You touched on this question a bit, but does the city have any, as a government and as an organization, have any official stance on diversity? Do you have any programs to encourage it?

G: You're referring to diversity as to race?

M: In particular, but if you have anything else, that works, too.

G: No. I guess maybe the closest of the last time that came on the screen as an element was when the gay pride group wanted to fly what is universally recognized as the gay pride flag on our Bridge of Lions for a gay pride unity day they were holding in the city here. A lot of cities have embraced it, have supported it, so on and so forth. We, as a city, have assisted in their unity day, closing off the street for their block party they're going to have, have the police and public affairs assistance as they need it, which we do for any groups with any reason. We're not going to buy them a tent or something like that, but as far as the city assisting, we've done that. They wanted to fly the flag, and the City Commission said no, the flying of flags on the Bridge of Lions is pretty much reserved to historic significance and things of that sort. Of course, flying the American flag on holidays, the lighthouse has had an annual festival and they put their flag up for that and we have had our Menendez birthday celebration and flown the flag for that, Greek Landing Day for our Greek community, we've flown that flag, and so on. We refused them last year for the first time, I think, and this year again they requested it and we refused them. They sued us, brought it to court, and the judge overruled the Commission ruling and said we must allow them to fly the flag because the way our flag policy was written, it allowed for interpretation as to how you're going to be flying the flag. My position on it was opposed to the flying of the flag because to me it was asking the government to make a statement on a social cause. This was gay pride, it is, if you will, like the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. It was a social thing that was happening and I felt that government should not be involved in legislating or supporting or opposing morality as it were. It's an individual thing a government should not be in the business of regulating. I told them in the City Commission meeting I also opposed amending the United States Constitution to define marriage as only a union between a man and a woman. That, to me, is a moral matter. You take our most treasured document, the basis of our democracy, and you start playing around with it by throwing these things in it, it's not right. That is my position. They argued that this was a matter of diversity. The flag representing through its' rainbow colors all elements of our society, of our way of life. I'd have to say that all of the commissioners said that we feel we live in a city which has amply represented diversity and has recognized and respected all races and creeds

and beliefs, nationalities. We are a history of multi-national elements. That's as far as it went. To create programs specifically for diversity, just off the top to me would be like bussing to create integration back in the 1960s. I think in that circumstance at that time it was necessary, but I don't believe it's necessary today and I don't think it would be right.

M: Coming off your last answer, if someone does have a complaint, a social issue, would it be better in this city to file a lawsuit, to march, to come work on the inside, get on government, get involved with boards and commissions? What do you think would be the most effective way for people to affect social change in this city?

G: The most effective way to continue and strengthen our democracy is to be informed, to have knowledge of your government, your city, your community, and to act on that knowledge when it's appropriate. Probably the greatest example of affecting social change that we've had recently was that election in 2002. If you would look up, I could send it to you if you want, but it wasn't until a few days after the election that *Folio Weekly* did an editorial on the election and for the first time, I understood the full importance of what had happened. It was people, gathering, rising up, and making a difference.

M: I think I remember reading that editorial.

G: Yeah. To me, it was awaking the great silent majority and saying, hey, I know you're apathetic, I know you don't want to vote because things never change, give us one more chance. Try it; just try it one more time. I think we brought them up. I mentioned earlier how that whole election and its outcome came about. It began with one or two people. The building of the garage, going to the commission and saying, this is wrong, you shouldn't do it. One of those people happened to be an architect who is involved in designing different garage ideas and concepts. Immediately, of course, the commissioners and other people in the community said, he's just sour grapes. The next meeting there were ten or fifteen people there saying, well, maybe this guy is wrong, but give him an answer. Tell him why he's wrong. Subsequent meetings there were more and more people, so that evolved. In answer to your question of, do you do litigation, do you march, or do you work from the inside, I absolutely oppose the litigation element. We are a litigious society. We are too quick to jump on, I'm going to sue you. We've had and we've made challenges on the City Commission because that's the standard practice of some people who don't get [their way].

[End of Tape B, Side 1.]

G: That's the way of too many people. If we believe that we are right, I won't go

into examples, but there are those that we have, if we believe we are legally right, we should be willing to stand by it. I take that off the table. Beyond that, going into protest, going through the system, obviously I believe that you need to go through the system. Let's take it to its basic level. Someone's got potholes on their street. The procedure in the city manager form of government that we continue to emphasize on people, is you call public works and you talk to public works. If public works says, oh, we can't do anything about it, you're probably talking who's bringing it straight down to the basics. You come into City Hall, you find the public works department, you go up to the counter, a secretary or one of the clerks is there, you tell them your problem, they say, no, I can't do anything about that. Let me talk to your supervisor. The supervisor says he can't do anything. Whatever the reason, whatever the answer, you go to his supervisor. Eventually you're going to get to the city manager. The city manager says, no, I can't do anything about it, now you go to the city manager's boss. That is the city commission. That is where the people are represented by their elected representatives. You lay it on them and they make a determination. Their determination may be, no, we can't do anything about it. That is just a hypothetical [situation]. Obviously, most people are going to get a couple bags of sand and fill the damn pothole themselves rather than go through all that. It takes a lot less time. One of the things that I am proudest of is as a part of our neighborhood association's program we created an office in City Hall on the first floor, our neighborhood council office. We hired a full-time neighborhood coordinator. She is functioning to assist the neighborhood associations, but she is also there as kind of an ombudsman. One of the things that I mentioned during the campaign and before was, I'm fairly familiar with government, having reported on communities and commissions. When we moved to the North City in 1999, we didn't have one of the green recycling containers. Whoever lived there before took it with them or whatever. It wasn't there. I called public works and said, I need a recycling container. They said, that's handled by BFI, you need to call them. So I called them and they said, okay, yeah, we can get one out to you. Eventually it got there. That was two phone calls. It could have been more if I had just called the city clerk's office first or the city manager's office first and said, how do I get a recycling container. Well, call public works and they'll tell you to call... Anyway, my point is that if government is truly going to serve people, they should be able to make one call and someone else does all the rest of the work. With any kind of question they have. I get people throwing questions at me, I don't know the answer. I have the choice of tracking it down myself, but because I want to try to do as much as I can, now, we have that neighborhood coordinator and you call her or refer them to her. Normally, I will, if I get an email or a phone call, I will take the person's phone number or email address and say, someone will get back to you. That person's made one call and that's it. Then I get to Cathy and I say, contact this person. She contacts them. I don't have a recycling bin. Well, if Cathy's already gone through the process, she knows who to call. She doesn't tell them to call, she says I'll take care of it. She notifies and does all the work for these people. They got their

