

SRC 19

Interviewee: Jay Worrall

Interviewer: Brian Ward

Date: February 25, 2003

BW: This is Brian Ward for the University of Florida Oral History Program interview with Jay Worrall in Charlottesville, Virginia, on February 25, 2003, for the Southern Regional Council project. Jay, thanks so much for seeing me. I really appreciate it. Basically, what I would like to do is to talk to you a little bit about the Southern Regional Council, which is the focus of my work, but also about the Virginia Council of Human Relations, which I guess you would have perhaps more expertise on. But before we even get to that, can you just give me a little bit of background on yourself prior to your involvement in what we might think of as civil rights work?

W: Yes. I was an Army officer at the time of the civil rights movement, and I lived at three different places in Virginia during that time, off and on. I was overseas twice during the civil rights days. I lived in Fairfax, in Petersburg and in Charlottesville during that time.

BW: Where were you actually born?

W: Born in Pennsylvania. Last summer, I spent several weeks in Cheshire checking my family roots.

BW: Right. So, you have English roots.

W: English roots.

BW: As a "northerner," when did you have your first experience of the South?

W: I think it was in 1950, I came to Washington. I was a soldier at Arlington Hall Station, which is in northern Virginia in Arlington, almost the northernmost part of Virginia. [Tape break.]

BW: What was your response to being in the South and experiencing Jim Crow? How much contact did you have with the system?

W: It wasn't too much different from the Pennsylvania scheme of things. I can't believe that the country has changed so in my lifetime. It was absolutely a prejudiced scheme of things, and the change has been remarkable and happy from my point of view.

BW: When would you say you first became involved, or conscious, if you like, of what we now think of as the civil rights movement emerging, that there were African-

Americans and a certain number of white moderates and liberals who were interested in some way changing the system in the South?

W: I am not sure. I was in the Army in 1948 when President Truman announced that the Army would be integrated. That certainly impressed me. But always I had a feeling that what was happening to black people wasn't fair.

BW: Do you have any idea where that came from? Because there were many people of your generation who didn't have that sense.

W: Yes. I remember being on a boat that took you from Baltimore to Philadelphia with my parents and some relatives, and there were a group of African-American people on the boat who were in a circle, and they were singing and dancing and having a good time. I guess I was about eight years old, and I found myself at the center of this group. I was dancing right along with them. Then somebody snatched me right out of there and gave me to understand that that wasn't being done. But I think that was my first impression that it wasn't a fair or level playing field.

BW: Was there anything in your family background that might have led you towards this more liberal stance?

W: I don't think so. There was a great deal of discussion about this in my family, but I came from a pretty prejudiced background.

BW: Okay. Did you actually serve with any black servicemen during your time in the Army?

W: Oh, yes. I had several first sergeants who were black.

BW: Do you think the people who perhaps were even less liberal-minded than you, the actual experience of contact in the military actually changed some attitudes, once people were working together?

W: Yes, I think that did change attitudes. When the soldiers were supervised by a black officer or non-com [non-commissioned officer], they must have gained respect for the African-American race.

BW: When did you actually put down roots and leave the Army and settle?

W: In 1966, I came here, but I had been active before. I was elected president of the Fairfax Council on Human Relations, but then the general for whom I was working called me in and told me I couldn't do that, that I would lose my security clearance.

BW: Tell me about how you came about to be president of the Fairfax branch?

W: Well, I just attended the meetings and participated, and they elected me president.

BW: Where were you stationed at the time?

W: At that time, I was stationed at Fort Myer, which is way up north there.

BW: Was there anyone else of your cohort in the military who was involved in any way?

W: Not to my knowledge.

BW: Did you get any hassle?

W: Yes, I got some hassles. At Petersburg, I was at Fort Lee, which is a military post nearby. I was then the president of something called the Friends of Petersburg, which was a local branch of the Virginia Council [of Human Relations], and Martin Luther King, Jr. came to town. [Neither] the mayor or none of the City Council would present him the keys of the city, so as president of the Friends of Petersburg, I was invited to give Martin Luther King the keys to the city. But again, the General called me and told me that that wouldn't do.

BW: Sort of got this constant censure, almost, from higher-up.

W: Perhaps I was something of a marked man, but I am not sure about that.

BW: Interesting. Tell me a little bit about the Fairfax branch, how many members you had, what sort of work you tried to do, what the goals were, and also what years were these?

W: That must have been about 1959 in Fairfax, and nothing comes to my mind about what was notable about what we did. I made a copy of this for you, which is the meeting of the Virginia Human Relations Council. You see, it tells here who the founding members and the first officers [were], and here is the program of that day. It goes right on through to 1973, so I thought you would be interested in that.

BW: Very.

W: Then there is a page back in there about the notable accomplishments of the Virginia Council.

BW: Tell me a bit more about the organization, then. You've got the Fairfax branch.

