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William Henry Chafe Oral History Collection

INTERVIEWEE: Tartt Bell

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DATE: October 13, 1977

WILLIAM CHAFE: —Tartt Bell from the American Friends Service Committee [AFSC]. You didn't grow up in Greensboro, but how long did you live there?

TARTT BELL: I first arrived in Greensboro I guess in early 1946. This was right after being discharged from Civilian Public Service, and there had been for a long time what was at that time known as an area office of the peace section of the American Friends Service Committee with a little tiny office on the campus of the Woman's College at Greensboro [now The University of North Carolina at Greensboro]. And there had been someone who had moved from there to Mexico and he asked me to take this on. I knew I wanted to come back south somewhere. I wasn't quite ready to tackle Alabama. So when the job opening occurred in North Carolina, my wife and I both jumped at it.

WC: And you were there for how long? Until the mid-sixties?

TB: I was there off and on, mostly on, until 1965. I had several assignments for the Service Committee outside of that: one, a couple of brief trips overseas and then a two-year assignment at the United Nations. But I was there in that regional office, developing the regional office, from the one-person affair that it was until 1965.

WC: At what point did the American Friends Service Committee start its desegregation emphasis or project? Do you recall that?

TB: We began to get into this, I think, mostly through the operation of what we called a college program. We had a full-time college secretary who was visiting on the college campuses, sponsoring events, programs, speeches, meetings of one kind or another, and recruiting students for the summer service projects of the American Friends Service Committee. And one of the things that our college program had been into, in cooperation with the North Carolina Council of Churches, was an annual student conference. And it was a hellish problem in those days to find a place where you could have an interracial

student conference. It was called Adventures in Applied Christianity, and through that we begin to get into and to see many of the possibilities and of course the problems of college students, black and white. And I think that was our first involvement, actually, program-wise.

And then in all of the events that we were having in our Peace Education Program, we always insisted on having these open events, open interracial affairs, and we tried to have this almost as important a part of the objectives of this program as the peace education itself. And we would bring national prominent speakers to the region and tour them around meeting in churches, mostly, because these were mostly the only places where you could have, in many of these communities, an interracial meeting.

And an interesting facet of this is that we found that the first target almost always in trying to find a place in a conservative North or South Carolina community to have an interracial meeting was the local Methodist church. And one reason we went to this was because the dean of the Duke University School of Religion was a wonderful old Quaker leader named Elbert Russell who, through his pacifism and his insistence on good race relations, had produced a lot of fairly radical young Methodist ministers who were then going out to these conferences around the southeast. And we could almost always find in one of these communities somebody who had been a student of and had known Elbert Russell, and who knew the American Friends Service Committee and the Quakers, and who were at least willing to sit down with us and talk the possibilities of their church being open for an interracial meeting. So this also was an opening to these communities that made it possible for us to have these kinds of interracial meetings

And then out of a number of years of this—I can't remember exactly when we took on the first full-time staff person for this, but it was in what we called an Employment on Merit Program, and it was specifically an effort to open up non-traditional job opportunities for black people. It was adapted on a typical kind of a Quaker approach of going direct to people who were in power and who had the decision-making ability in their companies or in their schools or whatnot.

WC: Was Sarah Herbin the one that did that?

TB: Sarah Herbin later on came into the program. Sarah Herbin came on as a staff member at the staff support secretarial level, and because she was such an able person and had so many of the qualities we were looking for, she then became program staff and director of the Employment on Merit Program working in that. But that, I think, was the first full-time race relations program we had. And [there is] a long and fascinating history with that in which we went to all kinds of people, all over the place.

I'll never forget [chuckles] an appointment—an interview—visit we had with Spencer Love at Burlington Industries—Spencer Love, who is a very big industrialist,

obviously, with influence and power. And talking all of this over with Mr. Love, he finally said, "Do you really mean that you would like me to take on a Negro secretary?"

And we said "Well, that might be a first place to start. And at least it would demonstrate the principle that you are not asking anybody else to do what you yourself are not prepared to do, and it may be a good place to start."

And he said, "Well, what would you do about, you know, the facilities in the building and all of that."

And of course we said, "You'd do the same thing you do about anybody else in the building." [chuckles]

So we had lots of fascinating interviews of this kind with top management people.

WC: Well, what did he say? What did he do in response to that?

TB: He said, well, he would give this very serious consideration. And then later, actually, in somewhat of a follow through with this, working with personnel people and others, they did start with a chemist in one of their plants where the dying process was important. They did a tiny bit of following our advice.

But this was the kind of approach we had. And we talked to people like John Whitaker, who is chairman of the board of R.J. Reynolds, and many other people, and obviously to lot of smaller employers who had five men, five-person shops. So that was one of the first deep involvement in race relations we had.

