

**Oral History Interview of
Charles Taylor**

**Interviewed by: Cosby Morton
May 2, 2013
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*African American Interviews***

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Interview Series Background:

The African-American Oral History Collection documents the diverse perspectives of the African-American people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, segregation, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11th 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Charles Taylor, who discusses his upbringing, family life, education, the African-American community, and his thirty-three years as teacher and principal in the public school system.

Length of Interview: 01:18:22

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Parents and early life	5	00:00:42
Growing up and high school	7	00:04:41
Military service and education	10	00:11:15
Story about riding the bus to save money for a party	17	00:20:18
Discussion about teaching in Floydada	18	00:23:57
Job after the army and after school recreation	22	00:30:37
Transfer to Bozeman Elementary	25	00:38:27
Busing to Posey and integration	35	00:56:07
Changing values, life within the educational community	41	01:08:36
Discussing mutual acquaintances	43	01:13:33

Keywords

Education, Floydada, busing, integration, African-American community, teaching

Cosby Morton (CM):

Today is May second and my name is Cosby Morton and I'm sitting here talking to Mr. Charles Taylor, a resident of East Lubbock and also a former educator and principal. Mr. Taylor, I'd like to say welcome and first of all let me ask you—when were you born, sir?

Charles Taylor (CT):

I was born July 19, 1931.

CM:

And where were you born?

CT:

Floydada, Texas.

CM:

Floydada, Texas. Your parents' names?

CT:

Charlie and Annie Taylor.

CM:

Okay, and tell me the story again about, you know, your parents.

CT:

About my parents?

CM:

How they met.

CT:

Well, my father was a cook at the hotel in Floydada. I can't think of the name of it now. It's been changed a hundred times, but any rate, the way he used to tell his tales, when my mother came to Floydada to teach, she was the first black teacher in Floydada and you know during that time just like now (??) in some places, they had segregated schools. I have a—they got married after she had been here—I think she said she had been teaching a year or two, and he had been bothering her and proposing to her, and so she finally said, "I gave in and we got married," and so there were five of us born and like I say, my oldest sister and I have a birthday on the same day, only she was four years older than me, and then there was my second sister, she was the second child. My brother was the third child. I was the fourth, and then my baby sister we called the fifth child.

So, we grew up in Floydada. We all went to school. We even played school at home. Some of them say, "You Taylors think all of you going to be teachers."

CM:

How many of you were teachers?

CT:

Huh?

CM:

How many ended up teachers?

CT:

Two of us.

CM:

Okay.

CT:

Two of us, my baby sister and I were the only teachers, and well, my parents sent us all to college but one. My sister that lived in Floydada—she didn't attend college. She got married early. Well, after she finished high school, she got married, but then my older sister had attended Prairie View. My brother had attended Prairie View, and then I was next on the list and then my baby sister. We all attended Prairie View, but—Marie was my baby sister's name—and I, we were the only two that finished from Prairie View because my brother quit and joined the army, and then my oldest sister quit. She quit and she wanted to stay in Houston, so my mother had to—her baby sister lived in Houston, so she stayed in Houston with my aunt, and it was quite interesting to have us in school down there because during the summer, my aunt, some of them, would come back to school, you know, they required teachers sometimes to go back to school in the summer, and sometime, one or two of my aunts would be at school at Prairie View. Sometimes we would see them and sometimes we wouldn't, but anyway, it was quite interesting. So we had this little school. We had this little school. It was a little bit larger than this room, I guess, and my daddy would always go by and build a fire for mother. On his way to work, he would be working—well, Floydada is—it's a small town. You ever been over?

CM:

Yes, sir.

CT:

It's a small town.

CM:

And Lockney also—

CT:

Yeah, but anyway, Floydada's larger than Lockney (laughs), but Daddy would always go by and light the big old stove and that stove kept that little old school warm for all of us.

CM:

So you had one—it was a one room school?

CT:

Yep.

CM:

And it was a black school, naturally.

CT:

It was a black school called North Ward School, and my mother taught grade one through twelve.

CM:

Wow.

CT:

And I'll never forget the first child—her first student—to finish high school was a Coleman. There were about—that family had twelve or thirteen children, and she was about the third or the fourth child, and her name was Baby Ruth, and Baby Ruth lived in Albuquerque. Now, we used to go visit her, but we haven't been a while—anyway, that mother lived to be 105, and Ms. Coleman died about two or three years ago, and she has a son that lived—a son and two daughters. Well, I know it's one daughter and the son still living in Floydada, and in this little one room school, she had all the grades and during that time—oh, I guess school was a lot different, but like they say, kids learned a lot from each other because the teacher would have first grade, a second grade, and all up the line. She taught us all and—I'll never get—I guess I was in the fifth or sixth grade or maybe seventh grade before we had another teacher. They've finally hired another black teacher, and we used part of the church, one of the churches because it was so many children, and so we used part of the church, and finally, they built a—they didn't build a—some school out in the country, some rural school, had closed and they moved that school to town for the black children for the black school, and this school was about a block from where we lived, and the other school was about two blocks down the streets from—on Lee Street where we lived. In fact, my sister still live on Lee Street up the street, and I can't recall

how many children we had in that school, but all the kids basically went to school under my mother until they got this separate teacher and I know I was in the sixth or seventh grade, and the thing that used to bug me—some of the black parents would go visit the school board and ask them to turn school out so their children could go pick cotton.

CM:

Oh, okay.

CT:

See that's the only they had of making money. Well, I didn't care for picking no cotton, but my buddies was going, so I'd go with them too, but I hated—you talk about hating, hating that farm work. Oh, man, I hating picking that cotton. I'd get a little and go to sleep on the bag. Some of them come talking about, "I'm going to tell your mama on you." I say, "Well, you tell her," because I hated it. Now, my older sister, she enjoyed pulling cotton. That gal pulled nine, ten-hundred pounds a day. I said, "No, it's not for me," but anyway, we had fun in school. We had—well, they didn't have the—well, it was called the Interscholastic League—we'd participate against the kids in Matador.

CM:

There was another black school over in Matador there?

CT:

Yeah. Matador, Plainview, and Ralls, Lorenzo. Yeah, we would have sometime in the springtime, you know, the different school would visit each other and we'd have softball games, spelling bees, math bees, and things of that sort, and so it was quite interesting.

CM:

Well, you know, at one time, I know the athletic programs became the Prairie View Leagues—

CT:

Yep.

CM:

Okay. I remember that in—where was your mother—where did she get her education at in college?

CT:

She finished from Prairie View A&M.

CM:

Ah, okay.

CT:

In fact, she finished high school at Prairie View.

CM:

Oh, okay.

CT:

She and most of my aunts, they all—you see, it was called Prairie View Normal, and a lot of the children down there were in—they had not finished high school, so my mother and two of her sisters finished Prairie View Normal, and they got their degrees from Prairie View, and then, as the years would go, teachers had to go back to school what have you, and so, they would go back, and one time, Mother—we were both in school at the same time. My wife Gracie was in school at Prairie View because she was one of the teachers in Floydada. Now, this was after I was grown, you know. She wasn't there when I was growing up, you know, but she came there and starting teaching and—it must've been '53 or '54 when Gracie came, and I had dropped out of school and Uncle Sam called me in, sent me to Korea.

CM:

Oh, so you're a vet—oh, to the—that's the war which was actually going on then.

CT:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

Okay.