W: I think there were twenty-four branches here in Virginia, and I think the membership never exceeded 1,200. The rival organization, the name of which I can't quite remember, they were something like 3,000 members.

BW: When you say the rival, do you mean the segregationists?

W: The segregationist group, yes.

BW: Like the Defenders of State Sovereignty [and Individual Liberties]?

W: Yes, something like that. I wrote a history of the Quakers in Virginia, and the Quakers were pretty well mixed-up with the Human [Relations Council], and I wrote a few things in the book here that I copied for you that might be of interest to you.

BW: Thank you. Now, were you, are you, a Quaker?

W: Yes, I am. My family, in [the] past, were Quakers.

BW: I don't want to get too far off-track, but how much were the American Friends Service Committee instrumental? Certainly, they seem to have been in Prince Edward County.

W: They were instrumental there. My daughter Emily was a teacher in the pre-school there. She was only about seventeen or eighteen at the time. Yes, the American Friends Service Committee was quite involved. If you are going to see Ed Peeples, he knows all about that.

BW: I have seen Jean Fairfax as well, and obviously she looms large in that story.

W: Right. And do you know the name of Nancy Adams?

BW: Just the name.

W: Yes. She was in charge of the Service Committee's group there in Farmville.

BW: Right. That is where I would have seen her in the documents. How would you characterize the role that the American Friends Service Committee played, because we've got lots and lots of books on the civil rights movement now, and they [have] a line here, a line there. You get an impression they had a finger in every bit of the movement.

W: Historically, the Quakers were the first group in America to speak out publicly, saying that slavery was an evil institution. The Quakers were very active in the Underground Railroad, you know. During the civil rights days, the Service Committee was quite active in integration activities.

BW: Any particular aspects of the movement that you were involved in where you saw AFSC representatives actually taking a firm hand?

W: Only in Farmville.

BW: Down in Prince Edward County, okay. It strikes me that one of the things the AFSC does for the movement is their pioneering an interest in the use of nonviolent direct-action.

W: Indeed.

BW: I was wondering, as you saw the movement gathering momentum in the late 1950s, with King and then the students in the early 1960s, how much the people you were dealing with were interested in that sort of Gandhian nonviolence.

W: At the Virginia Council, the chairman of the board during the height of the movement, was David Scull, who was a Quaker. Then Frank Adams, who succeeded Hap E. Lee, was also a Quaker. That is what occurs to me in response to what you have just asked me, that their interests overlapped or they had dual interests with the same purpose.

BW: Right. It sounds like there was almost an informal network where these people keep reappearing.

W: That's right.

BW: Good. I know you said you can't remember specifics about what was going on in Fairfax. What sorts of people were you associating with then? I mean, were they overwhelming white? Was it an integrated group?

W: It was pretty well integrated, and [these were] concerned people, intelligent people. It was worthwhile going to the meetings. The discussions were to the point and stimulating.

BW: I am trying to get a picture of what sort of constituency there was. Were they educated people? It sounds like they might have been.

W: They were educated people. There were ministers and university people.

BW: How much effort, and if there were efforts, what form did they take? Were they to convert the people who were not going to be so sympathetic to the movement? In a way, you see this as a sort of a good place for people of like-mind to come together, but how much effort was there to convince those people who were edging towards massive resistance, who maybe haven't gone with the whole hog yet?

W: I don't recall anything specific about that, but when we lived in Petersburg, my daughter, the daughter who taught at the pre-school in Farmville, she took it open herself to greet the first black students who entered the high school there. She had a very rough time. I mean, she was mobbed, and she had to resign from her sorority. We sent her to another high school in northern Virginia, and she stayed with friends up there, because she was sort of blackballed there in Petersburg. It was an unhappy experience, and I am awful sorry that it happened, but it did.

BW: And this would have been in the early 1960s? Late 1950s, early 1960s?

W: That would have been about 1965.

BW: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your sense of the mood of the state of Virginia, really from the second *Brown* decision of 1955 and then the upsurge of massive resistance. How do you characterize the problems that people of good will faced?

W: We were a besieged minority, I guess you would say. The administration, the governors, were all pretty well segregationists.

BW: So, there was no leadership from the top?

W: Not from the government. There weren't any until Linwood Holton became the governor. All the governors were segregationists, massive resistance. I saw something of the editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, [James J.] Kilpatrick. His wife was teaching sculptors, and my wife was one of the students. He infuriated me. His editorials were pretty rabid.

BW: But they seemed to capture the mood of the vast majority.

W: Indeed, they were right in line with that mood.

BW: Were there any efforts that came out of the Human Relations Councils that you were involved with, to actually try to produce propaganda, if you want to call it that, that counteracted the writings of people like Kilpatrick and [Virginius] Dabney [Virginia newspaper editor] and people like that. Was there a newspaper

that was friendly to movement aspirations?

W: Not to my knowledge. I do not know of any friendly newspaper in Virginia. The *Washington Post* was friendly, but that was a little removed from Virginia.

