

**Oral History Interview of  
Charles Taylor**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
November 15, 2017  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*African American Interview Series***

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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 11<sup>th</sup> 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Charles Taylor as he discusses his teaching career. In this interview, Charles recounts working as a teacher during integration, and the bussing that occurred in Lubbock.

**Length of Interview:** 01:19:05

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Interview overview; background information	05	00:00:00
Being a student while mother was teaching	09	00:08:21
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How his parents got him to college	33	01:03:34

### Keywords

Teaching, bussing, Ethnic minorities

**Charles Taylor (CT):**

Most days it's an hour. Yeah, most days, but then on the other hand, two days is only forty-five minutes. I only go two days. I exercise in the—you know, in the gym up there.

**Margaret Randle (MR):**

That's good.

CT:

They got a bunch of junk you can get on and play around on. So I go in there the other hour and wait on her to get out of the shower. Bring my letter, Gracie.

**Gracie Taylor (GT):**

Pardon?

CT:

Bring my letter so I know what she's talking about. [Laughter]

MR:

Well, we'll explain it again, Mr. Taylor.

GT:

You might need some more light over there. Why don't you turn that one on?

CT:

Light hadn't been on in so long.

MR:

Mr. Taylor, I'm still learning how to interview, so I'm—Andy's going to take the lead and I'll just kind of—I'm still learning from him.

CT:

Oh okay. Well, I hope you learn something.

MR:

I do, too.

CT:

I looked at my old suitcase yesterday for a whole hour trying to find something—not my suitcase but one of my bags I had at school. I couldn't find nothing but junk.

MR:

Really? Well, I bet it was good junk.

CT:

I guess it was. I don't know. You might want that.

MR:

Perfect. Okay.

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

No, the button in the middle twice.

MR:

Okay.

AW:

So, Mr. Taylor, Margaret, I think, has explained to you what we're doing but I'll just go over it again so that you—if you got questions, you can ask me those. We are doing what we call oral history interviews. The idea is that for a long time from now, two-hundred years, three-hundred years, somebody can listen to you, in your own voice, talk about your life and your experiences, nobody in between you and your story except you. So, we're glad that you're willing to tell that story. When we record—I just want to let you know a couple of things. One is we don't edit the interview. So, if we're talking about something and you want a few minutes to think about it before you answer, just tell me to pause the recorder and I'll put it on pause, but otherwise we'll just talk and visit. Is that good?

CT:

That's fine.

AW:

Great. Well let me begin by getting some basic information. First would be your date of birth.

CT:

My date of birth: July 19—it's a shame.

AW:

Where were you born?

CT:

Huh?

AW:

While you're thinking about that, where were you born?

CT:

I was born in Floydada.

AW:

Floydada, Texas?

CT:

Yeah. When's my birthday, girl? Gracie.

GT:

Yes?

CT:

When's my birthday?

GT:

July nineteenth in '31. That's what you told me. [laughter]

CT:

Yeah. July 1931.

AW:

What did your folks do in Floydada?

CT:

Well, my mother was a school teacher [pause] and my father was jack of all trades. He worked at different stores, mainly Piggly Wiggly.

AW:

Really?

CT:

He helped put up the groceries, clean up after—you know, after the store closed at night. But he helped sack the groceries and stuff like that; put it on the shelf and all.



AW:

One of the best jobs I ever had was when I was high school, I worked at the Piggly Wiggly here in Lubbock. It was just an aside. It was a long time before the internet and other things that you might do. But it was the very best way in the world to meet nice, young ladies because their mothers always shopped at the grocery store. [Margaret laughs] So, what was Floydada like? Did you grow up there?

CT:

Huh?

AW:

Did you grow up in Floydada?

CT:

Yeah. Bred and born over there. I still go. I have a sister that's still living over there. In fact, I'm going over there tomorrow to bring her son over to the hospital. Tomorrow's Thursday? Yup.

AW:

What was Floydada like growing up there in the thirties and forties?

CT:

It was just like any other place, I guess. You know, when we were in school, the schools were all separate and my mother taught all the classes from—well, she taught them from kindergarten—she didn't have no kindergarten but all those classes, she taught them all. Then finally after some of us got into high school, we had other teachers to come help her. So, we worked there—worked at that. We had several girls that'd gone to school at Prairie View. Two or three of them were a lot smarter than both of us boys. [Andy laughs] So, a lot of those girls went to school and worked on their master's and all that kind of stuff. It was the Coleman family. It was a big family. They had about thirteen children all together. Two or three of those girls went to school. Two boys went to Katy and stayed. Two of the boys was my age and they couldn't handle it or they didn't want to handle it. But anyway, you know, it's a lot different when you have boys and girls in school. We had this little old room, this little old school about a little bit larger than this room.

AW:

Really?

CT:

We didn't have too many kids in school but we had enough, you know, to keep her busy. So, she talked to the superintendent and he hired a man. "I'm going to get you a principal," said,



“Because you have too much work to do,” so he got her a male principal from Amarillo. He came down there and he was their principal. There were I don’t know how many of us. She said it was more than she wanted to handle. So, we had a pretty good classroom size. [MR coughs]

AW:

What was it like being a student when your mother was the teacher? [Phone rings]

CT:

It was just like anything else. We had to walk the chalk line. [Gracie talks on phone in background] I had a brother and three sisters so we all had to walk the chalk line, especially the Taylor Bunch, as they called them.