CT:

Well that's after I had finished school. I finished school in 1947, and so I went to school. I had attended Prairie View two or three years, and I dropped out, and I'd planned to go back, but I hadn't made it. And as a result, you see, Prairie View had ROTC, and you males had to participate, you know, so we were in ROTC and this fellow would always remind, "You boys dropped out of school, Uncle Sam is going to get you," and he didn't lie. (laughs) Yep, so—

CM:

How long did you stay in the service?

CT:

I stayed in two years. I went in in November of—what year did I go in? November of '52 and I got out in August of '54.

CM:

Where did you do your basic training at?

CT:

Fort Hood, Texas.

CM:

Fort Hood in Killeen.

CT:

Yeah, Fort Hood and before finishing basic, we had our orders to the FICON [**Fighter Conveyer**], and we were wondering, What in the devil are they talking about, the FICON And that old sergeant said, “Man, they just talking about Korea. That’s where y’all are going. Korea.” Well see, Prairie View had this ROTC and all boys, males, if you weren’t in sports, you had to participate in ROTC. You didn’t have a choice, you know, like around—in these schools, you know, the kids can join if they want to, but we didn’t have a choice. If you were male and not playing basketball or something, you would go, but then that was another thing growing up in Floydada, we did not have a basketball team or anything, but we had softball teams because my mother said, “Now, I am not a coach, so you all get out there and play.” (laughs)

CM:

Oh, okay, I can see that.

CT:

So we played ball with the boys and girls, and whenever we would have these little springtime meets, we would play the different schools, so we finally had enough boys to have a full team without the girls. We used to play with the girls, because the girls could beat most of us playing.

CM:

Oh, okay.

CT:

Yeah, those girls could play that softball.

CM:

I remember that, too. The girls, when I grew up you know, there's a stage where they're tomboys, and we had a girl in the neighborhood that could take all our marbles. She would take our marbles every day.

CT:

There's one—this girl, she died—he lived right down the street from—anyway, she was living in Amarillo when she passed, but she would take our marbles all the time, and anyway, we had a lot of fun doing it. We played Crosbyton, Ralls, Lorenzo, Plainview, Matador, yeah, and that was part of it, you know what I mean?

CM:

Do you remember the name of the schools in Plainview? Did they have particular names, the black schools?

CT:

They probably did. I can't remember.

CM:

Oh, okay, all right. One of the things that's interesting that you said, you know, going to Prairie View. Well, I didn't realize until years later when I got out, you know, you look at the Dunbar annuals that the education that I got in the system, you know, I graduated in 1971 from Dunbar, predominately was teachers from historical black institutes.

CT:

That's right.

CM:

Whether it be Samuel Houston, Huston-Tillotson, Bishop, Jarvis Christian, Wiley, Texas College, Prairie View A&M, you know. They all came from there and I must say, we got an excellent education.

CT:

Sure. You know, a lot of folks always had something to say about the school, but like they say, had it not for been for those black colleges, you wouldn't have those teachers because they weren't hiring black teachers to teach in Anglo schools, so you might have, you know, just admit that. That's the way it was at the time.

CM:

Right, and see another thing, you know, we had integration. We got—schools got integrated in '68, I guess. Some of them were integrated a little bit more. But the fact that I remember is in a way, we lost something when we got integration. We lost some teachers in the community because you were mentioning your neighborhood here. Ms. Griffith, Mr. Priestly, Ms. Davenport, Ms. Brown around the corner.

CT:

And Mr. Jackson.

CM:

Mr. Jackson on East thirty, yeah.

CT:

Barley, Mr. Peppers.

CM:

Tons of them.

CT:

Yeah, there was somebody else. Oh, Virgil.

CM:

That's right. His mother lived on East Thirty-Fourth—

CT:

Virgil Johnson lived down there.

CM:

Yeah.

CT:

—lived down there, yeah, and most of the teachers, lot of teachers lived down there—

CM:

Ms. Barren. Ms. Barren.

CT:

Ms. Barren and—oh the devil, he worked at the bank. What's that boy's daddy's name? That's a shame. He lived in the third house down there.

CM:

Oh, Mr. Alexander lived over here, too.

CT:

Who?

CM:

Mr. Charles Alexander.

CT:

Yeah, Charles Alexander and—

CM:

Mr. Powell. Mr. Powell lived over here.

CT:

And Romeo and Ms. Snookie lived over on Thirty-Fourth and—

CM:

Right, across the tracks right there.

CT:

Yeah.

CM:

And if you go a little bit further out, you had Mr. Williams at one time, the fifth grade teacher, and then you have Mr. Colvin and then back on here Mr. Roberts and Braxton back on—Mr. Braxton lived back in there on East Twenty-Ninth.

CT:

Who else was over there? It was quite a few teachers moved over because see, when I started teaching it, this was a maze field or something.

CM:

Okay, and that's what I want. I remember probably the first house over here. The Moores on that corner right there, you know, down here by Wheatley, on the corner where the stop sign is. Savannah Moore and her sister—I was in the grade with Linda and Brenda. They were twins and they went to our church. That's why I remember them, and they were there, and then I remember Mr. Taylor, the electrician, house being on the campus.

CT:

Over there by Dunbar.

CM:

Yes.

CT:

Yeah, yes, so, they moved—I mean they bought that property when they built a new Dunbar, and they moved over there, and then this area was open.

CM:

Well, you see, that's something I didn't remember and I—even though I lived over here across the tracks, I just didn't remember what was here, and I'm glad you told me this.

CT:

It was a cotton field—well, it was maize. That's what it was because I never get—one day, we were playing ball, you know, see, when I started teaching, that was Seiber Heights.

CM:

Okay, Seiber Heights, yes.

CT:

See, that was the school over here, and Ms. Simmons was the principal of Seiber Heights and Iles—

CM:

She had both there.

CT:

—and Ms. Richardson, Willie Francis—Willie Francis was the head teacher and so called extra principal. She was the principal of the Seiber Heights area. So when I started teaching in January of '57, we had to use Seiber Heights' cafeteria, because—I told Grace a while ago, I said, “You know, that was kind of strange. They built a school and put kids in it before they completed the cafeteria.”

CM:

Okay, so, actually, Wheatley was named Seiber Heights.

CT:

No. The area before.

CM:

Oh, the area was named Seiber Heights. Okay, yes.

CT:

It was—well, the school, they called it Seiber Heights.

CM:

And one reason I kind of knew that is that the Church of Christ was—Manhattan over there—was named Seiber Heights Church of Christ at one time.

CT:

Yeah, yeah. Well see, this area—it was very small, and during that time, and there were no houses down here, period. There were no houses on this side of Teak at the time when I started teaching up there. Now, the houses did run down Teak where Ms. Lincoln and them lived going to the cemetery. Those houses and the houses back on that side.

CM:

And that house that she lived in is still down there.

CT:

Yes. Still down there, and so, it had really grown here, you know, since that time because like I say, the people—most of the kids who were in school, they lived on that—see, the park up there from the Boys' Club, East Twenty-Fourth Street, all those houses were there, you know. People lived in that area, and—

CM:

And East Twenty-Fourth going into Manhattan Drive.

CT:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay.

CT:

And across from Quirt [Avenue] as it was called [now Martin Luther King Blvd], that white house that's over there before they got Green Fair [Manor, housing project]—Green Fair—I don't know when they built Green Fair, but it wasn't over there when I started teaching.

CM:

And I remember as a kid that they built the streets there two or three years before they actually built the complex, because they had the streets that were there.