BW: When you got to Petersburg, what was the role you played there? How did that side of your movement go?

W: At first, when we moved there, there was only a joint local Human Relations Council with Richmond and Petersburg. There wasn't any connection between the races, except the maid in the kitchen and the mistress. So, my wife started something called the Friends of Petersburg. There is the Virginia State College in the Petersburg area for black students. Those members of the faculty there and a few Petersburg people and a very few white people formed the Friends of Petersburg. I called up every [white] minister in the community and talked to them about coming to a meeting to meet some black fellow citizens. Several said they would come, but only one minister showed up. He was a retired minister, whose name I don't remember.

BW: This was a white minister?

W: A white minister, yes.

BW: Do you remember which denomination?

W: Yes, the Church of Christ. There was the Church of Christ, and then there was a Christian Church, and I may have the two confused. It was good that he came.

BW: It seems as though your wife is very active in all of this.

W: She was very active. I told you she took sculpture classes, and she got seven white artists and seven black and put on an art show, the first integrated art show in Petersburg. We held it in an abandoned bank building. We swept out the bank building and cleaned it up. Some undertaker gave us green mats to put on the floor, and we fixed it up nicely and had this art exhibit. We were very happy about that because black citizens and white citizens were actually talking with one another as they looked at the pictures.

BW: When would this have been? Was this after the 1964 Civil Rights Act?

W: I think it was about 1964, 1965.

BW: So, it may well have been after the legislation.

W: Yes.

BW: Were there any particular problems associated with Petersburg, or was there any sense of the routine stuff of segregation, [such as] lack of voting rights? I mean, were those the sorts of problems?

W: When Martin Luther King was assassinated, no church would hold a memorial service for him. We got the Jewish chaplain to come out from Fort Lee, which is close to Petersburg, and he held a service in the synagogue there in Petersburg.

BW: Wow. So, a long time after the legislation, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, there is still intense hostility.

W: Still, that's right.

BW: Any reason why, do you think, Petersburg had that sort of intensity of feeling?

W: Petersburg is the south side of Virginia, which is an area itself where segregation, the custom, was well-rooted.

BW: So, it was not unlike Farmville or somewhere like that?

W: Exactly. Farmville is the south side.

BW: What sorts of efforts were you making in Petersburg, and what other allies did you find, if you like?

W: Well, I told you about the art show.

BW: Did you have any dealings with the more established mostly black civil rights organizations like the NAACP or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee?

W: Yes. Wyatt "Tee" Walker. Do you know that name? He was a minister in Petersburg, and he was a leader in the black community. Yes, and those black leaders were quite influential in the movement. They were leaders.

BW: One of the things that comes out of some of the interviews with people like Walker, who seems to be a sort of larger-than-life figure in many ways, is an impatience with white liberals. Did you get any sense of that, and do you think it was justified?

W: Not at first. Late in the movement, the idea was, we don't need you anymore, we can do this ourselves. Frank Adams – I am not quite sure what year it was – got money from the Ford Foundation to start a program to teach young black people

to be journalists. So, he and his friend, who was the editor of the black newspaper in Richmond – and that little piece I gave you from the book I wrote, deals with this – they started this journalism class. Things went well for a few months, and then the students began to sort of rebel against Frank and his white leadership. That resulted in Frank's resigning, not only from the journalism program but also as the director of the Human Relations Council. He did it very gracefully. He said, well, they are doing what we want them to do now; they are speaking up and taking charge.

BW: There was something sort of inevitable about that in a way. It was almost an index of the success of the movement.

W: Indeed. In my mind, that was the beginning of the closing of the civil rights movement. The black leadership took charge.

BW: Right. Let's go back, then, and dig around more in what, in your thinking, is the movement proper. In your experiences, did the nature of what it meant to be a white liberal change in Virginia from, say, 1955 to the middle-late 1960s?

W: No, I don't think. I count myself among the white liberals, and I don't think there was any change in attitude. It just became apparent toward the end there that we weren't needed anymore.

BW: During this period when there was obviously quite a lot of activity among the Human Relations Councils, how close was the relationship to the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta? When did you first become aware of the Southern Regional Council?

W: I knew it was there, and I knew that it was the sponsoring organization for the Virginia chapter, but that is about the sum of it. My wife at one point was the vice president of the board here, the Virginia board, and she went to Atlanta. She was called down there, but she said nothing very important happened. She just sort of had a good time.

BW: So, they didn't really loom large as either a controlling influence or somewhere you went to for money?

W: Do you know the name of Paul Gaston?

BW: Very well.

W: Paul is a Charlottesville person. Have you seen him?

BW: I am seeing him in Florida. He has family down there. In fact, I am seeing him in

Charleston next week and Florida the week after.

W: Well, he was directly connected with the Southern Regional Council, but he is the only person I knew who was, except maybe, do you know the name of Patty Boyle?

BW: Sarah Patton Boyle. I know the name.