Mrs. Taylor:

The Taylor Bunch. [Laughs]

CT:

Yeah. We had to walk the chalk line. Yesiree. During that time, you know, they would let the—well, I’m talking about me—the would let us out of school a little—she would let us out a little bit early and then keep the older children, you know, a little later in the day. We would get out maybe around two thirty or three and the older children would get out about three thirty. I could be wrong. That’d been so long ago. We had a lot of fun trying to do what we’re supposed to be doing in school. Yup, lot of fun. So, after finishing school, my momma told me, “You know you’re going to Prairie View.” That was the college that two or three of us attended but only two—only one of us graduated, and that was me. My sister—I had one sister, she’s still in Floydada, she got married and didn’t want to leave home, you know, to go out of town for schooling so she said, “I’d like to stay at home and take care of my children.” My older sister, she did go for a year or two then she married—she met some soldier over here and they got married and wherever they sent him, that’s where she ended up. So, she’s in Wichita, Kansas now. My other sister, she’s still there and my baby sister passed on. Well, we had a pretty good size family. Yeah, pretty good size family. We had a lot to do at home when school was out. “Get that book boy.” [Laughter] “Get that book.” Yeah, we had to carry books home to study with. I understand now the kids don’t have books to take home. I said, “I’ll be darned. I didn’t know that. Living right in the school room.” I didn’t realize that until two or three weeks ago. Somebody was saying that the kids can’t take books home. I said, “They can’t?” I said, “I’m going to have start visiting these schools one of these days.” They changed so much. The old school has changed.

MR:

Significantly.

CT:

Yeah. They say, "Your school's changed." Well, my old school, they sold it. Yeah, old Posey, they—

AW:

You were at Posey here?

CT:

Yeah. Well, after—I had worked at Wheatley I don't know how many years, about ten or twelve years I worked at—not Posey—I worked at Wheatley.

MR:

What grade did you teach, Mr. Taylor?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

What grade did you teach at Wheatley?

CT:

Fourth and then the next year I taught the fifth and sixth grades. After about nine years, I was transferred to Bozeman and I taught the fifth grade at Bozeman a year and a half then I was promoted to vice principal, and I was transported to Posey at the time.

MR:

You were the vice principal at Bozeman?

CT:

No.

MR:

—or at Bozeman? Oh okay. When you were teaching fifth grade at Bozeman, was Mr. Priestly your principal?

CT:

Yeah. Clarence was the principal when I was over there. I had been over there a year and a half and he got rid of me and sent me to—we called it down the road.

MR:

Down the road. [laughs]

AW:

Was Wheatley your first school?

CT:

Huh?

AW:

Was Wheatley the first school that you taught at after Prairie View?

CT:

Was it what?

AW:

The first school you taught at after Prairie View, Wheatley?

CT:

Yes. Yes it was.

AW:

What did you study at Prairie View. What was your major? What was your major?

CT:

Education.

AW:

Education?

CT:

Yeah. I had majored in education.

AW:

You would've started Prairie View in 1948, is that right? Is that about right?

CT:

Trying to remember.

AW

You would've graduated in '48 from—

CT:

Yeah.

AW:

—Floydada.

CT:

Whatever. You know, I've got to looking into my junk bag I had back there and I couldn't find nothing, you know, that I thought I needed to find. I couldn't find it. I guess I threw all that stuff away.

AW:

Oh gosh. We hate to hear that.

CT:

Yup. I got a bag—it's not as large as yours—but I got one back there full of junk. I think I'll go back in there this evening and clean it out. I'll use that little bag for small trips. You know what I mean?

AW:

Were you the vice principal for a long time at Posey?

CT:

Huh?

AW:

Were you a vice principal a long time at Posey?

CT:

I was the vice principal at Posey one semester. Yeah, one semester. My principal was hired down at Central Office. I can't even think of his name. That's a shame. Anyway, after he moved down to Central Office, I was made principal over at Posey. I can't think of the year but then I stayed at Posey the rest of that time. I retired in eighteen—nineteen, eighteen, I don't know. But anyway, I stayed at Posey for quite a while playing principal. We had—when they started to integrate the children, I was at Posey and I had kids coming from two or three schools and my kids went to two or three schools. So, I had kids coming from different schools in town and my kids went to certain schools in town. Then they would pick out certain grade levels, you know,

like second or third or something, and then they called themselves integrating races and they would send some Anglo children over to Wheatley. They'd send my children, my black children and Hispanic, over town. So we had a good thing going on and the kids did real well together. You know what I mean? I found that in there. That's one thing I had. A parent sent E.C. letter talking about what a great guy I was.

MR:

By E.C. you mean Dr.—you mean the superintendent E.C. Leslie?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

The parent sent the letter to E.C. Leslie?

CT:

They sent E.C. one and he sent me a copy. It was nice to get something from somebody. The kids got along well together and the parents were very cooperative.

AW:

They were.

CT:

Most of them. We had one—I had two couples. I never will forget them but I can't think of their names. Their little, old boy—I was so glad. They took his little, old self away from over there because he was always into something. I believed in using that paddle but he said, "No, you can't hit my child." "You can take him home with you then," and he did. He went to some other school and they kicked him out. He thought he could go to any school he wanted but he had to go back to his home school, and they didn't want him over there either. I mean, they accepted him but he didn't want to go over there. Anyway, his father worked near—somewhere near the school and he said, "No, I guess I better take him back to his second home," so he came back over here. But it was not fun with those kids. We had a lot of children from outer—they said they were "outer space" by coming on this side of town. One lady said, "I was so afraid that these people would bother them." I said, "What people?" She said, "You know what I'm talking about, these black people." I said, "Well, I'm black and I'm the principal of this school. I'm the only one who's going to bother them if that's what you're worried about." I said, "If the child's doing what he's supposed to, you don't have to worry about him. I'll take care of him." And we had a nice group of parents, too. We really did. We had a nice group of mostly ladies. The fathers were too busy to come but every once in a while, one would come. So, we had parents basically—well, some of the people that we had were from banks and they work with us. They would help

us with—help the teachers with parties and things like that. I saw one of them about a week or so ago, two weeks ago. He was retiring. He was a banker at Plains National Bank and so he said, “I had to put them down. I’ve been with this bank business too long.” But it worked out well, you know. Everybody said it wouldn’t work but it worked out good. What I really enjoyed, [clears throat] a lot of those—[clears throat] excuse me—a lot of those kids didn’t want to go back to—you know, after they came over there, they didn’t want to go back to their home school the next year.