CT:

You were at Wheatley?

CM:

Yeah. I was—it wasn't—where Green Fair is because I would go down that alley, you know, where that alley went from one way all the way down to, you know, where the swimming pool was.

CT:

Yes, yes. Well, anyway, I can recall on my way back to Prairie View see, after—or before going into the service. Well, my mama would bring us over here and we'd catch Santa Fe to go to Prairie View. Well, we would go to Brenham. My uncle would pick us up and take us to Prairie View, but anyway, I kept seeing them building that building, and I said, "Well, I'll be darned. They're building the school over there." So, Charlie Brown and Dill and a bunch of boys, they were talking about them, you know what I mean? And so, I can recall on Christmas, one Christmas, we was coming home for Christmas, and Charlie Brown—we told him he's too doggone smart for us. We had to all gotten our tickets and we had to go to Brenham to catch the train otherwise we had to go to Houston, and so Brenham was thirty-something miles and Houston was forty-five, so we just go to Brenham and catch the train. So while we were there, we stopped at a restaurant, got us a hamburger or something. Charlie Brown—I just thought of an idea.

CM:

So he was at—was he at Prairie View when you were down there?

CT:

Yes. He was there.

CM:

Oh, Mr. Brown. Charles Brown.

CT:

Dill. Dill was there, too.

CM:

First principal of Struggs and former principal of Ella Iles.

CT:

Dill was there and—

CM:

Real estate.

CT:

Joe Snell, Joan Irving's brother.

CM:

Okay. Her brother, yes. I know the kids.

CT:

Joe Snell was there. There was Emma Scott, Mary Scott. Did you know them? You know Reverend Scott?

CM:

Yes, I know Reverend Scott.

CT:

Those were Reverend Scott's daughters.

CM:

Ah, okay.

CT:

They went to Prairie View, and these kids on the corner there on Elm where Ms. Smith lived, Betty Jo Holmes, her brother's name. He died not long ago.

CM:

Oh, yeah, right there in that white house that was on the corner, yes.

CT:

Yeah, Mutt's sister.

CM:

Next to Ms. Clarabelle Smith and Mr. Ben Smith.

CT:

Yeah, Ben and Clarabelle. Anyway, on the house on the corner was the Holmes, and I think Mutt died last year sometime.

CM:

Oh, okay. All right.

CT:

Yeah. Somebody told me he had died, but anyway, we were getting ready to come home, and we all had our tickets to ride this train. So he talked us into turning it in—we were going to catch the bus and save money and we we're going to have a party. After Christmas, we were all going to meet over—we were all going to meet in Lubbock and have a—it was some other kid. I can't think of some of them. Oh, Elroy, but it's late now. I believe he was from Slaton, and somebody else was from Slaton. Anyway, we all pooled our—put our money—got a little money back for my tickets, go ride this bus. We caught the bus in Brenham and got up to a little old town. I can't think of a little old town there. It's somewhere out below Abilene or somewhere back in that area, and we got there, the doggone bus had taken off. (laughs)

CM:

(laughs) You missed the bus?

CT:

We missed the bus, and lo and behold, we had to get a taxi cab to catch that bus, and that took all of our little extra money. (laughs) We got on old Charlie Brown. We wanted to beat him up. Man, we won't have no money for no party. We had to give that money to that taxi driver to catch that bus. I tell you, that was really something. But anyway, we used to come over here a lot. My brother and I used to run around over here a lot and go to the place you'd go and—

CM:

Ah, down on Dates Street. Mr. Ferris' place, roller skate place.

CT:

Yeah. We would go down there some, and—well anyway, there were a lot of—Betty and, oh heck. He's a minister, Church of Christ. What's that boy's name? That's a shame.

CM:

You're not talking about Guyton?

CT:

Guyton.

CM:

Yes. Lawrence Guyton.

CT:

Yeah, old Guyton down and his wife, because she was teaching—she was a substitute teacher.

CM:

She was Mr. Lawson's—Gene Lawson's sister?

CT:

Uh-huh.

CM:

Yes.

CT:

Anyway, when I was hired, she lost her job and I lost a friend.

CM:

Wow, because they had to even it out so needed a male teacher?

CT:

She was a substitute teacher.

CM:

Oh, she was a substitute.

CT:

She was a substitute teacher in the first place, and I said, "I wonder why they hadn't hired her," you know. Anyway, he said, "Well, he was—" Grover said, "He was trying to get a male because they had this after school recreation and they'd figured it would help to keep those boys in school, but what happened—I had more than I could handle."

CM:

Did the males necessarily have the boys back then?

CT:

Huh?

CM:

As a male teacher, did you necessarily have all the boys?

CT:

Uh-uh. No, no. This was just for the after school recreation. Yeah, no, no.

CM:

Yeah, we had a flag football and so forth, yes.

CT:

Yeah. I had too many girls and they was—in fact, most classes, I had—seemed liked I had more rebels because half those boys when they got around twelve or thirteen, they didn't come to school, and so that's when bought along the Sonny Fair and all that gang.

CM:

Oh, okay yes. The truant officer.

CT:

The truant officer, and that was really strange. It was a little girl named Roberson. We went to Prairie View together, and she was a second grade teacher and she lived over near Ms. Pepper's house. You know where Raymond's house was?

CM:

Yes.

CT:

Right there on the corner where this Williams girl stayed. Anyway—

CM:

So you're talking about Mr. Lawrence Roberson's wife?

CT:

Huh?

CM:

Mr. Lawrence Roberson's wife?

CT:

No, no, no.

CM:

Oh, a different one. Okay.

CT:

Yeah, no. This girl was—that was her maiden name. She was Roberson, and I don't even know where that girl was from. But we were friends at Prairie View. I knew her at Prairie View because we had a class or two together, and she went on and finished and like I say, I didn't finish. I hadn't finished because I went on to the service, and after two years in Korea, my wife had moved to Floydada before I went into the service, and I used to tease her. She stayed in that house behind us with the—my scoutmaster, and they had extra rooms and three teachers stayed over there, and so my mother was still teaching, and Gracie would always come, I said, "You told that tale you were coming over there to work out something." I said, "Girl, you know you'd come over to see me." I'd tease her about that all the time. I said, "You knew you were coming over to see me." So anyway, after her teaching, getting in the school system, there were several more teachers. In fact, those three girls stayed over at Ms. Jones. There was another teacher, too. All of them were young ladies.

CM:

You mean stayed—this is in Lubbock, right?

CT:

No, in Floydada.

CM:

In Floydada. Okay.

CT:

Yeah, in Floydada. They—it was a, well, there were a lot of kids up—a lot of folks moving from east Texas, come out here for cotton, you know, to pull cotton. A lot of them stayed, you know what I mean? And so, they had to hire more teachers in Floydada, and so that's when they moved that school from somewhere out in the country. I can't recall what it was called, but anyway, it was not very—it was, oh I guess, we lived a block from that school. We lived about two from the old school which was down almost in the lake because when that lake would get up sometime, that water would be out there where we couldn't even play on the yard.

CM:

And again, what street was that in Floydada?

CT:

East Lee Street.

CM:

East Lee Street.

