

TAPE TRANSCRIPT  
Durham Civil Rights Heritage Project  
CDS, Durham, NC

**Interviewee:** Mrs. Jennifer Smith-Wyatt  
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**Place:** Durham Public Library  
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**Equipment:** SONY MZ-R700 Minidisk  
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SONY ECM-MS907  
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**Tape:** SONY MD-80 Tape

**Date:** October 4, 2003

**Description of Interviewee:**

**Circumstances of the Interview:**

**Barbara Lau (BL):** (Discussing form) Okay. So today is October 3, 2003. I'm in Durham, North Carolina – oh –

**Jennifer Smith-Wyatt (JS):** October 4<sup>th</sup>.

**BL:** Oh, thank you! October 4<sup>th</sup>. Yeah, I wrote the 3<sup>rd</sup> on my other release. I'll have to fix that. This is Barbara Lau. We're working on the Durham Civil Rights Heritage Project, and I'm speaking with Jennifer Smith-Wyatt, and Brandon Dorsey is helping interview. Okay. Well, you were just getting ready to tell us a little bit about your own – something you remembered about being involved in civil rights here in Durham. About integrating a school?

**JS:** Well, it was in the late '60s, probably '64-'65 school year, and that was the first year when black students could go to a junior high school other than Shepherd Junior High School. So I was in that first group of students who went to Brogden Junior High School. And really, all of the black students, with the exception of maybe one or two in my neighborhood, we all went to Brogden Junior High School that first year. Now, after the first year, most of the black students left and went across town to junior high school, but my parents just happened to believe that we needed to stay there where we were, because that was in our neighborhood. And, of course, it would have been an added expense to take the bus across town, because back then you had to take the city bus to get around from school to school. There were no school district buses. So – I don't know what else you want me to tell.

**BL:** Well, tell us a little bit about – you mentioned your neighborhood, and I know that you live in a historic African-American neighborhood.

**JS:** Yeah, I do.

**BL:** Tell us a little bit about your neighborhood.

**JS:** Well, I grew up in Walltown. I remember, growing up, that the street that I lived on, Sedgfield, and all of the surrounding streets, were dirt roads at that time. And I remember in the summertime that every so often an oil truck would come by and put oil on the road, to keep the dust down. And in later years – and when I say "later years," (laughs) it was really in the '60s, probably about '63 -- I think it was when I was in sixth grade, maybe fifth grade – all of the streets in that area were finally paved, with the exception of two of the streets. F Street wasn't paved until much later. And I think F Street's name has changed. In fact, two of the streets' names in the neighborhood have changed. I don't remember what the names are now.

But during that time, there were no sidewalks. Of course, when there were dirt roads, we didn't get the sidewalks until the streets were actually paved. And also, during that time, you walked everywhere you needed to go, because right there on Club Boulevard, between Berkley and Onslow, that was a major – that was *the* shopping area for our neighborhood, because there was a barbershop there, there was a little – what I call a juke-joint – that was there.

There was a small grocery store, which was also a fish market. And my parents believed in having fish every single Friday, and my mom would go to the fish market and buy the fish there. And it was the old-fashioned kind of market: the floors were wooden floors, and the floors were really uneven, because some points were high, some points were low in the store. And what I remember most of all about that store was the candy, because there were big glass jars of different kinds of candy, and the candy jars – you know, to my memory, it seems like they sat on the floor, but I'm sure they didn't. It's just that I was so short. (Laughs) It seems like they were setting on the floor. And I remember just being able to go in and just get candy out of those jars, and just bring the candy and just drop it on the counter, and have my mom buy it. And I remember the lady who cleaned the fish; her name was Minnie. In fact, I can see – Minnie, I never knew anything other than that. That's what everybody called her. I don't even know if she lived in the neighborhood. The only time I ever saw her was on Fridays when we went to get the fish.

And on Berkley Street, now, there was another store that was in the neighborhood, was Mr. Grant's store. And that was really – it was diagonally across, on the right-hand side of the street, from the old St. James. And Mr. Grant's store basically just sold things like bread and milk, but he had lots and lots of candy too. (Laughs) And it was a real treat when my mom would let us walk from Sedgefield to Berkeley. And we'd always cut through the back yards. It was no walk, but my mom just didn't believe in letting us go out of the yard. But when she did give us, say, ten cents, to go through the yards and go to Mr. Grant's store -- You could get gobs of candy for ten cents in those days, because you could get three pieces of candy for a penny, or you could get a giant cookie for, you know, a couple of pennies or a nickel. So you got an awful lot in those days. You can't even believe it, can you? But you really could. You could get an awful lot.