AW:

So they were only going to be with you one year?

CT:

One year, yeah. Several of those kids stayed over there. We had a lot of fun in school. Yup. I had a great bunch of teachers. They worked real hard, made sure the parents enjoyed what they were doing. They wanted to make sure I enjoyed what they were doing. But anyway, it didn’t—we had a great bunch of kids and the kids got along well together. I found a picture back there that I had when Mrs. Martinez—I think that gal’s still teaching. I don’t know which school but somebody told me she was still teaching. Most of the other teachers are either too old or a lot of them moved out of town. But most of them are old, older than I am, because I’ve been retired—oh, I can’t recall. That’s a shame. I retired [pause]—I know it’s been—I always have to ask my wife for something.

AW:

What was it—what was the experience of bussing for that one year? What was that like on the kids that started out at Posey?

CT:

What was it like?

AW:

Yeah, for them. Do you have any sense of that? They went off for a year and then came back to Posey?

CT:

Some of them did. Yeah. A lot of them came back, more than I needed [Andy laughs] because they wouldn’t supply teachers. Some of those teachers had more kids than they wanted. But a lot of those kids came back. I can’t recall now how many grades we had, you know. That was a bunch. Then our kids—I told E.C. he was being unfair because he wanted all our kids to go to two or three different schools. He just wanted to send his to one. So anyway, it worked out well.



MR:

So, the students that lived in the Posey area, at some grades they would go to one school and then another grade they go to another school?

CT:

Yeah. Yeah they did that. I can't even think of the schools but—

MR:

Did Posey bus children to Haynes?

CT:

Yes.

MR:

I was thinking of Posey and Haynes. Where else did Posey send children to? Now, the kids from Wheatley went to Murfee. Did Posey send children to Whiteside?

CT:

Posey—where did we send those kids?

MR:

I know Haynes one of—Overton—something—no, Overton was in the mix somewhere. I don't remember which one it was.

CT:

That's a shame. I'm sorry but I've been out of school too long. I can't remember this morning.

MR:

I just got out yesterday and I still can't remember either.

CT:

You know what I mean? But anyway, a lot of those kids didn't want to go back to their home school, they wanted to come back to Posey. That made me feel good, you know. It really made me feel good. Some of the parents didn't like it but most of them did. I said, "It's your child. You do what you want with him. He does not have to come back." I think they were to come one year or something like that but I couldn't find nothing to tell me when those kids started, what year it started. You know what I mean?

AW:

Yeah the bussing, what year that started. Yeah. I don't recall either.

CT:

But anyway, I can't remember a lot of things.

AW:

Did your—when that bussing program started, did your teachers stay at Posey so you kept the same teachers on your staff?

CT:

Yes. I think had I had one teacher to leave. She had already asked for a transfer and they gave it to her but they sent her to a school where none of the bus kids were attending. They took kids from certain schools from across town, as we called it. It was pretty nice. You know, it wasn't—I didn't know what was going to happen to nobody else because we had one or two ladies, they gave those teachers holy hell. But anyway, I calmed them down and they got to be my better teachers. So the second year when one little gal wanted to stay, they voted her to be president of PTA [**Parent-Teacher Association**] and she did a lot of things for us. Like I said, the people at the bank there were—my reading teacher's husband worked at The First National Bank and a lot of them wanted to come back to be in her reading class. They wanted—but reading, you know, it was Title I thought, so a lot of them couldn't go because they didn't fall in that category. But anyway, we had quite a few from all different grades and they did the same for Posey's kids. We had a good group of teachers in the other schools and they would come over and visit and we would go over and visit, you know, the different schools that our children were in. Sometimes we tried to have little meetings together and it worked out real well. The kids, I think the kids really enjoyed it. You know, you never know what youngsters will do or want to do, but I think they enjoyed it or they never would've been back over there the second year, you know. But some of those kids stayed over there two or three years. It was interesting because a lot of our children had moved out anyway, because a lot of them didn't want the kids bussed across town, especially some of my Hispanic parents. They wanted to be on this side of town so they would try to get a transfer to—black boys went to Morton. My wife was teaching at Morton and they knew—some of the parents knew Clarence because some of those people were going to school at a Bozeman when they were youngsters. Yeah. So, it was really interesting because everybody said it wouldn't happen, you know, talking about the trouble we were going to have but we didn't have any trouble with the bussing of those kids. It was just regular school. Just regular school

MR:

Mr. Taylor, what kind of principal were you?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

What kind of principal were you?

CT:

What kind of?

MR:

Um-hm.

CT:

I don't know what you mean.

MR:

Were you real strict with your teachers, with the children?

CT:

When I what with the teachers?

MR:

Were you really strict with the teachers, expected them to turn in their lesson plans, or did you let them make decisions? You made all the decisions at school? How did you run that school?