W: Yes. Well, she was really the person who started the Charlottesville chapter. She was a writer, and she published a book called *The Desegregated Heart*. When I was in Petersburg, the local library had *The Desegregated Heart*, but they kept it in the back room. For months, they didn't bring it out in the library proper.

BW: Because it was considered too incendiary.

W: Yes. Sarah Patton lived on University Circle [here in Charlottesville]. She published a [civil rights] article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and after that article was published, all night long, there were people circling University Circle and trashing her lawn and blowing their horns and everything. I am sure Sarah Patton Boyle had some connection with the Southern Regional Council, but I do not know what it was.

BW: Talking about the harassment that she suffered for that book and the article and thinking about what your daughter went through, were you yourself subject to abuse of any kind for taking these positions on civil rights?

W: We got a lot of midnight phone-calls. The phone would ring, and nobody would be on the other end. I had to go away. I was on duty somewhere out in Ohio for most of one summer, and the Ku Klux Klan came and sat in front of our house.

BW: Where were you at the time that happened?

W: In Petersburg. Petersburg was the most rabid of the three places I have mentioned to you. Segregation was rooted there.

BW: Because of the nature of the oppression and the dangers, how big a constituency of white liberals were there in Petersburg?

W: It was a distinct minority. I am trying to think about the [constituency]. We had meetings, and I would think there would be maybe thirty-five or forty people there, and it was pretty nearly 50/50.

BW: Were these people of some stature in the community? Did they tend to be professionals?

W: Certainly the black part of the group were professionals. They were mostly faculty from Virginia State College. But I don't think the white part was quite so distinguished.

BW: But nonetheless with their hearts in the right place, by the sounds of it.

W: Indeed.

BW: My question about whether you thought the nature of white liberalism had changed during your time, really from the mid-1950s onwards, was perhaps disingenuous in that, what I was really thinking about was, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, you could be a white liberal by wanting to see segregation adjusted, if not necessarily abolished. But do you sense that by the mid-1950s, the people you were associated with were adamant that segregation had to go, rather than that the separate facilities could ever be made equal?

W: I am sure what you are saying is true, but I can't quite resonate. I can't quite think of anything that would indicate that change.

BW: Right, which implies that, by the time the mid-1950s come around, the sort of people who were involved in these organizations have accepted the end of segregation. They are not trying to cling on to a more polite form of segregation or a less vicious form of segregation. They have decided it must go.

W: Yes, I think that is true.

BW: Okay. When did you end up in Charlottesville?

W: In 1966.

BW: And what brought you here?

W: I got a job. President Kennedy was going to eliminate poverty in our time. Oh, in Petersburg, I worked with the group of people – it was sort of a human relations thing – working to get a group established, an anti-poverty program, group.

BW: Right. This would be under Lyndon Johnson.

W: In my mind, Kennedy originated the idea, and Lyndon Johnson picked it up and ran with it. I was a member of the group that, we wrote the plan of what we thought should be done to eliminate poverty in the Petersburg area, and I was chosen to go before the City Council and present our plans. So, I did that with my wife, and the mayor said, thank you very much, and you will hear from us about this. The next morning, there was a headline in the newspaper that said,

City Manager Doubts Worrall's Figures. He said, there couldn't possibly be all the poverty I said there was in Petersburg. Then a reporter called me up and said, what do you have to say to this? Well, I said, all the city manager has to do is go to the library and look in the census figures, because that is where the figures come from. I hadn't realized I had gotten into so much trouble. Then my boss, the General, called me in and said, what you are doing is all very well, Worrall, but too much publicity. Cease-and-desist. He told me to cease-and-desist about ten times. All right. I went back to my group and told them I had to cease-and-desist. They sent a delegation up to Washington. Hubert Humphrey was then in charge of the poverty program, and the [delegation] appealed to Hubert Humphrey. [Mr. Humphrey took some action that caused the Pentagon to send a team of inspectors to Fort Lee, to investigate the matter.] The General said one thing and I said something else, and I thought my Army career was gone. But what happened was, after the inspectors left, the General called me in and said, you may resume your activities, Worrall. So, that was that. I had some remote job down at the end of the post, and the next thing I knew I was the headquarters commandant or something like that with an office close to the General. My career took a sudden leap forward instead of being ruined.

BW: I think it is a remarkable story that you are doing all this while still serving. What rank had you achieved by this time?

W: I was a lieutenant colonel.

BW: Were you not worried that your civil rights activism may jeopardize your career?

W: Yes, I worried a little, but not very much. The way I am telling you this story, it seems that I was in continual trouble with the high command, but I wasn't really. I was in charge of six different outfits, from twenty-five men to 2,500, and I was pretty independent. I wasn't harassed very much. I got a little at Fort Lee in Petersburg.

BW: Over time, would you say that the military hierarchy was more sympathetic or less sympathetic to what you did?

W: Well, you see, in 1948, President Truman made it clear that he was going to integrate [the Army], and that took the wind pretty much out of the segregationists' sails.