CT:

Yeah. East Lee Street. I tell you, but anyway, it was quite interesting. It was quite interesting when, you know, the school had gotten larger, and even though—that's the school that I finished from, and I'll never forget—we were going to have all the senior prom—I was the valedictorian and there were two other girls—two girls. It was just three of us in the class, and we were going to have a dance. So we left the school the record player. The three of us talked to our parents out of enough money to buy a little old portable record player, and we left that in the school, but anyway, we had a little dance. That was our prom. That was really something. So anyway, I had no idea I'd ever—I never dreamed about teaching. When I went to college, I was just as wild as a buck. Never been nowhere but over here to Lubbock and Plainview, and what have you, but anyway, I had taken my majors so many times, my mom said, "Boy, you've got to settle and get one major. You can't just keep changing your major every semester." She said, "You want to change your major," but then I told her that ROTC, I had to do two years of that, and no ifs ands or buts about it. But anyway, I came back home and worked at the cleaners, I was a dry cleaner.

CM:

What cleaners did you work at?

CT:

I worked at Stuart's Cleaners on Main Street.

CM:

In Floydada.

CT:

In Floydada. Yeah, I worked for him about a year or two, and the year that I had planned to go back to school, that's when Uncle Sam tapped me.

CM:

All right.

CT:

Yeah. Uncle Sam tapped me, and so, that was all it, and so I went over, went to Fort Hood, and then went over to Korea, stayed over there—oh I think I was in the army eighteen months over there. I know I spent a whole year and like I said, I went in the army in November and I got out in August of '54, and so in December of 1954, we got married. Somebody said you tried to wait until New Years. I said, "We did. We married on the thirty-first of December," of 1954, and I

went back to school and I had two years to do. So I went back to school and I put in an application and I even put in one for Floydada. That old superintendent knew me. He'd known me all my life. That joker didn't even look at my transcript, partner. Anyway, I came and applied over here, and I got that call to come in for an interview, and I said, "Well, I don't know whether to go over there or not. They'd probably won't give me no job."

CM:

So now, was your wife still teaching over there?

CT:

Yeah, but she had resigned. She resigned because when you expect and they don't want you teaching at that time, you know, they had to—she had to retire, you know, resign. So, I came over here and had an interview, and they sent me to Wheatley, and I met Grover, and we talked and he said, "Well, I shouldn't need a young man," and I told him, I said, "Now, I've never played football a day in my life," and I said, "I didn't play basketball, but now I did play softball and baseball." I said—they had these little old men playing baseball on Sundays, and mom was reluctant to let us play because she said, "We didn't need to be playing ball on Sunday." So anyway, when Dr. Hill told me, he said, "Now Charles, we also, if you accept this job, you can make a little extra money." I said, "Really?" I said, "Well, I need some money." I said, "Doing what?" He said, "Well, we call them directors of after school recreation." He said, "That job pays \$150." I thought he meant a month. That was for the whole year.

CM:

Oh. (laughs)

CT:

A hundred—I tell you, I think it was \$150, and he said, "Now in the spring, you play softball and in the fall, you play football." I had never played a game of football in my life, you know what I mean? I knew about football, but I didn't know anything about calling no plays, anything, so George, Scott, and Charlie Brown was my teacher, and so, every day we'd played, it was just Iles and Wheatley. We would walk over to Iles and they'd walk over to Wheatley one week, and we'd walk the next, and so—

CM:

How did you get over to—how did you get over there without the bridge being there?

CT:

We walked over those railroad tracks.

CM:

Yeah, okay.

CT:

And see, just like they said, that was dangerous. Even though during that time of day, wasn't too many trains going, but we walked, and the boys from Iles walked—well see, Charlie Brown had more boys than we had, but then finally, after Joe Davis and—Joe Davis was a truant officer during that time. He rustled those boys, and those jokers would come to school, and just like Grover said, he said, “By you being here, these boys want to play football, and they come to school” Said the attendance, you know, had gotten so much better with those boys, and some of the parents who were keeping them out of—they weren't keeping them out. Some of them were because they said they had to work. But anyway, they got all those boys and it was so many, and so after Charlie Brown—I mean Charlie Johnson started teaching, he would come out there and help me. I told him, I said, “I have too many boys. We need to separate these boys.” So Charlie took the younger boys. He took the fourth and part of fifth grade, and I had fifth and sixth, because those were some big old jokers. I had to look up at most of them. I had one of them old Shipman boys. Oh, William, that boy, every time you turned around, he was hurting, and his mother said, “Oh, Mr. Taylor, don't worry about it. That's not the first time he had a broken bone.” Says, “He just—he just prone for accidents.” I said, “Well, I declare.” But anyway, we had this recreation, and it worked real well, and then they hadn't really integrated the schools, you know what I mean?

CM:

Right.

CT:

Because they put this, and it's true. See, a lot of folks don't realize this. Black kids could go to school anywhere they lived, and during the time when I moved here, there were a lot of black kids. Their parents was working as maids and what have you, and those kids could go to school in those neighborhoods.

CM:

I did not know that. I didn't know that.

CT:

Yeah, those kids could go to school in the neighborhoods where they lived, and so somebody was talking about how prejudice it is—I said, “Well, it's prejudice everywhere.” I said, “Kids could go to school if they wanted to.”

CM:

And see, I didn't know that, and I'll tell you something else I didn't know, I knew a person—I worked with a person that grew up in Spade, Texas, and she went to school in the early sixties in an integrated school because they didn't have enough black kids to have a school.

CT:

That's right.

CM:

And see, I didn't know—I didn't realize that existed anywhere. She told me that.

CT:

Oh yeah. That happened on several—some of these little old places, right, because I can recall even when—when I was a kid in school, there were no black schools in Lockney. Those kids in Lockney came to school in Floydada, and so, that happened. But here in Lubbock—in Lubbock, they could—you know H. M. Adam?

CM:

Yes.

CT:

They lived out on Nineteenth Street. I'm not sure—Nineteenth and it might have been Quaker because we used to go out there and play dominoes, but anyway, there were some other blacks that lived around in that area because some kids were going to school at Rush, and that was in the fifties.

CM:

Oh, I did not know that.

CT:

Yeah. That was in the fifties, and so, after I worked at Wheatley, ten years, from '57-'67, and I asked for a transfer and I got transferred to Bozeman, and so, I still had my coaching duties, so I had the fifth grade at Wheatley because I was teaching sixth over here, you know, after they brought our kids back from Dunbar, so I had fifth grade over there and I had after school recreation and I had Lieutenant Prothro, he was police officer—

CM:

Oh yes, I remember him.

CT:

And his red-headed wife worked for the city, and they were the best parents, and he would come out there and referee for me. So anyway, class came over. I had worked for Mr. Mears one year, and then class was transferred to Bozeman—

CM:

And at that time, Bozeman was not a minority school. It was still—

CT:

It was still white predominately. Excuse me. I just got to take a pee.

CM:

Go right ahead.

CT:

I had some tea from—excuse me here.

Pause in recording

CT:

Any rate, back to Bozeman, it was so interesting when I went over to Bozeman. Mr. Mears was the principal and I had the fifth grade and I had thirty children.

CM:

Were there any other black teachers over there then?

CT:

Oh yeah.

CM:

Okay.

CT:

Ms. Priestly, was over there already. Ms. Priestly was there, Ms. Anderson.

CM:

Mr. Anderson's wife?

CT:

Ms. Anderson—

CM:

Roy and Roy Anderson's wife.

CT:

Yeah.

CM:

And you're talking about Ruth Priestly.

CT:

Yeah, Ruth Priestly. Ms. Anderson, and then there were two girls hired. Ms. Ruby Henderson.

CM:

Yes, I know Ms. Henderson.