CT:

Well, I called myself being a principal that's working together with people. There's certain things I asked them to do, most of my teachers, and they would do them. I wouldn't ask them to do any more than I would have done. I'd still be in the classrooms and it worked out real well. We had a lot of teachers. Even some of the teachers where we had sent our children, they wanted to move to Posey but I had too many teachers. They wouldn't send any of them over there, as we called it over there. But it worked out real well. I found one letter from one of my fifth grade teachers. She moved to Austin and she was trying to get her a job and at the end of that letter, she said she thinks she would go into something else besides teaching. She said, "If you're ever in Austin, come see me." I told her, "Well, my daughter's teaching in Austin so we come down there pretty often," but I never did go see her. Yup. They said I was a diehard. I said, "What do you mean a diehard?" "You expect too much of us." I said, "Well"—

MR:

That was why I asked you that question. [Laughs]

CT:

I said, "Well, I don't know why you would say that. I don't expect no more from you than what you're supposed to do, you know." But we had a good group of teachers and we had a good group of kids. I was teasing some of those principals. I said, "Now you picked out the kids that you didn't want to send over here and I get away with them like that." But they said, "No, I got rid of some that I sure didn't want to go but they sent them by grade level." It really worked out well. It certainly did. Those kids sure did enjoy riding on the buses.

AW:

They did?

CT:

Oh yeah.

MR:

When they first started bussing children over, did they stay the whole year or did they stay one semester?

CT:

They stayed a year, I think. Yeah. I think most of them stayed a year and they enjoyed it, I guess, because at the end of the year, we would always have a little end-of-the-year program or something. I found a program and had some of our dignitaries and I noticed three or four of them didn't show up. Well, I had a doctor or two that didn't show up and I could understand that, but some of the others that we had invited didn't show up. They had excuses or something. It was quite interesting. I really thought it was going to be trouble, you know, to work with those, as they say, those crosstown teachers. But they came—in fact, seemed like they sent a teacher or two out of some of those schools but I can't think of all the schools now. But it seemed like they sent one or two teachers from the schools, you know, where the kids had been so that the kids would know some of the teachers at Posey from one of the schools that we were bussing. Yeah, that bus business. Yeah, it was something else. Seemed like the kids after, you know, getting used to something, we didn't have any trouble with them. They enjoyed riding that bus and the bus driver didn't have that many problems, you know, and I didn't either.

AW:

Do you think it was valuable?

CT:

Huh?

AW:

Do you think it was valuable to—

CT:

Transfer them?

AW:

Yes.

CT:

I do. Yup. In the first place, the city—I always used to tell E.C., “If you all weren’t so stingy with your children, leave these kids alone and let them go to school where they want to and you wouldn’t have so many problems as you claim you have with some of them.” You know what I mean? But anyway, I was teasing him. But the kids did quite well working together, working with the teachers whether or not they wanted to go home or not. They said, “You get them over there, they don’t want to leave. What are you doing to them?” I said, “I’m doing nothing more than anyone else would do,” you know. A child’s a child. It doesn’t matter. You know, you got to treat a child the way he should be treated. I didn’t have too many problems. I had one little, old boy try to give me trouble and his daddy—his daddy worked at this oil mill place, you know, right up here.

AW:

On 50<sup>th</sup> street, the Paymaster.

CT:

Yeah. It tickled me. He took him out. He thought he was going to be smart and take him back to his home school and they wouldn’t accept him. They wouldn’t accept him. Then they want to send him to another school and they sent him right back to Posey.

MR:

Why wouldn’t his home school accept him?

CT:

Hm?

MR:

Why wouldn’t his home school accept him?



CT:

What home school?

MR:

Why they wouldn't let him come back.

CT:

Because he was in the group that's supposed to be—I don't know how they worked that out but they had certain children that they sent, you know, certain grade levels and he was in that grade level that was supposed to be bussed. So they said, "No, we can't have him back," so he said, "I'll just put him in private school." I think that private school that he attended lasted about two or three days and he came back.

MR:

Did they—I can't remember correctly—but did they put something on the record to show that if a child was trying to avoid being bussed by moving from school to school that they had to stamp their records to show that they had not fulfilled their bussing requirement?

CT:

They had to what?

MR:

They—each child, you know, like you were talking about the child who was at Posey that went back to his home school. I think that every child had to fulfill their bussing requirement and they would stamp something on the records or something to make sure that they weren't avoiding being bussed by just jumping around from school to school.

CT:

I was told by one or two principals that they lost one or two kids but they had to go to another school, they couldn't come back to their home school. You know what I mean? So a lot of those parents put them in private schools. It wasn't that many, though. The next year, some of the same children we had that didn't have to come back, they were back. [MR coughs] You know what I mean?

AW:

Um-hm.

CT:

Yeah. They didn't have to come back but they did. Like somebody said, they should've done this a long time ago but, you know, we know—everybody know what everybody else should have



done but it didn't happen. So, it worked out anyway. Yeah. We had a good group of kids. I'm trying to think how long did we bus. Well, when I left, they were still bussing kids from Posey and I can't even remember when I retired.

AW:

Did your teachers at Posey have the same good experience that you were talking about with bussing?

CT:

Huh?

AW:

Your teachers at Posey, did they have a good experience with bussing?