BW: How, then, did you get to Charlottesville, and what were the circumstances there, because, obviously, Charlottesville for a little while in the 1950s closed down its school system. What was the situation...?

W: Charlottesville was a much more liberal place than elsewhere in Virginia. I

suppose the university does that. So, I had a great deal of support here.

BW: Did you instantly get involved in the Human Relations type work?

W: Yes.

BW: What form did that take?

W: Here, my wife was the president [of the Human Relations Council] for a while. We published a little (it wasn't exactly a) leaflet, pocket-sized, about fifty pages, of employers, and we indicated which employers were hiring everybody and who wasn't. That caused quite a little commotion. There were a lot of letters in the paper [saying,] this is blackmail and so forth.

BW: This was in the later 1960s, so this was after the Equal Opportunities Act.

W: Yes. Then we went after the University of Virginia in the late 1960s. There were fifteen things we went after the university about. One was that all the outside employees, the grounds people, were all white and that the janitors, the people inside, were all black. There were wage differentials. There was a cafeteria, I think in the basement of the hospital, where there was one side for blacks and one for whites. So, we presented the university administration with these things, and they changed things. There were a lot of changes as a result of that.

BW: Did you feel there was a lot of support for these initiatives on campus, among the faculty?

W: Yes. That is where a lot of the support came from.

BW: Some of the things you have been describing, like doing research on which employers are hiring and that sort of thing, that is very much in keeping with the way the Southern Regional Council has always worked, a sort of research and publicity agenda.

W: Yes.

BW: Is that the way you liked to work? I mean, how did that help your cause?

W: I think that leaflet that I mentioned to you was effective, and I think it did a lot of breaking down [race prejudice]. People who wouldn't hire black people began hiring them.

BW: Right. Who was the leaflet really targeting, then? Were you trying to shame, in a way, the businessmen themselves? Were you trying to get that into the papers so that the Charlottesville press would highlight this injustice? I am trying to think

- through the mechanics of how you alert people to an injustice.
- W: Just publishing that little publication, it seems to me, was a major means of alerting people to unfair hiring practices. There were, as I said, some letters to the editor. I had quite a file, which I passed along to Ed Peeples.
- BW: Who I will see later this week.
- W: Yes. Did you see, I think Frank Adams told me that he was putting the Council papers in the university...
- BW: Here or in...?
- W: Here.
- BW: I have not seen those.
- W: I am sure he told me there was a file. Would it be in the manuscripts division?
- BW: In the basement.
- W: In the basement there, next to the rare books.
- BW: Yes, I am sure.
- W: Then, Ed Peeples called me the other night, and he told me that he was putting my papers and other papers, I think he said, in VCU, Virginia Commonwealth.
- BW: I think that is right. I think your papers are in his house for the moment, from what I can gather, but they are on their way across the street, so I will get to see those later in the week. Just one thing. I keep forgetting to ask you just to say on the tape. What is your wife's name?
- W: Her name is Carolyn.
- BW: Thank you, because she looms large in the story, and I want to make sure that she is noted.
- W: I wish she could be here this evening, but it didn't work out.
- BW: Sure. As the 1960s wore on and perhaps the civil rights movement came to an end and a new era, perhaps Black Power insurgency came, how did white liberals like yourself respond to this sense of not feeling wanted or feeling that your work perhaps was done?

- W: I think, generally speaking, we just retired to the sidelines, and there was a little disappointment. I remember feeling a little sadness that our role was winding down.
- BW: But, in a way, that could be construed as a sign of the triumph of the movement.
- W: Indeed, and I think we felt that, too. It certainly was a triumphant outcome. You know, we have a way to go, but we have certainly come a long way.
- BW: Did you notice black membership dropping off of the Councils for Human Relations, either at the state level or the more local level?
- W: I think there was a loss of interest. The NAACP continued, maybe stronger than before, and I think that is as it should be. Do you know the name of Gene Foster and Jane Foster? They were quite active here in Charlottesville. He is a physician, and last year, Thomas Jefferson, it developed that he had some mixed offspring. Sally Hemings [slave and mistress of Thomas Jefferson], you know? Well, Gene Foster was the fellow who developed the DNA proof that that happened. Anyway, he and his wife were quite active during the civil rights.
- BW: I am guessing by the time you got to Charlottesville in 1966, the town, city, was more or less desegregated?
- W: Not very much. For a time, the public schools closed, and that was before we got here, maybe in 1965. There was one of those academies [referring to private schools that maintained segregation]. I think it started here in Charlottesville. So, it didn't happen very long. Along about 1968, there was a rumor in town, "Rapp Brown [incendiary leader of SNCC] has come to town." And you wouldn't believe what happened. There were pick-up trucks riding around town with shotguns behind the driver. All the sporting goods stores sold out of ammunition. It was amazing. And it wasn't Rap Brown. It was a fellow by the name of Rat Brown, who was a local boy who had come back home.
- BW: So, people were just waiting for another riot, like in Cambridge, Maryland.
- W: Yes, but there was a great deal of feeling in 1968.
- BW: Do you remember the aftermath of King's assassination? I know you remember the Petersburg incident. What about in Charlottesville?
- W: Well, we weren't here yet, and I can't say. I don't know what happened here.
- BW: We have sort of talked a bit about the Human Relations Councils in Virginia. Was there any point in which the Southern Regional Council loomed large in this

story, or was it just a story of local activism?