CT:

And—oh this girl, I see her sometimes teaching—her uncle was principal in Brownfield. Oh, that's a shame, I can't think of the child's name, but anyway, she used to live with Ms. Taylor up here, and I—she rode to school with me every morning, and there was another black teacher up there. It was a tall man named Johnson. I didn't know him. He was not a Lubbock man. He was imported in here. Anyway, Mr. Mears was very fair to me. I had thirty darlings. I had ten white, ten black, and ten Hispanic, and that was a handful, and I tell you, it was really something, and basically, Bozeman was one of the first schools that they really started kind of mixing, you know what I mean?

CM:

Okay, now you're talking about this period of time, 1967, 1968—'68 rather?

CT:

'68

CM:

Okay, you're right, okay.

CT:

Yep.

CM:

Okay, I didn't know that.

CT:

Yes, 1967, it was—that's when it—well it started before then. I think they started doing it because my wife was transferred to Martin from Iles, but Martin was predominately Mexican-American, I think.

CM:

Ruel E. Martin, okay.

CT:

At that time, you know, right here on Broadway.

CM:

I know when they opened Struggs in '65 or '66, we saw the first teachers. You know, because Ms. Perry was over there and Ms. Perkins who ended up at Dunbar when it closed were over at Struggs at that time, Mr. Charles Brown was the principal and Roy Anderson was the counselor, and he was the assistant principal over there.

CT:

And you know Ms. Perkins's husband taught at Wheatley.

CM:

I did not know that.

CT:

Olden Perkins. He taught at Wheatley because he was my daughter's fifth grade teacher, and we worked together. Oh, I think he'd been out there two or three years before I had moved over there. In fact, Perkins just retired about two—I said, "Man, what you trying to do?" He worked forty-something years, or maybe fifty. I told him—

CM:

It would have to be because I know Ms. Perkins—that was 1965 or 1966 when we were over there, and she was over there at Struggs in 1966. That was over forty years ago.

CT:

Well anyway, like I said, we still had after school recreation. We played football and they had changed that thing up because Charlie Brown and myself, we played the schools all along the rim. We started with—we played Posey, because James Otis Price was over there.

CM:

Okay, and Posey was probably predominately Hispanic at that time, I would imagine?

CT:

Basically.

CM:

Okay.

CT:

But no, it was quite a few Anglos over there at first because when I over there as assistant principal, it was still—oh, I wouldn't say it was—I don't know how many Anglos were over there.

CM:

So you made the transfer out of Wheatley for a career—for your career?

CT:

Yes.

CM:

Okay. I understand that.

CT:

Yes, uh-huh. Well anyway, after being transferred to Posey, what they were doing, they would remove the principal and they wanted somebody—I guess they wanted a black, and I was glad they did because I was selected. Klause (??) was my principal. I told him, "Boy, you got rid of him. You kept me over here half a year and got rid of him." He said, "Well, look what happened to you." I say, "Yeah, I'm thankful that you did that." You know what I mean?

CM:

Well, you know, coming out of a segregated environment and going to Bozeman where you had mixtures, you know? You had multicultural. It was just fluid?

CT:

It was fine.

CM:

That's all right.

CT:

I tell you what. There were a few Anglo parents—was resentful, you know, you can tell that because it's just like that today. Lubbock's one of the most prejudiced places in the world. A lot

of folks don't believe that, but you know it. You know it. I mean, there are a lot of things that's different, but then there's a lot still hanging on.

CM:

And then that's the key point. Things are hanging on and, you know, I think racism, in my opinion, racism is taught to you, so if you had these attitudes that come down the line and you're in these attitudes, I think you're going to still have that attitude, and if you don't know and you've never experienced it, well, it's just like—

CT:

You wouldn't know it.

CM:

I've never been certain places. I don't—actually, "I don't like that. Well, I've never tasted that. I've never been there."

CT:

But really, that year and a half, it was quite an experience for me because I had only taught black children, you know what I mean?

CM:

Yes.

CT:

All of my ten years teaching before going to—I had only worked with black children because we didn't have no Anglos. We didn't have no—and no Mexicans either. You know that at Wheatley. Uh-uh, but anyway, most of those parents worked, like I could say, Lieutenant Prothro and his wife; Jimmie Keeling, he was coaching over at the—

CM:

Right, at Estacado.

CT:

And his wife was my room mother.

CM:

Oh, that is—

CT:

And Judy was one of my favorite little gals in that class, and they just welcomed me. It was just like—it was really something. I told Mr. Mears. He said, “I was so afraid of what was going to go on.” I said, “Well, I don’t know what you’re afraid of. I’m not going to bite them.” You know what I mean? Anyway, he had this girl. She still come to exercise, we do water aerobics most mornings out at Covenant. Well, I don’t do it every day, but I go out there and exercise, and this girl was a music teacher, and those little old black girls was giving her holy hell, and she said, “What am I going to do?” I said, “Put a board on them.” Mr. Mears, “Charles, you paddled girls?” I said, “I sure did.” I said, “Yes sir. I paddled girls.” He said, “Well, I haven’t paddled too many big girls.” I said, “Well, I tell you what. Sometime, that’s only—” I said, “You know, it’s a shame you can only reach some kids’ brain through their behind.”

CM:

Well, I actually thought there was a course that y’all had in college because I remember at Wheatley, the women and everybody paddled.

CT:

Damn right they did.

CM:

I said, “I think that’s a course they take for the technique,” you know. (laughs)

CT:

No, they don’t teach—and even in college, they were talking about how kids are going to do things and some schools permit corporal punishment and even—now that’s a long time ago. Some schools didn’t permit it.

CM:

Oh, is that right? Even back then?

CT:

Even then.

CM:

Oh, I did not know that.

CT:

They didn’t permit it, no, and that’s where the schools would—well, their kids was running all over them.

CM:

Well, you know, one of the worst things that could happen to you—is that they happen to you at school, and then back then, when y'all were in the neighborhood, they could phone call your mother.

CT:

That's right.

CM:

And then—oh, God—and then your dad gets home and then, you know, and it's like three at a time, you know.

CT:

Yeah. Well, just like I told somebody, I thought I had the best parents in the world when I worked at Wheatley. Those parents backed me anything I suggested to do and help do because we had these Jehovah Witnesses and Ms. Berry—you know Ms. Berry?

CM:

I don't think I do.

CT:

Her husband was a carpenter or something.

CM:

Oh, Ms. Berry. Yes I do. In fact, her husband was from Paris, Texas and my mother knew him, and they're kin to the McGrews. Yes, I know Mr. Berry, yes.

CT:

Yeah, okay, well, she's still over here on East Twenty-Sixth Street. Anyway, one of her little girls was in my sixth grade class, and Ms. Lincoln was our music teacher, and we were going to have kind of a little graduation program, you know, at the end of school and what have you, and so, I can't think of the child's first name, but her mother had told her she couldn't participate. I said, "I tell you what." I said, "You tell your mama that I said, 'If you don't participate, you'll be in the sixth grade next year.'" I'm lying like a big dog. (laughs) Knowing I couldn't keep that child, you know what I mean? And some of them said, "Boy, you shouldn't have told her." I said, "Well, she's a member of this class and the parents ought to let those kids participate." I said, "That doesn't even make sense. All they going to do is sing a song or do something like that, and that's not to hurt one thing," and Ms. Berry got to be my best buddy. She's still a good friend of mine. I haven't seen her in quite a while. She was—she didn't want it to happen, but it did, you know?