CT:

Oh yeah. Yeah. They really did. Like I said, I had one who wanted to get a transfer and she got it. She said she just couldn't work with all those different kids. I said, "That's up to you. I can't give you a transfer. That will come from the Central Office whether or not you get transferred or not." You know what I mean? Like I told E.C., "If a teacher isn't happy over here I wish you would move them because I would catch the devil from them otherwise." But that never happened. All the teachers were most cooperative and the parents—I had a list of the parents, you know, for PTA and what have you and I said, "That's a crying shame." Our PTA list was about that long. I had one black. All the other PTA officers were Anglo. You know what I mean? Because our people are so sorry and lazy and I told them that. One lady I had, she used to take up for me. She said, "You scared all of these black people away from over here." [laughter] "I didn't do"—I said, "I didn't have a thing in the world to do about transferring our students." You know what I mean? I said, "You want to get onto somebody, get onto E.C. Leslie." I think he was president. It might've been Ed Irons. I can't remember. But anyway, it worked out real fine. I don't know how they are doing it now since they have closed down a bunch of schools, which one thing that I didn't like about it, they closed down most of the black schools and sold some of them, because they sold Gracie's school and I think it's still open. No, maybe somebody bought it. I don't know. Posey, I know it's open but it's not—it's not open for school, it's open for a lot of other things but they have classes in the afternoon for some of the kids. They do a lot of little things over there. This minister and his wife bought that school and they had a lot of things going on over there, you know, for the children in the neighborhood and other children, too. But somebody was saying, "We should have done this"—and this was an Anglo person—said, "They should've done this in the beginning," you know, transferring kids, and said, "It would've been a whole lot better on some of them. But anyway, I can't complain about it because it really worked. That bussing really worked for us and the kids, you know. Basically the kids, those kids—I had this one lady say, "This boy can't wait to see your smiling face every day. He's

always”—he was sick one day and talking about, “Mr. Taylor want me to do this, want me to do that and I need to be there.” She said, “No, you will not be there this morning.” But it was really interesting to work with the kids and the parents. One of my little students was teaching out here at Roosevelt. We ran into each other one day at Walmart or somewhere and she told me she was busy teaching. I said, “What are you teaching gal?” She said, “I’m teaching out at Roosevelt.” I said, “Well, good for you.”

MR:

You mentioned that your daughter is a teacher?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

You mentioned that your daughter is a teacher?

CT:

Yeah.

MR:

And she teaches in Austin. What grade does she teach?

CT:

She taught—I think she taught first and second. She taught lower grades. Now, she’s not teaching now. She retired from teaching, oh, I guess two or three years ago and she worked at a daycare center where they, you know, take care of children at a church. Yeah. She was working at a church and she took a leave of absence, oh, about—I guess about six or seven months ago. It’s a Baptist church where they, you know—they had a daycare center and she helped run that center. But she had taught—all of her schooling—all of her teaching at school was in Austin.

MR:

Is Mrs. Taylor from Floydada, too?

CT:

Unh-uh.

MR:

How did you meet her?

CT:

How did I meet her?

MR:

How did you meet her, um-hm.

CT:

She came to teach in Floydada. She's from Mexia. You ever hear of Mexia?

MR:

I have, down around central-east Texas area.

CT:

Gracie's from Mexia. She entered—we had a lot of pretty gals to come out there teaching and somebody said, "How would you know? You should've been in school or somewhere." I said, "Well, I had to go to the war." I used to tease Gracie because she was staying with a family that lived right behind our house and she and my mother was always putting up something. So, she was always over there. I said, "Girl, why don't you tell them you're coming to see me?"

MR:

She was just pretending to come see your mother.

CT:

"Why don't you tell them you're coming over here to see me?"

MR:

And Mr. Taylor, when were you in the war, and were you in the Army or the what?

CT:

Army.

MR:

In the Army? What war were you in?

CT:

Which Army?

MR:

No, which war. Were you in World War II or Korean? I mean, where were you stationed?

CT:

After basic training—where were they fighting at that time? I was transferred overseas and we fought whoever—wherever the war was going on. I can't think of the year. But anyway—

GT:

But you were Vietnam. Weren't you in the war in Vietnam?

CT:

Huh?

GT:

Were you in Korea or Vietnam?

CT:

Vietnam. She said I was in Vietnam.

GT:

No, I'm saying—I'm asking you.

CT:

Oh I'm not sure. We stayed over there—

GT:

You had to be sure because you were either in the Korean War or the Vietnam War.

CT:

I stayed over there over my time.

MR:

Did you? Was that by choice?

CT:

That wasn't by choice.

AW:

Then that would've been Korea.

CT:

Korea.

AW:

Yeah, because in Vietnam, people only had a one-year tour so it would've been Korea.

GT:

That's right.

CT:

Korean War, yup. They told you, you have so many months, years, so we had the ceasefire when I was in Korea so they gave me a little more time. They said I was such a good soldier.

[Laughter] I say they tell a bunch of lies to you. Anyway, I was given another group—anyway, I had a group of soldiers, I was in charge of a group.

MR:

Were they all African American, black soldiers?

CT:

No. They were all kinds of—they had integrated—they had integrated the Army when I was over there. No, we had a little bit of everything in there. Yup, we sure did.

MR:

What was you all's role?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

What was your role? What was your job there when you were in Korea?

CT:

Well, when I first went over, I was a cannoneer. We were firing 105 howitzer's and so I made—my rank—I was promoted and I finally made sergeant and they finally gave me a battery of my own. So, I was over a group of soldiers, our battery and our unit. That happened until the war ended. When that ended, we thought we would get to come home but they kept some of us. They said, "Since you know what's going on, we're going to keep you and let you help us clean up this mess over here. So, I stayed in Korea—it's a shame. But I stayed longer than I was supposed to stay over there.

MR:

You went to the Army after you graduated from Prairie View or before?

CT:  
After.

MR:  
After, okay.