container. They made one call to someone and they got a response. If we do that in as many as our matters as possible, there's no reason for protest. The other element, of course, that we do is regular public hearings on all our major projects and programs. We call it the Sea Wall process because the sea wall south of the Bridge of Lions is going to be revamped for greater flood protection. It's kind of a hot issue. A lot of preservationists who say, that sea wall is historic. You can't cover it up and put something else in there. There had to be a lot of debate and discussion on how do we preserve an old wall that's ineffective but historic and still protect our Bayfront and our properties on the Bayfront. That required a lot of thinking, and what we did, primarily based on the fact that it wasn't being done before 2002 when the epic Lightener garage issue, was begin to hold public meetings with the neighborhood, with the community at large, get their inputs, what are your problems, questions, concerns about this, go back to the drawing board, modify, come back again and move every step of the way with the public input. At the very least, when you have full public input, if a project doesn't work out the way you thought it would, you could blame it on the public because we all got involved in the thing. I didn't make a unilateral decision on it, we were all about it. That's a negative approach. The positive approach is that the community is involved and those folks who stay here sitting on the couch watching griping oh, damn government never changes, are beginning to realize over time, oh, the government is us. The government does respond. They gave me an opportunity to speak, if I didn't get up there and speak, I can't gripe about the results. I'm proud of that.

M: Just two more questions. In the future, do you see St. Augustine becoming more or less integrated?

G: I think if we achieve any success at all, I have no doubt that we will see greater integration as a part of greater community spirit. We are looked upon as a very special city with that small-town feeling. People are comfortable coming here, visitors are saying it, newcomers are saying it. We have been infected with the same fractionalism that exists throughout the country. If you look at today's *St. Augustine Record*, they're talking about a lack of civic spirit in Palm Coast. Community spirit, they call it. I am focused on that now in St. Augustine. We recently lost, through cancer, a gal who was an events director and fund raiser for our Heritage Tourism program. During her tenure she developed a number of events and ceremonies; the Menendez Festival, the Victorian Teas, things of that sort, which are part of a community. It got a number of us talking about the fact that that volunteer spirit, that civic spirit, that community spirit that we grew up with is a very fragile thing today. It really doesn't exist like it should. It's gone on for quite a while because we have events that have been chaired by the same people for twenty, thirty, forty years. One of our events, the chairman has been at the helm for more than forty years. They have a cadre of volunteers, but generally they are all the same people, too. When people begin to die or give it up or retire or whatever, I mentioned Lorenzo Laws with the LincolNVille Festival,

he was doing it pretty much singlehandedly, not by choice but by necessity, for years. He finally said, hey, I've got other things I'm doing. I can't keep doing this. Still nobody has stood up to the plate. Next year, I think someone has finally realized, hey, this is crazy, we need that Lincolnville Festival. Someone will stand up. This year he gave them plenty of notice, and nobody stood up to the plate. These are the elements that I want to focus on this now and necessarily it's a part of it that fifteen percent of our community, which can enhance our diversity and our total community spirit, needs to be included. I know for my part, in my connection with the community, that I can find ways to encourage that. Of course, having a black commissioner, having Commissioner Jones on the commission, he grew up in and knows that community, he can provide pathways for them to become involved. Again, I appreciate your paper focused on racial questions and diversity and the like, but I think the best way, my approach anyway, is to look at the whole community and make it such that everyone is going to be comfortable going to the various events. Even me, as a Presbyterian going to a Catholic event. That's what my focus is.

M: Actually, this is more present-day. Would you say that today St. Augustine is still a segregated town?

G: To some extent. I would not say, and I disagreed with my friend in the black neighborhoods when she said they were tremendously segregated, I don't believe it is noticeable segregation. We've gone over things that I would like to see happen and we are working in that direction. I see black people among our visitors. I see white people living in and involved in organizations in the black communities, or predominately black communities. I see, not as much as I'd like, but I see black people attending our commission meetings. I think that segregation probably will always exist to a greater or lesser extent. It's gone from a legally sanctioned social matter to a matter of individual attitudes. Those individual attitudes have dropped to a very small minority of the population. The short answer would be yeah, there is and sadly will probably always be segregation anywhere you go, but it's a question of degree and whether you bring it down.

M: Thank you very much Mayor Gardner.

[End of Interview.]