CM:

Well, you mentioned that Mr. Colvin had told you that you'd get good kids in your class, and I must commend you on the sixth grade class I was not in. I could name two people out of that class and I think—you can correct me if I'm wrong—that went on to better things, and a lot of them did. Dwight Gibson.

CT:

Yeah.

CM:

Dwight Gibson went on to achieve a PhD in astrophysics from MIT. And then Charles Melton is at cardiologist—in fact, he's one of my best friends. He lived on the corner over here, and Charles Melton—and that's not to say the other people that were in that class, you know, but just two of them. They came through Wheatley Elementary and through your tutelage, you know, those people, you know.

CT:

Yep, yep, but anyway, back to Bozeman. This was a sixth grade teacher that had so many problems, and I told those little old girls. I said, "Don't you know you're only looking ugly—making other kids look bad?" You know, I tried to talk with them. So, Mr. Mears, "Charles, what would you do?" I said, "I'd put a board on their behinds." "You mean you'd hit a girl?" I said, "If the girl's the problem, yes sir, I would put a board on them." He said, "Well, you come up here. I want you to witness." He hit them little old gals. There was three of them, one of them named Judu Brown. I'll never forget her—Judu Brown because I had taught her in the fifth grade, see? She was one of my little students trying to act bad, and I think I had put that board her butt a time or two, and I know she didn't want me to get her, but anyway, she and these other two little girls that kept acting ugly with Wanda's class, he got them and tightened their little skirts, and sent them back, and the next day, they all bought him bouquets of roses. (laughs) Now, you would whip their behinds and they've stolen some roses from somebody. I said, "Well, I bet that they don't have a rose growing in their yard," but those girls would bring him a bouquet of roses all the week. He said, "I have learned a lot." I said, "No, you might get yourself in trouble if you think that," I said, but they still have corporal punishment on the books of Lubbock right now, and some of them talk about, "no, we don't do that." "Well," I said, "Well, you don't have to do that. You don't have to," but then when I went to Posey, man, I tell you, you talking about some bad children. I tell you, you go down that hall, you'd see of them just using profanity just like if they were grown or something, and one little old boy and his mother, Ms. Dunn. Ms. Dunn had a grandson and there's another lady—I cannot think of that lady's name. She had a little old boy and both of them in special ed. classes. I went by that room one day, he's calling that lady all kinds of "whitey MFs" and everything. I said, "Come here, boy, you going with me." I tightened his little old britches. I told her—well, his grandmother's in the

cafeteria. I said, "If this boy gives that teacher any more problems, I'm going to put him out of school." I said, "I'm going to have him suspended because we're not going to put up with this profanity and stuff," and lo and behold, every day after school, it was a fight, and see, I'm the assistant principal, and so, Mr. Farley would be going down the central office. They were trying to break him in to take over something for—some of the federal program, and there I was left, and looked like every time he would leave that campus, something would come up, you know, something that you wouldn't expect, and I told him one time, I said, "You know, I really want this job as principal when you leave, but I don't know whether I can put up with these children unless I make some changes." He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Every time I catch one doing something, I'm going to tear his backside up." And so, I had James Otis over there.

CM:

What was James Otis Price doing over there?

CT:

He was sixth grade teacher.

CM:

Sixth grade teacher.

CT:

Yeah. James Otis was a sixth grade teacher and he had after school recreation, and old Boyd—another Anglo teacher named Boyd—there was two other Anglo fellows over there that worked with intermediate children, and so I just told them, "I'm not going to put up with this business of these little old boys—these children trying to sass teachers, and use profanity around them." I told them, "I'm going to wash their mouths out with a can of lye soap." I'm lying like a dog, you know, but I told that lie to those kids, and so finally, after they found out we didn't intend to play and keep this going, I said, "Man, I don't—" He said, "Oh, Mr. Taylor. It's been going on." I said, "Well, why—why?" He said, "Well, I paddle mine, but some of these others won't." They said, "No, you're not supposed to hit other people's children." I said, "Well, other people's children are supposed to obey." I said, "I don't care what you say. Children will do what we let them do." I said, "I don't have but one, and I paddle her when it was needed," and I said, "it had worked." I said, "And we're going to change this business at this school."

CM:

How long did it take you to clear that up—clean it up over there as far as the discipline?

CT:

Oh, it took two or three years.

CM:

But you got it in the—

CT:

About two years.

CM:

Okay, and you were there twenty-one years?

CT:

I was there about twenty-one years. Yeah, I went over there in 1968 and retired in 1989. Yep. I tell you, I had a lot of fun over there, and now what was fun—I can't even recall the year we started busing. Now, that was fun. The year when they called themselves integrating the schools, and I asked E. C. I said, "Why in the devil did you pick Posey?" "Well, one thing, you had the biggest school with the least children."

CM:

That was E. C. Leslie?

CT:

Yeah. E. C. was the vice—he was vice superintendent and when those parents would come over there, the League of Women Voters really helped that busing situation. They would go to different schools and visit and talk to the parents and what have you. The parents would come over and visit the schools, so I made it my business when they came. I would give them a grand tour. I'd take them around the entire school and all across from my office area, we had an area across there where the teachers—it was a little breakroom. I used to go in there and smoke and one of my little teachers, you know, and I told them, "Now, we don't want smoke when the parents come. We don't want to smell this tobacco in here." So anyway, we would go in there and tell them—I had a board lying up on my desk in there, and it had holes in it. Now, I didn't use that. I didn't use that. I had another little paddle about that long and it was oak, and they said—I said, "Now this is my choir room." I said, "This is where we do a little singing sometimes," and this old lady, "Do you actually hit them with that?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." I said, "Now if you don't want your child to have corporal punishment, we've got a form for you to fill out and when I think it's bad enough for him to get paddled and you don't want it, then I'll have to call you and you have to come get him and he'll have to stay home a day or two." Man, that got to their attention, you hear me? That got their attention, but anyway—then I had this one from Georgia. She said, "Mr. Taylor, I want to be frank with you. You see, I'm from Georgia, and we didn't mix races in our school." I said, "I know you didn't." I said, "Yes ma'am. I know exactly where you are coming from." I said, "But I'll tell you what. You don't have to worry about your child. I'm going to take good care of him." That child was in the second grade. Do

you know he stayed over there until he finished the sixth grade? And she was a volunteer. The mother volunteered. She said, "This has been the best experience for me and my child. He just loved you to death."

CM:

So we're talking about the period of time, probably the seventies?

CT:

Yep.

CM:

Okay.

CT:

I said, "Well, I'll tell you what." I can't even think of the lady's name now, but I had a good experience with that integration, the busing as we called it, you know what I mean?

CM:

Right.

CT:

It really worked well.

CM:

And I think we adjusted to it, you know, coming out of the neighborhoods that we had that were segregated and I think we've merged pretty good, you know.

CT:

We did. I think so, too.

CM:

Because, you know, after years and years of not being integrated, I think we've merged real good, you know, because—

CT:

But see I thought about that when I went to Bozeman. When I asked for a transfer, you know, you fill in the form and send it in, and if they want you to go somewhere, they are going to send you, you know, or call you in and talk to you. I went in and talked, and E. C. told me—I don't know if it was E. C. or Bob Knight. He was personnel director, but anyway, he was talking about

an opening. They needed an opening over at Bozeman because it was an Anglo man. He had a group of boys, and Bozeman had a lot of children at that time, you know what I mean?