CT:  
Yeah. So when I came back—I had not finished school when I went over there. I had started school at Prairie View but I didn't finish until after the war was over. I got married to that gal in there and she told me, "You're going to have to go to the school," so I went back to Prairie View and got my degree. We've been together ever since. We got married a long time ago. When did we get married?

GT:  
Fifty-four.

CT:  
How many?

GT:  
Fifty-four. We've been married almost sixty-three years.

CT:  
Fifty-four, huh?

GT:  
Right.

CT:  
Yeah, we married in '54. I had a year—I think I had a year to go to school.

MR:  
On your GI Bill?

CT:  
Huh?

MR:  
Did you go to school on your GI Bill?



CT:

Yes. I went on my GI Bill. That was interesting. So I went back to Prairie View and they gave me most of my credits, which I enjoyed having because that little, old time, that little, old money that they would give us, it wasn't enough to turn around on. But anyway, it helped because I didn't want to use all my wife's money because she was almost beginning teaching when she came to Floydada. I used to tease her about coming to visit my mother. "Why don't you tell it like it is? You know you came to see me."

MR:

Was your mother born in Floydada?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

Was your mother born in Floydada?

GT:

Unh-uh.

CT:

No. I don't even know where mother was born.

GT:

She was down in old Washington.

CT:

Yeah, Washington-on-the-Brazos.

GT:

Old Washington. She was born in old Washington.

CT:

Yeah. She was born in Washington-on-the-Brazos.

GT:

Down around Brenham, in that area.

MR:

Oh okay.

CT:

Out in the country.

MR:

So how did she get way out here to Floydada?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

How did she get way out here to Floydada?

CT:

She came out here for a teaching job.

MR:

To teach, okay.

CT:

Yeah. They were recruiting teachers everywhere.

MR:

Did she—

CT:

A lot—you know, a lot of—you'd be surprised at the number of teachers that didn't want to come to West Texas.

MR:

Why?

CT:

They had all kinds of excuses. "It was too dusty," or something. "They didn't pay enough." She and some other girls came and most of those girls were from a big town. Well, Gracie's home in Mexia—you know where Mexia is? You heard of Mexia?

MR:

Um-hm.

CT:

Well, she and some of her classmates—however, Gracie went to school at the rural school. She didn't go to school in Mexia, she went to a rural school, which would be out in the country, so to speak. So, she came to Floydada and started her teaching again and that's when she met me. We got to be buddy buddies for a while. I went overseas. When I went in the service, I figured I would have to go overseas because they were sending all—mostly all the youngsters that were in the service, they sent most of us to Korea. They helped clean it up because, I'll tell you, those Korean are killing our soldiers left and right. I was just fortunate though to get to come back. We had quite a few veterans killed from the United States. We were firing battery, as they called it, batteries. Those number one big guns. So, I was the Chief of Battery for a while over there until the war ended. Then after the war ended, we thought we were coming home, several of us, but the soldiers in that group were supposed to have been coming home and they extended our time. They said we need to help them clean up what we'd messed up over there. So, that happened. So I came home and I talked that gal into marrying me and she did. We've been married a long time. I don't know how I've been able to put up with her. [Laughter]

MR:

Mr. Taylor, do you know if when you—[coughs] Excuse me. When you first started teaching, when your mother was teaching in Floydada and when Mrs. Taylor was teaching in Floydada, was the pay for black teachers the same as for white teachers? Do you know?

CT:

I have no idea. Gracie.

GT:

Let me answer that question.

CT:

She can answer that. [MR coughs]

GT:

You said when—I was working there and Charles' mother was working there. Did we—

MR:

Was the pay the same for white teachers as it was for black teachers?

GT:

I don't think so. Now, when I first went there, there were three black teachers when we went there: Arlene Malls from Fort Worth, Golden from some little town in Austin—out of Austin,

and I was from Mexia. All right. I had my teaching certificate. I did not have a degree but I had worked four years before I went to Floydada.

MR:

Where had you worked?

GT:

I worked in a little town called—right out of—Mart, M-a-r-t. I worked there for four years so naturally, my pay was better than the others because I had worked four years. But now, believe it or not, I wasn't paid a great salary. My salary was very low but I made it because I lived with some people who were very, very nice. They said, "If you want to stay here with me, that's fine, but if you want to do your own cooking, you can do it." I said, "I don't do it. I would rather pay extra," so that's what I did. But I think I was paid like two-hundred dollars a month.

MR:

Do you know how much the white teachers were making?

GT:

And I don't think—I think the white teachers were making a little bit more. I really do. But the lady cooked and whatever she cooked, I ate it, and I would make a little contribution. So really, it's a long story but we made it. We really did. So after I worked in Floydada four years, I came—there was a position open at Iles. I came over here and worked and I worked here for thirty-something years, I believe—twenty years and then I retired in '86.

MR:

And you retired from Martin.

CT:

Hm?

AW:

You retired from Martin?

GT:

I retired from Martin Elementary in '86.

CT:

I guess I should've worked a little bit longer.

GT:

Yes you should have but, you know, you're at home and I'm coming home, too. [Laughter]

MR:

So he retired before you did?

GT:

No, he retired in '89.

MR:

Oh okay.

GT:

Three years afterwards. I retired—

CT:

What year did you—

GT:

Pardon?

CT:

What year was your retirement?

GT:

Eighty-six.

CT:

Yeah, '86 and I worked three more years. I said, "Well, you can stay at home. I'm going to stay with you." So, she—we've been retired a long time.

MR:

That's good.