W: I think local activism is what dominated my view of things. Beginning in 1969, I started something called Offender Aid and Restoration here, and I spent a lot of time in New York visiting foundations and raising money for that. There was a fellow in the Field Foundation, George somebody.

BW: George Esser?

W: No. George Esser was a director in the Southern Regional Council, wasn't he? That program I gave you, George Esser was here. He was a speaker. No, it was some other George. Anyway, the Field Foundation provided financial help, and he and I talked quite a bit about the Southern Regional Council and what it was doing, but I can't remember the specifics.

BW: Right, because there were quite tight connections between Field and Ford Foundation and the SRC at various times, and Leslie Dunbar ended up at the Field Foundation.

W: Indeed.

BW: Those ties into philanthropic organizations were a constant theme.

W: That is right. Leslie Dunbar.

BW: Did you ever meet him?

W: I never met him. This other George was his right-hand man.

BW: One of the things we have not talked about, which is a big part of the civil rights era, is the quest for black voting rights. Was that ever part of the agenda of your organizations?

W: Yes. I seem to recall that we sent people to the polls to make sure that the black people got their rights. Yes, that was certainly part of it, but I am a little fuzzy about that.

BW: Because somewhere like Petersburg and its environs, I would have thought it was very difficult for blacks to register to vote in the early 1960s.

W: Yes, it was very difficult. They had to be familiar with the Constitution. Yes. I wish I could remember more clearly. But I do remember we sent people to the polls to try to make things fair.

BW: What about the era when busing was important, in the late 1960s and early

1970s. Again, was there much busing? I am thinking of Richmond and Norfolk and other places, not necessarily Charlottesville, though I don't know about Charlottesville.

[End of Side A1]

BW: ...segregation. Sometimes buses were needed to take African-American kids into integrated schools and white kids into integrated schools that were perhaps in black neighborhoods. I was thinking of that phase.

W: Yes, I know what you are talking about, but nothing comes to my mind.

BW: If you had to sort of characterize, for a CNN newscast or something like that, the sort of work that these Councils for Human Relations did in Virginia, how would you do that.

[Tape interrupted.]

BW: I was just thinking of some concluding remarks, really, and generalizations about the nature of the work that these Councils for Human Relations did.

W: They were certainly active in voting rights, active in integrating the university here. I remember when a new Holiday Inn started in Petersburg, and a black dentist and his wife went into the new Holiday Inn and asked for a room, and they were told, sorry, everything is filled up. Then I went in and asked for a room, and the desk clerk asked me if I preferred the second or third floor or something like that. So, there was integrating of those public facilities.

BW: How much of that took you in the direction of, sort of, direct action, of actual picketing, of marching? How much of that took place?

W: There was a lot of it taking place in Washington, but I can't remember any marches or anything taking place in Fairfax or Petersburg or here in Charlottesville.

BW: I am trying to think about the way that, as I am going to write this, I am going to characterize the sort of work that was done. Obviously, direct action, the students sitting in and taking Freedom Rides. That is one aspect of the movement. This is a different aspect.

W: Let me see that program. Here, Roberta McCarty was a very nice secretary in the Richmond office, and she wrote all this up, and those are outstanding projects. I think that is pertinent to what you are thinking about now.

BW: So, fellowships in journalism and the sort of things that are designed to encourage African-American economic advance in a way, professional advance. Same as the paramedical training research. I guess that has that aspect there, as well. Obviously, the free school programs in Prince Edward County, so this sort of educational drive, as well.

W: Yes.

BW: Okay. I can run through this at my leisure, but it seems as though it is very much in keeping with the Southern Regional Council's approach, which is that you can do a lot by research and publicizing the research.

W: Yes. The Southern Regional Council was sort of a revered name, looming in the background in my experience.

BW: That is an interesting way of putting it. Now, what I usually do at the end of interviews is ask the subject if there is anything that I have not prompted you to think about that you would actually want to add, any particular programs, or any individuals you would like to talk about or any themes you would like to talk about.

W: Let me see. In 1969, I left the poverty program and started something called Offender Aid and Restoration, and I got money to start up in several cities. To start up that program, I got three sponsors. The sponsors were the Virginia Council of Churches, the Virginia Chaplain Service, and the Virginia Council on Human Relations. Frank Adams went around with me, and he introduced me to some key people and he helped me to get the sponsorship of the Council of Churches. You will see on that list of accomplishments, starting the Offender Aid and Restoration program. Offender Aid and Restoration was really just a group of volunteers to go into the jail and help the offender to get straightened out so they wouldn't go back again. We got programs started in New York City and Philadelphia and Baltimore and major cities, and there still are OAR programs here in Virginia. Programs outside of Virginia generally became independent after a time and continued the idea of prison visiting.