CM:

Yes.

CT:

So, I had wanted—he said, “We don’t want you to lose none of your money. We want you to keep your salary that you had, what you—that \$120 a year. They want you to keep your little money.” But anyway, I got a good start over there. The parents were very cooperative. In fact, it was surprising because Mr. Mears told me, said, “You sure did do something for some of these Anglos.” I said, “What did I do for them?” He said, “I don’t know, but before you got over here—” I said, “All the black teachers are having a lot of problems with some of these little Anglos.” It wasn’t the kids so much. It was, well, it was the parents. He said, “But you, what did you do to them?” I say, “I didn’t do anything to them. I came over here to teach,” and I—you know, I said, “Maybe some of the things that I was doing was wrong, but I know how to treat children,” you know? I said, “That’s my basic point. We want children to do what’s right.”

CM:

Exactly.

CT:

We want to teach them something because they’re not going to be children always. They’ve got to grow up and raise their own families and they need to learn how to get along with other people.

CM:

And that’s the key point that you’re—you need them to learn how to get along with people and it does take—because the teachers, you know. My greatest fear was PTA meetings because I knew, so to speak like the use the term now, I was going to be ratted on. (laughs) And see, and my mother had that ear wide open because the teachers couldn’t wait. Did your mother come into the PTA meeting? “Yes, ma’am,” you know, because I knew that I’m just waiting it out. “What happened? What happened?”

CT:

Your mother worked at Bozeman.

CM:

Yes, she did.

CT:

Now I'm trying to remember. I was trying to remember, and I talking to [inaudible (1:02:15)] yesterday, because Ms. Priestly lost a sister, and I was—we went over there yesterday and I was talking, was something about school, and I said, "Yeah, Ms. Morton also worked over at Bozeman, but she might have been over after I left."

CM:

I think she went over there like '71 or '70.

CT:

Yeah, that's what I say. She went over there after because see, Clarence and I would go out and have lunch together some days and I—he'd pick me up one time and then the next I'd go over there, and I'd always go in the building, you know. But anyway, school was a lot of fun. I'm not joking. I enjoyed my work at all the schools. I enjoyed my work at Wheatley, and I told somebody, "Wheatley had the best children and the best parents that you could find because those parents that I had, including Zach Johnson—"

CM:

Zach Johnson—(laughter)

CT:

And you know the most of the time, when I go to the barbershop—

CM:

(laughs)—that lived right over here on Teak Avenue.

CT:

Mhmm.

CM:

I went to school with a sister Brenda; she was in my class in fact. (laughs)

CT:

But anyway, I see old Zach sometimes during the days at his barbershop when I go down there. He's always trying to sell me some socks or something, and you know he spent some time down at Gatesville or something. Not Gatesville, where's the pen?

CM:

Hunstville.

CT:

Huntsville or somewhere. “Yeah,” he said, “Oh, I got in a little trouble.” You told me about that. He said, “You told me about that. Had I listened to you, it wouldn’t have happened.” I said, “Well, you learned, didn’t you?” He said, “Yeah, but it took the long way around.”

CM:

One of the things back then that we had, if an old said you did it, you did it, but the scariest phrase that a teacher could use on anyone that I knew, even notorious people, was “I’m going to tell your mother.” “Oh no! Please! What do you want me to do?” “I’m going to tell your mother,” and boy, that would, you know, that made people straighten up right then, you know.

CT:

But sure, you tell some—some of them say now. You tell them that, “to hell, tell her.”

CM:

Hell, that was the last thing I wanted you to do was tell my mom, man because I know—because she’d take care of it and then she’d be telling my dad and he coming in because I’m like, Aw, man, I could have thrown myself on the mercy of the court here, but then I’d take the paddling because I don’t want to go home. (laughs)

CT:

Yesiree.

CM:

My greatest fear was every time, you know, class meeting and the first thing the teacher said, “Oh, he’s doing good, but he talks all the time in class and he cuts up.” Oh. That was just like, that was the curse of death right there. “He cuts up in class,” and I can hear my mother now. “I’ll take care of that.” (laughs)

CT:

Yeah, and you didn’t have to worry about it.

CM:

That’s right.

CT:

You know, I just—I noticed some of these little kids that come to our church. We have two vans that pick up these children. A lot of them come from Green Fair and other places, and some of those children, they’re just terrible, just talking all the time and what bugged me, my daughter’s sitting with them and didn’t say nothing. I said, “Why don’t y’all—” and Gracie said, “Well,

why don't—?" I said, "No. I'm going to keep my hand away from it." Every once in a while, I'll say something to one, you know, but I said, "Now, it doesn't make sense to let kids just do any and everything," you know, so it's getting better because I tease some of them old girls at work. I said, "They going to take care of you some time later. You let it keep happening." But anyway, children, just like I say, children will do what we let them do.

CM:

Right. See, I was taught that adults were called—you'd say "Yes ma'am" and "Sir," you speak to them, and then if adults were talking, the phrase was "Go play."

CT:

That's right.

CM:

You get lost, you know, and they're adults in here, you know, you get lost. They didn't say get lost, but she'd say, "Why don't you go outside and play?" Okay, you know what that means. It means we're talking adult stuff in here. We're having adult conversations no matter what it is, and you don't need to be in here.

CT:

Yep, that's for sure. That's for sure, but anyway, I really enjoyed my work with school.

CM:

And a total how many years again?

CT:

In school?

CM:

In the school system.

CT:

I worked thirty-three years.

CM:

Wow.

CT:

Yeah, I started in January, so I got a full year's credit for that. I started January of 1957 and I retired in 1989.

CM:

That's all right.

CT:

So, see, that would have been thirty-two years been with this mid-term. I got a full year's credit for that.

CM:

That's very good.

CT:

Yeah. I'll tell you something. Somebody say, "You sure look young." I say, "Looks are deceiving," but my mom even teased me about my retirement. She says, "Boy, I worked fifty-years and here you're talking about retiring." I said, "Yes ma'am. That's what I'm going to do."

CM:

Yes. I remember my dad. They worked even after they retired. They worked doing something, you know, well into their eighties and they worked, and my aunt, my mother's sister, worked and she was cutting the—the property they have down there is about an acre. She was cutting that with a push mower up until she was like eighty-five, and I told my uncle. I said, "Well, we can pay for that," and my uncle said, "Yeah, we can do that." When he left, she said, "Don't take that away from me. That's my exercise." When he left the room, she said, "I like doing that." I said, "Well—" "No," she said. "I like pushing that mower out there. Don't take that away from me," and I said, "Okay, if you're sure, you'll have to cut that yard out there," but now that—because I was amazed when you said that your daughter is retired and you know, you look at them, boy, they're much younger than us, but everybody that I know is retired now. See, I go back to my friends, you know, like Dennis Carroll and all them? We shot marbles and stuff together, and that—

CT:

Where are those Carroll boys?

CM:

Okay, Dennis Carroll is down in Houston. He lives in Missouri City.

CT:

Oh, that's where I've got a nephew that lives up there.

CM:

Yeah, and then Donny Carroll retired from the army. He's in St. Louis. Duell Carroll, I think, retired from the air force. He was an engineer there and he works in the—oh, in Albuquerque, and then Douglas, the baby boy, is over in Fort Worth and the next one—who was—not Donny. I can't think of—there's one more. Okay, he is over in—I'll think of his name in just a minute. He is over in Atlanta. He retired from AT&T. So they're all around.