Mr. Grant had ice-cream pops too, that sort of thing. And the most amazing thing about Mr. Grant was that he was *blind*. He couldn't see at all, but you could never, ever cheat him. Of

course, nobody – we were little kids, we didn't want to cheat him anyway. But he was blind, and I always found it so interesting that, if you gave him some money, he could tell you whether you had enough money or not. And see, back then, being a little kid, you know, I never even thought anything about having the right amount of money. "This is all the money I have, this is what I want, so this is my money." But he could tell you, and he would just feel the coins, and he would say, "This is –" and he would name the coins, and he would say, "You don't have enough. You need" x-number of additional coins. And it never occurred to me until I was much older what a tremendous thing that was that he was doing. Because I guess, when you're a little kid, even though in your brain you see that he can't see, it never click, "This guy can't see and he essentially might not be able to do the same things I can do." From a little kid's perspective, he was doing everything that I could do, because he was running a store, it was his store, he was taking care of the money. Now, his wife would be in the store with him sometimes, but she never handled the money. He handled the money.

And what was so interesting is when, later on I grew up and I went to college, I went to North Carolina Central, and the business building, the old business building – Central, way back in the '70s – there was a store that was in the basement there, and it was run by a blind man too. I don't even remember what his name was, but he did the same thing. He ran the store. Of course, by that time I had a higher appreciation for what it took to actually be in a store, a blind man running a store. But he did the same thing. And of course, kids did try to cheat him, because they were older. But you could never cheat him either.

But yeah, those were the two great places: Mr. Grant's store, and I can't remember the name of the fish market, the name of that store. I'm sure my dad could probably remember that. There was another barber shop in the area, too. It was run by Mr. Day. I think his name was Alonzo Day. In olden years, back in the years when it was the Walltown Community Center over there, he was considered the mayor of Walltown – the unofficial black mayor of Walltown. And my dad would go to his barbershop every Friday, to get his hair cut. But, yeah -- And back then, on Broad Street, it was the old A&P store. I think right now there's a – oriental carpet shop there. It used to be an Eckerd's, or Kerr, Rexall, drugstore there. But that was an A&P supermarket to begin with. And when I was growing up, my parents had one car. My dad took the car to work, and my mom was at home for, you know, some years before she started working. And we would walk to the grocery store. And then of course everybody had to bring

their groceries back in the grocery cart. But we did something better than they do nowadays. We *walked* back up there and took the cart back! (Laughing) Nowadays people don't take the carts back. But they never had a cart problem. Everybody would walk their carts home, unload their groceries, and walk them right on back.

**BL:** Was that store patronized primarily by people in the Walltown neighborhood, or was it also – tell us a little bit about what was around Walltown. You said there was an unofficial mayor, black mayor. Because wasn't Walltown kind of surrounded by some other neighborhoods?

**JS:** Yeah, Walltown – it was very, very interesting, because Walltown – most people think of Walltown as being *black*, but when you look on the map, in terms of the boundaries of Walltown, Walltown itself actually included some white neighborhoods. But the white people never considered themselves as part of the Walltown community. Because you had Sedgefield Street, Berkeley Street, Onslow Street, and – I cannot think of the name of the street just past Onslow, before you get to Buchanan. But those were the black streets. All the way to almost the Duke wall, on Sedgefield and Berkeley, it was all black. And I think it was probably the same way, back then on Onslow. I'm almost sure it was. It wasn't until you got to some of the other streets where it might have been a block before you got to East Campus, where you picked up pockets of white families. And then on the other side, across from Club, on Sedgefield Street, which went all the way down to Guess Road, it was all black there until you got to Guess Road, and then once you crossed over Guess Road it was white. But then behind us, in our back yard, it was Clarendon Street. That was all white. And you know, we never spent any time on Clarendon Street. Now, when we would go to the A&P, we would *walk*, you know, we would walk on – I don't know why I can't remember what the name of that street is – we would walk on the street that would lead us between Clarendon Street and Broad Street – we would walk *through* that neighborhood, but we never spent any time. We never stopped or anything like that.

So it was kind of like that neighborhood was behind us, but we never knew a whole lot about it. White people lived in our back yard. We would play in our back yard, we would see the white people in their houses, but they never spoke. We would hang out our laundry, they would hang up their laundry. They never, ever spoke. And I remember, there was one old lady who lived back there. It was almost as if she dared us to speak. She would just come out on her

back porch and just almost stare you down sometime. You know, it was just unbelievable. We weren't even in her yard. She was over there staring us down.

And I remember there was one family that had some young children, and in those days, we made our own entertainment. There was the park over there, Walltown Park, but like I said, my mom didn't let us go out of the yard. And most of our immediate neighbors' parents didn't let their kids – we just didn't go out of our yards like that. So we entertained ourselves. My parents had the biggest back yard, because my father stopped having a garden (laughs) before the other people did, so we had a big back yard. So we would have games. We would have baseball games, but we played with a wooden plank and a tennis ball, and that was our ball field. And the little white kids on the other side – there was a little creek, so to speak, that ran, you know where the alleyway is, there was a little creek there – the white kids would be on the other side of the alleyway, and you could tell, they wanted to come over and play *so badly*, so badly. And they would just stand there and watch us. They didn't have anybody to play with. We were over there having all of the fun.