BW: Your speaking has reminded me of two other things I was going to raise in another context. What about the criminal justice system's injustices in the courts? Was that a major concern of yours and these organizations?

W: A major concern, yes. The population here in Charlottesville was about 20 percent black. The population of the jail in Charlottesville was about 40 percent black, and the population of the state penitentiary is about 60 black. That is a line I used when I visited foundations to try to raise some money. There still is, I think, an imbalance. Racial-profiling continues.

BW: The other thing I was going to ask you about was in relation to the poverty initiatives in the mid-1960s, which perhaps were rooted in the Kennedy administration and then Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and the Great Society. One of the figures who gets associated with that in the last years of his life was Robert Kennedy, and I am wondering how someone like Robert Kennedy loomed as a figure for folks like you working in the South?

W: Yes. A revered figure. He raised a million dollars to start the free schools in Prince Edward County. Yes, he was well-known to be a friend of the civil rights movement.

BW: I guess I am leading the witness a little bit here, but was he universally popular among southern whites?

W: Oh, I don't think so. I was in the Brushy Mountain prison in Tennessee one time, and I saw his assassin [Sirhan Sirhan]. No, I think he was revered by the integrationists and opposed by the others.

BW: Okay. Anything else from your list that you would like to bring up while the tape is still rolling?

W: In Petersburg, I was part of a theatrical group, three white actors and three black, and we toured in a show called "In White America," which was written by a Princeton history professor. We toured Virginia with great success.

BW: Was that Marchan Duberman?

W: Yes, I think he was the writer.

BW: How did that go?

W: It went well. I'll tell you, we had an ally here in Virginia named Henry Howell. He became the lieutenant governor. When he ran for governor, the segregationist movement turned out in force to squelch that. But I remember he was the present one evening at the "In White America" performance, and he was enthusiastic about it.

BW: Where did you take it to?

W: I remember we performed at the Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, which is a branch of the University of Richmond, and in churches. I remember a dance hall in Petersburg, we performed. That is where Henry Howell was that evening.

BW: This would have been mid-1960s?

W: Yes, about 1964, 1965. It was a pretty classy performance. We had two people who were in the drama programs, one at Virginia State College – she recruited the black actors – and a woman who was the drama coach at St. Anne's School in Richmond. There were six of us, and it was a lot of fun.

BW: Did you get any harassment on the road?

W: No harassment that I recall. Let me see if I have anything else. Paul Gaston, when he was here, was leading [a picket]. Buddy's Restaurant, down there near the university, near the tennis courts, was segregated, and Paul Gaston was leading pickets around the restaurant, and Buddy came out and punched Paul Gaston in the nose. That created quite a stir.

BW: Talk a little about Paul. Obviously, he moved elsewhere to work with the Southern Regional Council proper and ended up.....

W: Yes. Did you say he is living in Florida now?

BW: No. He is still in Charlottesville. He is just visiting family in Florida the week after next, and I am going to interview him there. But what sort of role did he play in the Charlottesville movement or the Virginia Council for Human Relations?

W: That thing about Buddy's Restaurant happened before we got here. That would have been in 1966. So, he must have playing pretty much of a leadership role at that time. But after we got here, he was connected more with the Southern Regional Council. I don't think he was active locally or in the state council. Reverend Griffin, the Moses of Prince Edward County, do you know about him? Carolyn and I went to Farmville one Sunday. We visited and knocked on doors, and we said, if the public schools open up in the fall with a few black children in them, would you send your children, too? A lot of people said, yes, they would, but they didn't follow through when September came.

BW: Right. Was this right on the eve of the school closings, like 1959?

W: No. That would have been more like 1964 or 1965. Now, let's see if there is anything else I can dig up for you. The Council did not have enough money to pay its rent in the later years, so the Quaker meeting in Richmond invited them to come and set up shop in their meeting-house, and they did. The last director of the Virginia Council on Human Relations succeeding Frank Adams was a black man. His name slips my mind now.

BW: Reverend Curtis Harris?

W: Yes, from Hopewell, Virginia.

BW: I am speaking to him on Friday.

W: He moved the offices to 4500 Kensington Avenue, which is the Quaker meeting-house. Then there was a great hubbub. The neighbors said this violated the zoning restrictions in Richmond. This was a residential area, and businesses were forbidden. So, we appeared before the zoning commission in Richmond, and I did the speaking on behalf of the Council. I was going on at great length about the [fact that] Quaker meeting was the first religious organization of the city, established in 1795 beside St. Johns Church, and it did so many great things. The chairman of the zoning commission said, this is very interesting, but do you have anything to say pertinent to the purpose of this meeting? So, then I leaped forward a couple hundred years and said it [the Human Relations Council] wasn't really a business concern; it was a human relations sort of enterprise. But that didn't prevail. We presented a petition to let the Council stay there in the meeting-house, and there were about 150 signatures, but the opposition came up with about 1,500 signatures. I think that was just about the demise of the Virginia Council.