CT:

Yup. Several people told me I shouldn't retire at that time. I said, "Well"—I was tired of doing what I was doing so they had other words for it, "You're just a lazy little bastard." [Laughter]

Yeah, they said I was lazy, especially some of those kids in Floydada. They're in Floydada and I'm over here.

MR:

So you still keep in contact with people in Floydada?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

[coughs] You still stay in touch with people in Floydada?

CT:

Did I—

GT:

Yes, he has a sister and nephew that lives there and we have several friends that live in Floydada. Charles has a sister that still lives there and you have a nephew.

CT:

Huh?

GT:

You have a sister and a nephew that lives there in Floydada.

CT:

Who?

GT:

You have a sister that lives in Floydada.

CT:

Oh yeah. I still have a sister there.

GT:

Yeah and quite a few friends.

CT:

Yup.

GT:

Absolutely.



CT:

I might have to go over there bring my son to the hospital tomorrow. Yup.

MR:

Do you have friends that didn't go to college that resented or something that you went to college—did you ever have conversation with your friends about that, that they would say things like, "Whatever," or something, because you went to college and they didn't?

GT:

Yes. You've had people to say, "How did you get a chance to go to college and I didn't get a chance to go?"

CT:

How—oh.

GT:

You've never had nobody to say that. I have.

CT:

Yeah.

GT:

How did your mother and daddy send you to college?

CT:

They did the best they could. She was doing with that and daddy, too. But anyway, they sent us then they brought up this GI time and I went to college on the GI Bill. So they paid for some of my schooling.

GT:

The tuition was different now—then than it is now.

AW:

Yeah.

GT:

You know, when my sisters went to school, we all—I had—it was seven girls and I had five sisters who received a bachelor's degree.

AW:  
Really?

GT:  
But daddy was a farmer.

AW:  
Where did they go to school?

GT:  
We all went to Huston-Tillotson. But we went because mom and dad made a sacrifice. They were able to send us. Now, we didn't have everything that, you know, like every child had but we went because daddy and momma said, "You're not going to stay here at home, you're going to school," and we went. The same thing about Charles.

MR:  
Did you take any courses—how did you get your principal's certification? Did you go back to PV [**Prairie View**] to do that or where did you go to get your additional certification to become a principal?

GT:  
Everything from Prairie View then he went to Tech. You went to Tech, didn't you? You went to Tech to get your principal's—

CT:  
Oh yeah. I had a little GI time—

MR:  
Oh so you used that.

CT:  
—so I went to school on the GI Bill.

GT:  
But when you went to Tech, you didn't use GI.

CT:  
No. I know, but I said I did have a GI Bill.

GT:

All right. But when you went to Texas Tech, you used your own money.

CT:

Yeah.

MR:

To get the certification to be a principal.

GT:

Right, to get the certification for a principal.

CT:

Yup. Oh it was fun. It was fun. You know, a lot of the fellows that had gone to the service was given the GI Bill and wouldn't use it, wouldn't use the time, the money, you know, that they could have, you know. They didn't want it so I said, "Well, if you don't want it, give it to me," which I knew it wouldn't happen. Anyway, Uncle Sam helped me a little bit. Yup, he helped me a little bit. So, I went to school on the GI Bill of Rights, as they called it.

MR:

GI Bill of Rights.

CT:

Yup.

MR:

Here's this one Andy.

CT:

Sure did.

AW:

Oh it's signed already?

MR:

Yes, sir.

AW:

Thank you so much.

MR:

Uh-huh. And then this is his copy. I signed it. You can sign it, too.

AW:

I will. We want to leave you a copy of the agreement for us to be able let people listen to this great story of yours. That's my card if you ever need to get a hold of me.

CT:

If what?

AW:

If you ever need to get a hold of me, you can—that's how you track me down.

CT:

Andy Wilkinson.

AW:

Yes, sir.

CT:

Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. So was that at Texas Tech? Yeah it says Texas Tech.

AW:

Yes, sir.

CT:

That's good. Yessiree.

MR:

Andy went to Hodges Elementary.

CT:

Huh?

MR:

He went to Hodges Elementary.

CT:

Hodges?

MR:

Yes, sir.

CT:

He did? Well that's good.

AW:

Yeah. It was a tough school when I went there. People forget that we had lots of migrant labor in the fifties in Lubbock. Most of them went to Hodges because that was that part of town. I don't know if this happened—thank you—if this happened at Posey but when I was at Hodges, we used to get a week off in the fall for harvest.

CT:

Girl, where did you find that?

GT:

I wrote that. [Laughter]

AW:

Can we get a copy of this?

GT:

Pardon?

AW:

Could we have a copy of this?

GT:

Sure, I can make you a copy of it.

AW:

Yes, would you please. I'd like to have that.

GT:

I sure will.

AW:

Thank you.

GT:

Um-hm.

AW:

So did—I'm curious. I remember when I was first at Hodges that we would take—they would give us—in the fall, they'd give—everybody would take a week off of school for harvest time. Did that happen at Posey as well?

CT:

They would take a what?

AW:

A week. They'd give the students a week off for harvest. I can remember that during cotton when they were—

CT:

No, I don't remember.

MR:

Did you get a week off when you were going to school in Floydada?

CT:

Huh?

MR:

Did you get a week off when you went to school in Floydada?

CT:

No. They were giving no time off. Oh you mean when I was a youngster?

MR:

Yes, sir.

AW:

Yeah.

CT:

Yeah. There was a family, my best buddies, and he would talk to the superintendent and get the blacks kids to go to some cotton patches.



MR:

During school time, when you were supposed to be—

CT:

Huh?

MR:

When school was supposed to be in session?