But, you know, we were that close in terms of kids, but we didn't even go to the same schools. We went to Walltown Elementary School. That's where all the black kids went, and it was one teacher for every grade. Miss Russell was my first-grade teacher. Miss Russell – you know, as the kids say, she was “old as dirt” when I had her. And when the woman finally died – and she died a long time after I had finished college – I don't know how old she was when she died, but if someone had told me she was a hundred years old, I would have believed it. Because she was really, really old. My second-grade teacher was Miss (Bibby?). She was also known as Miss (Hand?), Miss (Hammy?) too, because she got married – I can't remember which one was her married name, which one was her maiden, name, but she only stayed married for like a year, so (laughs) she reverted back to her other name! She was the meanest teacher in the whole school. She was just *so mean*. You know, she would make me cringe. And then of course, when I got older and left Walltown, and I came back, you know, it was just like – she was different, she wasn't mean anymore. But I guess that's because I wasn't one of her kids anymore. My third-grade teacher was Miss Jimison – Mrs. Jimison; we called everybody “Miss” back then. Now, Mrs. Jimison – (sighs) you know, I want to say she's still alive. She lived on Fayetteville Street. And I want to say she is still alive. And my fourth-grade teacher was Mrs. Alston. She died. Mrs. Alston was the only one of my elementary teachers that came to my

house and gave me a college-graduation present. And Miss Fogle was my fifth-grade teacher. She made sure that all of the kids had good manners. (Laughs) She was the one that I remember teaching me about “there’s more than one kind of fork,” “there’s more than one kind of spoon,” and, “you put one hand in your lap when you eat.” You know. She went through that whole kind of thing. And back in those days, the teachers in that school, they kept a washcloth and soap in their desk, toothbrush, toothpaste, all that kind of thing, because if you came to school and you were not put together, you had to go to the bathroom and put yourself together. No matter who you were. And there were kids in the neighborhood who needed that.

Now, everybody in Walltown, compared with today’s standards, was considered poor. There were degrees of poor. And, you know, when we got shoes – we had two pairs of shoes: we had school shoes, we had church shoes – and we kept those the entire year. We didn’t get new shoes until it was almost time for school to start. But then, there were other kids in the neighborhood, particularly the kids who lived on Berkeley Street – that was really the street in Walltown where you had pockets of people who were much poorer. Because a lot of the people on Berkeley Street didn’t own their own homes. They rented their homes. Now, most of the people on Sedgefield, the end between Club and Guess Road, we owned our homes, with the exception of maybe one or two people at the very bottom of the hill of Sedgefield. We owned our homes. So in reality, we had a little bit more, but we were still poor.

But there were some kids who were at Walltown School who were really, really poor. I remember there was one kid – I have no doubt he probably had to clean himself every time, every morning when he came to school, because his teeth were never well-kept at all. At all. I remember my mother even gave some of our clothes that we no longer used to a family, and I’m not even going to name the family, you know, because they’re still in Durham. And one of the girls was in my class, and she – you know, I didn’t know my mom had done that until I went to school one day, and I saw her walk in, and she was wearing one of my old dresses. And I was a pretty big kid. I was, you know, overweight, then. But she was really, really skinny. Her mom didn’t take in the dress, didn’t hem it, didn’t do anything. She just wore it just the way it was, so it wasn’t fitting on her very well at all. But she was so happy, you know, wearing that dress. She felt like she had a brand-new dress.

**BL:** Well, how was the new school different than the one that you went to when you started – you went to Brogden, you said, and that was –

**JS:** That was when it was a Junior High School.

**BL:** -- going from a school in a black neighborhood to now an integrated school.

**JS:** You know what? What I remember most about Brogden were really two major things. The black kids, we all stuck together. We did everything together. We ate in the cafeteria together, we sat in class together, you know, unless the teacher separated us. And then another thing I remember about Brogden is that, if there were some of the white kids who befriended you, some of them who would be friendly with you in class, if you saw them out in public, they would act as though they didn't know you. And for a long time, I just could never – I couldn't figure that out. You know, why would they act as though they didn't know me, you know, when they would see me in public? And unfortunately (laughs), even to this day, there are some white folks that will do that. I have *worked* with some white people who, when they see me out in public in another venue, they may or may not speak. They might see me and then turn and look like, you know, they're doing something else. And I know they saw me. And it's still – it's so incredible to me. When I was really little, you know, after I had started Brogden and went through Durham High School, you know, it was just – I could not understand why, you know, they couldn't be friendly to me. I just couldn't understand that.