CT:

Well, that's all right. Yeah, I tell you, those were some good kids, and his parents were sweet parents, too, and like I say, all the parents over in this area were good. I can't think of a parent that really came to that school to raise hell. You know what I mean?

CM:

Right, and I've seen that now.

CT:

Now, I said—I take that lie back. One did and I was surprised as the devil that she did that, and it was—did you know Ms. McCowan?

CM:

Yes, I did. She was the fifth grade teacher over there.

CT:

Yeah, Modena was fifth grade, yes. Anyway, because she had this little girl in her class and she had been talking, this mother, the whole year about what she's doing and not doing, and the mother knew it, but what made me mad with this parent—you see, when school—you know when we used to get out of school, the kids would come back and get their report cards after twelve o'clock.

CM:

Yes. I remember that.

CT:

On that Saturday, and this was on the Saturday.

CM:

Yeah, whether or not you made it to the next grade, yeah, that was a big deal. Yes.

CT:

But anyway, she had had all kinds of conferences with this parent, and we all had given out our report cards, and we knew we couldn't leave because Grover told us we were going to have a meeting. See, he wanted to wish us farewell. Somebody said, "You did that yesterday." So he says, "Well, I want to do it. I want to—this is sensitive." He says, "Some of these will not be coming back." This woman stayed up and raised hell with Modena. I think we started giving out the cards at one o'clock or something. One-thirty, you know, everybody would have gotten them if they had—so anyway, she came up and raised hell all that day, and what really ticked me off—Grover called themselves having a meeting after she left and you might not believe this, but it was at five o'clock when we left that school. Everybody wanted to whip Grover's butt. See now, he raised hell about this woman coming up here about this child, and Modena was sitting there. I told her, "Girl, don't you cry. Don't you cry. Just hold up. You did your thing and you did it and you—I know you had talked to me about this same child," you know what I mean? Because I had taught to some of—I said, "No, she never done anything like that to me," because I had told her when I had one of them, what I was going to do for them if he didn't straighten up, I was going to keep him and you can look for another teacher to do the same thing the next year, but he kept us up there, man. It was a shame, and it started raining is what made it so bad. It started raining, and there we were still there, but I said, "That goes with the territory," but he didn't have to keep us up there that long. You know, to talk about something that wasn't our business. That's what we all figured. Said, "What happened with that parent happens between that parent and the teacher and him," because he was in there with the conference with them, and I said, "Now, we knew what was going on." We had an idea, you know. She was mad because she was going to be retained, and I said, "Well, I understand how she feels, but she knew it was coming," you know, but that's the way life goes.

CM:

You know, I go back—that wing that you were in. When I was in the fifth grade which had to be '63—it was '64. I remember that you were in the end there, you know, that last room on the south side of the school. Across from you was Mr. Jackson, and then a little bit confused here, but you had Ms. Richardson in there, Ms. McCowan in there. On the other side, you had Ms. Vivian Cook and then I was in the first room with Mr. Williams. He was my fifth grade teacher.

CT:

Maurice, yeah.

CM:

Now on the other side, you also had Ms. Armstead a year before I think she became Ms. Kelly, or she may have been Ms. Kelly—

CT:

Yeah, no, she was Armstead.

CM:

Armstead? And I'm not sure if Mr. Johnson was there then, but I think also at the very—

CT:

Yeah. Charlie came—I'm trying to think. Now, I started in '57 and he came in '58, I think.

CM:

Okay, so he was there, and then I think at one time—

CT:

And Ms. Lincoln was there.

CM:

Oh, okay. That's where the other person is.

CT:

Ms. Lincoln was my music teacher, remember?

CM:

Wasn't Ms. Fair over there at one time in the second grade? Didn't she have it right there next to the cafeteria?

CT:

No, she was on the other side.

CM:

Oh, she was on the other side?

CT:

Yeah. She was on the primary wing.

CM:

Yeah. See, on the primary wing—

CT:

And Maxine and—

CM:

Mrs. Roberson, Mr. Lawrence Roberson's wife. I was in Ms. Jones' room in the second grade. Ms. Carter in the first grade, then you had Ms. Newsome. You had Ms. Vanilla Woods. You had—Ms. Craven was over there. Then going on down, that new section they built, I was in Ms. Bluard's room which was next to Ms. Mercy Brown. Then Ms. Allen was down there, and I can't remember the other teachers that were in that area.

CT:

Yeah, yeah. Well, that's like I say, the only time we would get to meet with those teachers was at staff meeting or something, you know.

CM:

And it's just like the kids, see? We didn't get on that other side unless—you know—now when I got on the other side, I didn't go to the other side. In the same school, you don't know who was over, you know, and it's amazing when you get older that you're not that much difference in age because you now I thought of those as little kids, and now somebody says, "Well, you know I'm retired and I'm fifty-five." I said, "Okay, I guess you were back then," but you know, we were a lot bigger than y'all and you seemed like you're just a little kid.

CT:

Yep, yep, but anyway, I really enjoyed my work in the school system that I worked and I—they talk about Lubbock schools, well, they have a lot of faults, but I think they've done a good job overall in this system. I really do. The only thing that kind of got me about our school life, Jones, my buddy, she was my buddy before she died, and Joe and I was in Prairie View together. He was one of the boys down there at Prairie View too, but when they voted this bond, they claimed the school would be named Iles Wheatley, and all of a sudden when they started building, they changed it, and I mean, you know, somebody said they said something to them about it. I said, "Well, that is a shame that it happened, but that's the lie they told." They told that and it never should have happened, you know. They shouldn't have changed that.

CM:

Right, and I agree with you and that has come up several times where people have said that, you know. I've talked to other people and said, "Well, you know, we don't know if—nothing against the name now, but it probably should have been named Ella Iles Wheatley, you know, to go back to reflect that deal. I've even heard Grover Colvin.

CT:

Huh?

CM:

I've even heard Mr. Colvin's name. Maybe it should have been named after him.

CT:

They should have named Grover Colvin. He was the first—what did they say? He was the first male teacher. I said, "Well, when he was teaching over there, Ms. Simmons was the principal," and see now, I wasn't here, but I know she was principal.

CM:

And I guess I didn't think of him being a teacher because when I came into the picture, he was always the principal.

CT:

But he was a speech therapist or something.

CM:

Ah, okay. See, I didn't know that. He's a Samuel Houston graduate.

CT:

Oh, I didn't know where it was he was from—

CM:

Yeah, he was of Huston-Tillotson, that's what it eventually became.

CT:

Yeah. That's where my wife went to school.

CM:

Oh, did she really?

CT:

Yeah.

CM:

And see, my uncle and my cousin, Charles Perry, they went Huston-Tillotson—

CT:

Where is Charles?

CM:

Charles is still here. He lives over on Parkway.

CT:

I know it. I haven't seen that fellow since.

CM:

And see, Mr. Roberts was down there and of course Mr. Fair was down there, you know. A lot of people were down there.

CT:

And Clarence.

CM:

Yes, he was down there, and Mr. Guyton was down there.

CT:

Well, see, Roger went to Prairie View.

CM:

Okay. Yes. That's right, he did.

CT:

Yes. He went to Prairie View. Yesiree.

CM:

But I have a lot of respect for the historically black universities because, you know, I think, "Man, there's an education there," because everybody I've seen that comes out of those good deals—

CT:

Excuse me.

CM:

Yeah. Go ahead.

CT:

I tell you what. I'm going to quit drinking tea as much.

Recording ends