BW: When it was in its pomp, its heyday, how often did the affiliates actually meet together under the umbrella of the statewide organization?

W: I think there were twenty-four local councils. I think they got together annually.

BW: But they didn't really take direction from the statewide organization. It sounds like the story you have been painting is very much one of local activism.

W: Yes. I don't know that many things happened in a coordinated, statewide, all-at-once way. The local councils operated pretty much independently with the support and backing of the state office. Frank Adams was the director I was in closest touch with, and I think he literally worked himself to death. He had kidney trouble or a collapsed lung or something. He worked nonstop. He was a marvelous man. Then he retired, and he started a shoe-repair shop in his local town, Gatesville, North Carolina, which he called the Awl Soles Shoe Repair.

BW: Very good. Did you know Hap E. Lee?

W: I was at some meetings where he was present.

BW: Do you have any recollections of him as a person or as an activist?

W: I can't say that I remember him too well. As I said, Frank Adams is the one who

sticks in my mind most clearly. Then there was a fellow, Bobby Lee Combs. I think he came after Happy.

BW: Yes. There were a couple in-between. He was a couple before Adams, as well. Who was the first African-American executive director?

W: Curtis Harris. Hopewell is close to Petersburg, so I knew him pretty well, even before he became [the director]. He and I were on the board together.

BW: Right. Now, he had an SCLC – Southern Christian Leadership Conference – background, as well.

W: He did, indeed, and he referred to that. I remember him talking about that.

BW: Just looking down this list of folks who were involved, your wife looms large, and then there is Sarah Patton Boyle as a founding member, and Ms. Suzie Peach Foster is another founding member. I was wondering if you could sort of generalize to say something about the role that southern white women played in these initiatives, these Councils for Human Relations.

W: I think they predominated. I think they were the ones who became the most keenly aware that it wasn't right what was going on.

BW: What about in terms of the leadership positions?

W: Well, I have a friend, Chic Moran, who just died a month ago, but he was the first president of the Charlottesville Council on Human Relations. He said, I became president because Patty Boyle called me and told me that I was to be president. She said, you will be the first president, and that is how I came to have this job. He talked about some harassment that happened. People came to the meetings of the Charlottesville membership and [delivered] cat-calls and harassment like that.

BW: Do you think there is an explanation for someone like Patty Boyle would have done things from behind-the-scenes, apart from harassment?

W: Apparently, she established Chic. She did not want to be the president herself, so maybe she was a *deus ex machina* there.

BW: Maybe. I was just thinking that some of the stories we have of the African-American civil rights movement, there is lots of evidence that women are the backbone of the movement, but yet, with one or two exceptions, it is King, [Ralph] Abernathy, [Fred] Shuttlesworth, these are the names. Andrew Young, Julian Bond. These are the figures who loom large in the stories, yet we know

that the women were working behind the scenes. I am just wondering if [there is] a parallel thing which has more to do with the times than anything else.

W: I think Sarah Patton Boyle bears that out. Then there was a woman here in town, [Frances Brand] who was not only very active in the Human Relations Council [but] she was also for years and years a white woman [and] the recording secretary of the NAACP here in town. She was known locally as the purple lady. She always wore purple. She was a lovely woman. She had been one of the first women army officers. But I think your idea about women playing an important part behind the scenes must be correct. I think we have about done what I can produce.

BW: Thank you so much, Jay. I really appreciate it.

W: A great pleasure.

[Tape interrupted.]

BW: Jay, could you tell us a little bit about your involvement in the Southern Leadership Program?

W: Yes. In 1970, I got a fellowship in the Southern Leadership Program, which took place on St. Helena Island, just off Beaufort, South Carolina. We looked into all kinds of efforts going on in the South to relieve poverty, fishermen's co-ops and lots of different kinds of co-ops. The last few weeks of the program, we left the island and went to Atlanta, and we stayed in a motel that Martin Luther King used to frequent for breakfast and so forth. We visited the church where his father was the pastor, and we examined a lot of things going on in Atlanta, having to do mostly with the efforts to bring the black people of the South out of poverty. I thought that was a great program, and I was honored to be part of it.

BW: Presumably, part of that program was to encourage African-American leadership, as well.

W: Right, but I can't seem to recall if many of the fellows in the program were black. There were some. Penn Center is where we were on St. Helena Island, and that was something that was started by Quakers during the Civil War in the 1860s to sort of protect the free black people down there.

BW: Yes. I have a colleague who works on the Penn School in Florida. Okay, thank you.

[End of Interview.]