Brandon Dorsey (BD): When you studied at Brogden, did your parents discuss the racial relationships?

**JS:** You know something, a lot of people have asked me that. I really don't remember my parents sitting down and talking to me directly about race-relations. You know, "Act this way when you go there," "Act this way when you—" My parents always – they expected you to act a certain way no matter where you were, so that's what they always centered on – how you are supposed to act when you're in public. Not how you're supposed to act when you're around white folks. They never did that.

And there was one incident when I was growing up. My mom took my sister and I with her when she went to visit someone at Duke Hospital. And in those days, Duke Hospital took blacks as patients. Just like there was Lincoln Hospital on the other side of town that was the all-black hospital. Well, we were right there in Walltown. We were within walking distance of Watt's Hospital, which is now the School of Science and Math. Black folks didn't go there. That was the white hospital. We had to either go across town to Lincoln – which, if we were sick and we had to be hospitalized, that's where we went – but then in later years, back in the late



'60s, then, you know, blacks also went to Duke. And I remember, we went to Duke Hospital. My sister and I could not go with my mom to the room to visit whoever it was she was visiting. She left us in the waiting room, and she told us to stay there until she came back. Well, after my mom left, this lady came over -- and she was a white lady -- and she told us that we were in the wrong place, we needed to go somewhere else. And she took us to another place. And we stayed there a really long time. And when my mom finally came back, she was really, really angry. And I couldn't tell whether -- you know, I thought she was angry with us, because she kept saying, "Why aren't you where I left you?" And you know, we said, "This lady told us we were in the wrong place, and she brought us over here." And then, when we got home, I heard my parents discussing it, and what had happened was my mom had left us in *the waiting room*. Well, apparently there was a waiting room for black folks -- an official or unofficial waiting room for black folks. It was probably the unofficial waiting room for black folks. And this lady had taken us there, instead of letting us stay there where we would have been mixed with the white folks. And that made my mother very, very angry. But I don't remember if my mother ever went to the lady and said anything. I just don't remember. She could have, but I don't remember.

And, you know, that was really -- I just found that -- that was really, really -- that was sad that that woman felt she needed to do that, because we were just little kids. You know, we weren't hurting anybody. You know. If she had been a black woman and had moved some white kids, they probably would have tried -- and when I say "they," the system -- probably would have tried to make a lot of it in terms of, you know, putting children in harm's way, so to speak. Just the way you would now if you were an adult, and you just go over and speak to a kid. You just don't do that in these days and times. But she never should have done that, not to somebody else's kids.

But I don't know what else you want me to tell you.

**BD:** What was your parents' rationale for having you go to Brogden Junior High instead of --

**JS:** Well, just like I said, my parents' basic rationale, from my perspective, for our going to Brogden Junior High School, was really the money. My mom and my dad had -- they were hourly employees, so they didn't have a big paycheck. You know, my mom and dad's paychecks, for a lot of years, at the end of the week, was way less than a hundred dollars. And they would have had to have spent money for myself and my sister to go across town on the city

bus, rather than walk from our house to Brogden Junior High. And that's what we did; we walked from our house to Brogden. And that was at least a two- or a three-mile walk. And we walked it every day, no matter what the weather was, or what the temperature was. We walked there. So, from an economic standpoint, that made more sense to my parents. It was the only junior high school that was on that side of town, and it just happened to have been the all-white – except for Carr Junior high – you know, at that time. So -- And then, it was available to blacks. You know, we were allowed to go. So it was never – I never heard any discussion. You know, I never knew anything different. You know, Brogden Junior High – that was the school that was within walking-distance of my house, that's where we're going.

You know, I never really had any desire, personally, to get on the bus and go to the other side of town, because that was a long way! That was a really, really long way. To talk about putting a kid on a city bus and going to the other side of town, when, at that time, I had never ridden the bus by myself, you know, at all. I'd always ridden with my mom. (cell phone rings, JS answers) You know, my parents didn't believe in wasting money. (Laughs) That's what the bottom line was. And even – now, a whole bunch of us started Brogden Junior High that first year it was integrated, but after that first year just about all of the black kids did start taking the city bus to the other side of town.

**BD:** What was the reason for that? Was it really very (?)

**JS:** You know something, from what I remember, I don't think they felt comfortable being there. I don't think they felt as welcomed as they thought they should have been, or would have been, welcomed. You know, some people can walk into a room, and immediately they say, "Okay, there's one black person there's one black person, there's two" – you know, they start counting it off – and then other people can enter a room, and all they see are people, and they don't think anything about it. And I can give you the perfect example. This week I went to a conference in Winston-Salem. And, you know, I'm at the conference just – I'm not thinking anything, I'm just there with a whole bunch of people. And one of the presenters brought up something that had to do with black issues, and when they did that, it's like something went like that in my brain, and I turned, and I looked, and I looked again, and I thought, "I am the only black person in this whole room!" (Laughing) And there were like a hundred people in the room. But, hey, that was the second day of the conference. I had been there two days and it never occurred to me! I was the only black person in the room.