CT:

Yeah. So, they would grant us a leave. This one man said—he had so many children, he had to do something in the fall because if they're in school all year, they won't have anything to eat. So, they started closing schools in Floydada and the black schools, you know, since we were separate but unequal. So, we would go to cotton patches and what have you. I'd go out there and go to sleep. [laughter]

MR:

You would do what?

CT:

Go to sleep.

MR:

Really? Where would you go to sleep?

CT:

On my cotton—

MR:

On your cotton sack?

CT:

On my cotton sack. But I got a big surprise one day. My momma decided she would go and see—

AW:

Thank you so much.

GT:

You're welcome.

CT:

I had told her—I had told them that—let me see that. I don't remember that picture. "A product of Floydada. To A.M." That's my mamma's name, Annie Marie. Nineteen thirty-one. "To Annie Marie and Charlie Taylor." Number one school in Floydada. We graduated in 1948. I have a picture of it. Somebody said, "They must not have had nobody in school if you were the val [valedictorian]." [MR laughs]

AW:

I wonder if at Hodges that was just an informal adjustment because, you know—but I distinctly remember that. There were so many kids that were itinerate. Now, they were all Anglo kids.

MR:

How old are you?

AW:

I'm sixty-nine. I started in '54 at Hodges.

MR:

Okay. I'm doing an interview on Monday. I'll ask her, too, because she—no, she went to Iles so I don't know.

AW:

I also remember that at that school, the kids that were there in the fall were not necessarily the kids that were there in the spring and vice versa because when they—

MR:

Because of migration.

AW:

Sure. [Pause] Do you have any other questions, Mrs. Randle?

MR:

No.

AW:

Mr. Taylor, thank you so much.

CT:

You're welcome. I hope I gave you all something to talk about.

AW:

Oh you did, some very good information.

CT:

This might help you a little bit, this sheet. Is this yours or mine?

MR:

Yes, sir, this is mine.

CT:

I don't know where she got that.

MR:

She said she wrote it.

GT:

I wrote that years ago when the—we were—well, Reverend Cook.

CT:

Huh?

GT:

Reverend Cook had asked for something about you. We were members of the First Baptist—well, over at Floydada, Mount Zion Baptist Church, and Reverend Cooks was the pastor. He asked if I would—if you would give him something about you because you were one of the prophets that had finished school there. And I wrote that and gave it to him. Now, you were not the only one that finished in Floydada. There were other children who finished in Floydada but you were one of the first that finished. I think there was another girl, a Coleman girl, that finished other than you. But when he asked for it then I wrote it and I kept it after so long.

AW:

Yeah. I'm glad you did write it.

GT:

I wrote it. I thought it would help you.

AW:

Yeah it's good.

MR:

Is there anything else that you want to talk about that you—is there a question that you wished that we had asked you that you want to—that's not the way you say that. I'm still learning, Andy. Tell me—[laughter]

AW:

We ask a lot of questions but is there something we missed that we should've asked you?

CT:

I don't think of it. Yeah. I want to know what are you going to do with that information you have.

GT:

That's none of your business. [laughter]

MR:

Yeah it is.

AW:

We're going to save it and we're going to keep it and make it available to scholars that would study. For instance, you said a lot of interesting things about bussing. The two of you described—and we need to come back and interview you, too, Mrs. Taylor.

GT:

I was in the bussing, too.

AW:

That's what I mean.

GT:

And I was one of the crossover teachers.

AW:

We would really ought to do that. So that kind of information is really valuable. As we were talking earlier, it's most valuable when it's not me telling somebody what you said, but where they can hear you say it. So, the integrity, the scholarly integrity of that information is unquestionable.

GT:

That's right.

AW:

It's in your voice. So that's what we do with it, is make it available for people to study.

GT:

I know.

MR:

So if Mr. Taylor wanted to go out there next year and listen to that tape, could he go out there and listen to it?

AW:

Sure. In fact, at some point—it takes a while because we have to do this with student help. That's all we can afford.

GT:

Yes, I can understand.

AW:

We transcribe the interview. In other words, we listen to it and we type it out. That's for two reasons. One reason is that people who have hearing difficulties can still read the interview, but also when we transcribe it, that means you can put it on the computer and use a word search with your computer and find out terms like "bussing" or "crossover teacher" or "combination class".

GT:

That's right.

AW:

So you can do your research a little more quickly and we make that transcription available to read on the internet. So, if you're in Mexia, you can research without having to come to Lubbock.

MR:

Or if his sister wanted to hear—see her brother's interview in Floydada, she can get on the computer and play that.

GT:

That's great. Wonderful.

MR:

And as Andy says, it'll be around for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years.

CT:  
Huh?

MR:  
And Andy says, that this conversation will be around for hundreds and hundreds of years.

GT:  
It will be there.

MR:  
Yeah. You want to talk about that piece of paper that he signed, keeping that?

AW:  
Yeah. Sure. What you signed just gives us permission to let people use that. But it's important to hang onto that piece of paper so that your children and their children will know that that—that this interview has taken place. So it's—that's also why I put my card with it, not that I'll be here in hundreds of years.

GT:  
I know what you mean.

AW:  
But you'll know where it came from.

GT:  
That's all right.

AW:  
So, I assume that Mrs. Randle can call you and we'll set up a time.

MR:  
They're my good church members.

AW:  
Oh good then that'll be easy.

MR:  
She sings in the choir and he's the head deacon. [GT laughs]



AW:

There you go.

MR:

That's right.

AW:

All right. Well thank you both very much.

GT:

You know you're welcome. You certainly are.

CT:

Yessiree.

***End of Recording***

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