And I think some people, even years ago, when you're a little kid, it depends on how things were discussed in your house. Like I told you, I don't remember my parents discussing, "You act this way when you're around it—" They never did, they just wanted you to act a certain way, period, when you're out in public. Okay, so I would imagine that maybe in other households it was not like that, that it was discussed – you know, racial things were discussed – so therefore when they went out in public, you know, they may have seen things from a different perspective. Now, when I was at Brogden, did I know I was a black among a whole bunch of whites? Of course I did. But it never seemed to bother me, from a racial perspective. And you know, I've had a lot of black folks say, "You know, something's wrong with you!" But what bothered me was if nobody, if they wouldn't be my friends. I couldn't figure out why they wouldn't be my *friends*. You know, that's what bothered me. You know, it didn't bother me that they didn't want to eat with me, I mean, because I had some people I was eating with. They were my friends, they lived in my neighborhood. So I didn't care if they didn't want to eat with me; they don't live in my neighborhood. Big deal. You know, so -- (laughs)

Now, I'll tell you what I do remember my parents talking about: "the olden days," how things were when *they* were growing up, in terms of race relations. My parents never could watch a movie like "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman." They would never watch anything like that on TV. *Nothing*, period. If it came on and if my sister and I were watching it, they would get up and leave. And I remember asking my parents, "Why aren't you watching this?" And their simple answer to me was, "I lived it. I don't need to go through it again."

And I do remember my father telling us that the father of one of his friends was lynched. And my dad grew up in Roxboro. That's in Person County. And, you know, as a little kid, I found that so unbelievable, because lynching is something I read about in a *book*. It's not something that I knew somebody that, you know, could say they had a personal connection to a lynching. Now, I can't remember why this man was lynched. You know, that's something my dad would have to tell you. But the father of one of his friends was lynched. Now, that – you know, that really did bring it home, because, "Hey, that's right in my back yard," so to speak. Person County and Durham County are side by side. And if you haven't been to Person County before, or northern Durham County, you'll find pockets of black people who got the same last names, but they're the black Basses, the white Basses.

And even in my own family – now, my mom grew up in Granville County, in Creedmoor. Now, my grandfather owned an awful lot of land in Creedmoor, and he had white people in his heritage. And you know, I don't even remember the whole story about that. My aunt would have to – in fact, we only have one aunt that's still living – she would have to tell you the whole story about that. But the bottom line being, the fact that my grandfather had all of this land, for my family, keeping that land in the family has been very, very important. The same is true of my father's side, in Person County. Now, my grandfather, my father's father, *bought* all of his land. And he had an awful lot of land. I think he had a hundred acres, maybe even more, of land in Person County. And land back then was real cheap, but not every black person had the means to buy land. So my father's side, on his side of the family, keeping the land in the family is very, very important.

And (laughs) it might sound kind of bad to some people, but it's an unspoken rule – you know, it's just something that I know, no one's ever said it to me – that if you get married, your land needs to stay with you and your children. Your land is not your spouse's land. You know what I'm saying? Because the spouse might not understand the hardship that it took to get the land. And fortunately I have a spouse who understands that perfectly well. He doesn't have any problem with that.

(Sighs) In fact, on my mother's side, a story is told about one of my grandfather's children who married, and he divided his land up and gave each child some land when they got married. Well, this aunt's husband lost the land, and it was told that my grandfather was on his deathbed, and when he found out that this – his son-in-law – was losing the land, that he tried to get up off of his deathbed to take some money to wherever it was, tax or wherever it was, to pay for the land, to keep the land in the family. But the land was lost. So, you know, it was always unspoken: "You keep the land in the family." Now, that's not Durham County, but I'm sure there are other places within Durham County where it's like that.

And I happen to live right now in the house where my mother was reared. You know, and I have a great affinity for making sure that our land – and when I say "our land," I'm talking about the family's land – stays in the family. And of course, it's been divided up among all of my grandfather's children which, now some of them are dead, and it's really my cousins' land, but we have the same – we all have the same affinity. We keep it in the family. You might not

live there (laughs), but you're going to keep it in the family. So I probably have told you more than you even wanted to know.

**BD:** It was great.

**JS:** That was getting off of the track from Walltown. But like I said, my dad was one of the founding members of the Walltown Community Center. And Mr. Primrose Jones was my dad's and my mom's next-door neighbor. He also worked at Duke Hospital for a lot of years. He was a cook. And when he left Duke Hospital – you know where the Cattlemen's Restaurant is on Hillsborough Road? Well, when that restaurant was first built, Mr. Primrose Jones was the chef at that restaurant. I don't remember if it was called Cattlemen's then or not. But he was the cook for the Walltown Community Center. Because every Thanksgiving, there would be a Thanksgiving meal for the founders of the Community Center and their families. And we would all go into the Community Center, and Mr. Primrose Jones would cook dinner for everyone. And that is the only time in my life that I ever got to eat mincemeat pie, because he would always have mincemeat pie. He would always have apple pie. That is the only time that I would ever have cheese on my apple pie. He would put cheese on the apple pie. My parents always put ice cream on an apple pie; Mr. Jones put cheese on his apple pie. And then he would have the turkey and the dressing, and yams and everything. But we would all go there, as a group of community families, and eat there, our Thanksgiving dinner.

Now, I never thought a whole lot about that – it was just fond memories. But recently I went with my dad to a meeting at the Walltown Community Center, and the meeting was held in that same room. And the Center, back in those days, was just really one room. And when I walked in, and I saw (laughs) how small that room was, I couldn't believe that all of those families got in that one room, and we all sat down at one long table, and we ate. It's unbelievable to think we were all in that one room eating. We had to be some really little people. (Laughs) Because that room was so small! But, yeah. That was something.

**BD:** One thing you discussed was the strength of the community.

**JS:** Yeah.

**BD:** What role did the community take during the (civil rights movement)?

**JS:** Oh, you know, you're probably not asking the best person, because during that – during that period of time, I was really young. I don't remember anything like marches taking place in Walltown. Now, that doesn't mean that they didn't, but I really don't remember. What I

remember were the marches taking place on the other side of town, because, see, there were more blacks on the other side of town. Really, on the side of town where we were, the north Durham side, that was really it, that little pocket of blacks. That was -- you know, just about everybody that was black on that side of Durham lived right there in Walltown. Everybody else that was black was on the other side of town, and compared, the size of the black community in Walltown to the size of the black community in Hayti, we probably weren't even half that number in size. So all of the activity that I remember for the civil rights movement was really taking place on that side of town, or downtown. You know, like the old Walgreen, Walgreen's downtown. Now, I know there were some sit-ins that went on in there. But see, I just don't remember anything like that taking place in Walltown. I mean, you ask somebody else who grew up in Walltown, they might tell you something different.

My parents really, they really sheltered us, you know, when I look back on it and think. They really protected my sister and I. So there may have been things going on in the community that, you know, I, as a little kid, I may not have even been aware of.

**BL:** Do you remember anything like, when all of that stuff was happening, did it change the way that you (End of Side A). -- when that stuff was happening, did it change the way that your family got along with any of the white families or other people right in your area? You know, kind of being influenced by what was happening over there?

**JS:** I really don't remember my parents having any interactions with the white people that were in our neighborhood -- you know, like the people on Clarendon Street. You know, I really don't remember any interactions of that nature. Like I say, you really have to ask my dad.

**BL:** Did you go to Durham High School?

**JS:** I went to Durham High School.

**BL:** How many years had it been integrated when you went there?

**JS:** Ah, three years, because I started at Brogden, and I'm sure that was the same year that Durham High was integrated. So I was at Brogden three years. And yeah, I went to Durham High. And it was a little different at Durham High. The kids, the white kids, were friendlier than they were at Brogden. But by the same token, some of the kids that I had gone to school with all three years at Brogden, you know, by the time we got to Durham High School, even they were probably a little different. And then, of course, when we got to Durham High School you

had black guys that were on the football team and the basketball team, and of course they excelled at those sports.

**BL:** Black cheerleaders?

**JS:** There was one black cheerleader that I can remember, and I want to say her last name was Cook. I remember one black cheerleader. Now, what year or years was she a black cheerleader, I do not remember. But I do remember there was one black cheerleader that was at Durham High School.

**BL:** Any tension?

**JS:** (Sigh, pause) You know, for me personally, I don't remember any tension, but I have no doubt there was some tension. I didn't always put myself in a position for there to be tension. Like I said, you really have to ask some of the other kids, because, like I said, when I say that to people, they either think that I'm not telling the truth or I don't have a realistic viewpoint of it. But, you know, I kept to myself, I was not an extroverted kind of person. And like I say, if someone wanted to be friends with me, fine. If they didn't, then – (laughs) you know, I always had somebody else that I was friends with.

I don't remember – I don't remember any teachers being overtly mean to me, or rude to me. Like I was telling this young man, I do know that if I saw one of them out in public, they more than likely were subject to not acknowledge my presence. That happened a lot. I did have one teacher, I had a French teacher in junior high school, and she always seemed to think it was just so amazing that, you know, I had some brains. I didn't think too much of it at that time, but I have no doubt there were probably a lot of teachers who didn't think that the black children would excel at their studies. And my sister and I, you know, we were smart. (Laughs) You know. We always did our homework, we always studied, we always made good grades. Now, there were some other kids who were like that. There were not large numbers of kids who did that, but like I said, my parents expected that. They believed in education, and that's what we did.

**BD:** (?) there a real difference between the black females were treated and the black males were treated after integration?

**JS:** (Sighs) I would have to say it's probably still very much like it is right now. I think the girls probably had an easier time than the boys, because, back then, you know, it was an unspoken rule, so to speak, that you didn't want the black boys hanging around the white girls.

Now, the black girls, we could hang around just about anybody, nobody would think anything of it. But if it was a black boy hanging around some white girls, that would be quickly broken up, right away. You know. And it wouldn't necessarily be broken up in an obvious way, like, you know, "Oh, y'all can't be together. Y'all black, y'all white." You know. It might just be a matter of, you know, a teacher might come over and say, "Hey, I need to talk to you about so-and-so! Come with me, blah-blah-blah-blah-blah," while the group is broken up.

And I have no doubt that there were probably some interracial couples. In fact, I'm sure there were some interracial couples. Now, people who knew them probably knew they were a couple, but if you did not know them, if you were not considered friends or friends of friends, then you may not know that they were interracial couples. Now, did they go to each other's houses? Probably not. But then, you know, like it is now -back then's not like now. You could be boyfriend-and-girlfriend in school and never ever go to anybody's house. You'd just be boyfriend-and-girlfriend. (Laughs) I don't know if I can tell you anything else.

**BL:** How did you decide which college to go to?

**JS:** That was kind of like a no-brainer. I went to the college that my parents told me to go to. I went to North Carolina Central. When I was at Durham High, we did have a black guidance counselor, and I know she was there my senior year; whether she was there before my senior year or not, I don't know. And (pause) you know something? I had never even thought about this. I think she might have been the only black teacher at Durham High School. But that can't be – that *can't* be – the case! But she is the only black teacher I really remember at Durham High School. At least she's the only one that has even left an impression on me. And she was my senior guidance counselor. She happened to be the student recruiter at North Carolina Central, Nancy – um – she just died a couple of years ago. I can't think of her last name. But anyway, she was my senior guidance counselor. She made sure that all of the black kids had information about all colleges, specifically white colleges that were recruiting blacks. And during that period of time, white colleges were actively recruiting black students. They had money for black students. But in order to get the money, of course, you had to fill out the financial aid application. And one college that appealed to me was Franklin and Marshall. Now, I never visited Franklin and Marshall. I just know I read all of the information that was there for Franklin and Marshall, and my guidance counselor was saying, you know, that they wanted



black students, they had money for black students. It was *away* from North Carolina, so Franklin and Marshall sounded very appealing to me.

But when I took home the applications for financial aid and the applications for college, my parents refused to participate in completing them. And one reason they didn't participate – well, there were really two reasons, but one reason was my father did not believe in letting the family business, his business, leave the house. So when it came to money, the only person who knew about our finances were the people who lived in our house. If there was any need for money to go and do anything outside of our house, then my father provided the money. If he couldn't provide the money, then you didn't participate in it.

And the other reason was that Franklin and Marshall was a long way away. It was out of state, in Pennsylvania. And my father's whole thing was, "Okay, they have money for you this year" – because I kept saying, "They say they have money." "Okay, well, suppose you get there, and you either don't do well – you don't have any money, you have to come back home – or, say you do well, who says they're going to have money for you the next year?"

What my parents could afford was North Carolina Central University. What my parents could afford was North Carolina Central University with me staying at home with them while I went to college. So it turned out to be a no-brainer. I was a very docile child. (Laughs) I did what my parents said. You know, I had no money of my own. So North Carolina Central was the college that I went to. Now, once I got there, I excelled, I was able to get some money on my own that didn't require (laughs), you know, any family business going out to anyone else. And I'm really glad that I went to North Carolina Central, because – of course, it was North Carolina College back then, but before I left the name changed – because it does have such a rich history about it. And Maynard Jackson's mother was in charge of the French Department while I was there. She was history right there, and I never even realized until after I had left college that I was going to school with historical people – right there. You know, so I'm glad I went to Central. I feel like I got an excellent education while I was at Central.

And I'll tell you one thing about Central. Now, when I was in high school and I would tell people about North Carolina Central, tell white kids, their words to me was, "Where is that? I never heard of that school." I found that so unbelievable. North Carolina Central, right there in Durham, has been in Durham for years and years and years and years, and the white kids never knew anything – they didn't even know the name of the place. They knew Duke. They knew

UNC. They knew North Carolina State. They didn't know North Carolina Central. They didn't know North Carolina College. (Pause) Now, that's sad. I could see, if Central was a school that was maybe no bigger than, say, this room. But Central covered, you know, acres and acres – a big old place – and they didn't know anything about it? So why didn't they know anything about it? They probably never went to that side of town. Probably never, ever went to that side of town. And their parents never spoke the name. You know. That's sad. (Laughs) But I bet you they know Central now.

**BL:** Last question on the list – I know you don't have a lot of time – but (indistinct, consulting with BD).

**BD:** How do you think Durham has, or has not, changed, since the time of the civil rights movement?

**JS:** Has or has not changed. (Pause, sighs, pause, sighs) Well. (Clears throat) I think one thing that has changed about Durham, from a black perspective, is, since the civil rights movement, I don't think the black kids really understand all of the history and struggle that blacks in Durham went through. They just have no perception of it at all. And you know, that's not something that's unusual. I mean, that's – even my own kids, they just don't have any perception of how hard it really was to be black, and how hard it still is to be black. They don't have a perception of how hard it still is to be black, because everything is so subtle now. If you are excluded from activities, there's always other reasons why, that can be pinned on – (sighs) I don't know how to say this – (pause) and I probably shouldn't even say that. My husband says I should stop saying this, “because you black.” (Laughs) Um. Kids in Durham, they just don't understand. They don't understand the rich heritage of Durham. And one of the reasons they don't understand the rich heritage of Durham is because they don't see it. And the reason they don't see it is because it keeps getting torn down. And see, when we go to the other side of town, where the old Hayti was, you know, I point out to my kids, I say, you know, “It was a florist right there at that corner. It was like a Five Points.” It was like a – one, two, three, four – it was at least four streets that came together, and right there, in that V, there was a florist. I tell them, “Okay, your cousin had a restaurant.” My cousin owned the Green Lantern Restaurant. She had her restaurant right there. When my husband and I got married and our invitations needed to be printed, we went to the printer, the black printer, that was there in Hayti. Now, we had other places that we could go, but when we got married, you know, it was still that sense of

patronizing black folks. You know, all of those businesses were still there. Now, were they decrepit? Were there empty storefronts? Yes. But they were still – the old people, they were still there hanging on. And I, you know, I tell my kids, you know, “All of these businesses were along here.” The black doctor, Dr. Cook, had his office right there across from the library. You know, and even though Dr. Cook – he had to have some type of disease like Lou Gehrig or something. I just remember in his later years, he shook, he couldn’t half walk, he had to sit down to examine you, but my parents continued to go to him until he just couldn’t do anything at all. Now, could they have gone somewhere else? Should they have gone somewhere else? Sure. But it was that sense of patronizing black businesses. Dr. Bass had his dental office right there on Fayetteville Street. You know, my kids, they go over there and the businesses aren’t there. Or, if it’s a business that is there, it is – there is no pride in the way the business is maintained or run. So it’s very easy for kids, black kids – and white kids – to get the impression that if you are a black businessman, that you’re not professional enough or capable enough of running a business.

That’s one sad thing about the – the, uh – about the integration and what the civil rights movement brought around. It actually -- it actually wiped out our culture. And I shouldn’t say the civil rights movement wiped out our culture. (Sighs) I think that when we got to the point where we could have choices, we were so glad to have those choices that we wanted to let go of painful memories, and, in letting go of those painful memories, we allowed the majority race to erase those memories. And it wasn’t until much, much later, like now, within the last few years, when someone turned around and said, “Hey, you know, things are not a hundred percent better than they were years ago.” You know, and my past is not there anymore. And I would venture to say, it may not have been a group of black folks that started all this historical preservation stuff. Now, I could be wrong about that. It could have been a group of black and white folks. But the civil rights movement, and the fact that we wanted to let go of a painful past, we allowed our past to be erased – you know, physically erased in Durham. And because it’s been physically erased, it’s hard for black kids, and white kids and Hispanic kids, to see where the history physically was. They can read about it in a book, but when you can’t touch it, it doesn’t have the same value as if you can go and visit, and put your finger on it. It’s like reading about the Holocaust. You can read about it and read about it, and say, “Oh, that’s so sad.” But until you go to the concentration camps and you see the places where the people were, that’s when

you say, "It's real." And that's really what the civil rights movement in Durham has done. It has erased, physically erased, our past. And it's unfortunate that, when people have a lot of pain in their soul, that they want the pain to be erased. But the reality is, you can't let the pain be erased. You got to keep the pain in your soul, so that you can always remember and appreciate any benefits of the future. That's why you sometimes hear people say, "I can forgive you, but I can't forget." That's exactly what it boils down to. That make sense?

**BL:** Thank you, very much.

**JS:** You're welcome!

**BD:** Thank you.

**JS:** You're very welcome. Well, let me go find some book tapes. (End of recording)