Then the next one, I suppose, was in the desegregation process following the *Brown [v. Board of Education]* decision, and others before that, working trying to get schools desegregated. And here again we took on an interracial staff. [William] Bill Bagwell and Charlie Davis were the directors of this particular program. And we worked with that in every conceivable way we could: with local encouragement, holding the hands of parents and students who were going through the process, to sponsoring public meetings, to doing research projects, to consultation with the Superintendent of Education of the State, Charlie Carroll, and others across the board. And those were tense, difficult times, particularly in the business in Greensboro. And if you've been into that, you may recall that Charlie Davis' own son was one of the pioneers in the Greensboro situation.

WC: Yes, yes. I would like to talk about that some more. Maybe we could go back a little before that at the time though. Were you active yourself in the Guilford [County] Interracial Commission, that group of people who went in teams to try to desegregate or to have the signs removed from the water fountains and things like that?

TB: I was at one point the president of something called the Greensboro Community Council, which was an association of various community organizations and agencies of the United

Fund agency [now United Way of Greater Greensboro] in Greensboro. And I'm trying to recall what the relationship of that was to this Greensboro Council that you are referring to—but we were helping that group put on its meetings. We were trying to share with them the experience that our staff in our school desegregation project and our Employment on Merit Project were having with the whole pattern of race relations.

And I recall what a great victory we thought it was when Sears Roebuck [and Co.] eliminated these signs over their drinking fountains. Sears was our natural number one target in Greensboro. I don't recall actually being involved personally in any of those visits. Oh, yes we did, too. I talked at two or three points with the manager of one of the Sears places. You know Sears had both a big retail store and a mail order house in Greensboro, and we talked with managers of both of these places. Visitations in small teams, you know, we would go and sit down with them at a table.

WC: Were you—you mentioned George Mitchell[?] earlier—were you there when George Mitchell came through just prior to the *Brown* decision to sort of brief local officials about the possibilities or probabilities of court decisions in schools?

TB: I don't remember this particular occasion that you refer too, or I'm not sure it's the same one. I remember setting up some appointments and some meetings for George, as I recall, when he was there. This was at a time, I think, when there was in existence the North Carolina Council on Human Relations, you know, which was a subsidiary or off-shoot of the Southern Regional Council, and it was, I think, the primary avenue through which George's visit was arranged for Greensboro at that time. But George was an old personal friend, and I always saw him when he came to town. One of the great things I remember about him was he was a most marvelous babysitter. [laughs] He was a terrific babysitter. [unclear] went out somewhere and George didn't want to go, he'd stay at home and get the children on his knee and tell them stories. [unclear]

WC: Warren Ashby, I guess, mentioned to me that George Mitchell lived in—had been in town, and that he had talked with members of the school board and the school staff. And that on the way to the airport, he had said to Warren, "As long as you have Ed[ward] Hudgins in the position of school board chairman, I think Greensboro is going to be okay on this question." Now Warren's recollection is that that was before the *Brown* decision came down; probably not too much before it, maybe a year, or within the year of the decision. And I just didn't know whether—does that story ring any bells in terms of similar comments that he may have made to you about the local situation or—?

TB: I don't recall any real comments that George himself would have made. I would know and certainly understand and feel that that's the way George would think about Ed

Hudgins' leadership in the school board situation at that time, but I don't really recall George's saying that, actually.

WC: Let me ask you about your own perceptions and your own relationships with the people who were, at that point, most directly involved at least in—well, in both the white and black communities and on the school board, people like Ben[jamin] Smith and Ed Hudgins and Dr. [John] Tarpley and Dr. [William] Hampton and people like that. Were you having conversations with them or involved in any of that period about—over the whole question of school desegregation?

TB: Yes, we had extended contacts and conversations with several key members. I'm trying to remember who were the other black members of the school board. I know George Hampton was at one point, and whether it was Ben Chavis at that point on the school board or was that later—I remember that name.

WC: Vance Chavis.

TB: Vance Chavis, yes. Yeah, right. Vance Chavis we talked with at length. He at that point was, I believe, a superintendent—a principal of a school. Then we had talked, of course, with Dr. Tarpley, and extended consultations with Ben Smith who was a—I happened also at that point to be a member of a little discussion group that Warren Ashby and I and one or two others had helped get together, which was a sort of place where some of the beleaguered liberals in town go and cry on each other's shoulders. We got together usually at the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] for dinner once a month. Did Warren tell you about this?

WC: A little bit. I'd like to have you talk more about it if you could, because it is something which I'm interested in exploring.

TB: Well, we thought there were obviously going to be some tough times ahead, and that some of us who were in Greensboro had the potential for doing something progressive and helpful on the desegregation front, [and] ought to at least try to keep in touch with each other and support each other. So Warren and I got together and suggested the possibility that we ought to try to really organize this a little bit, and the simplest way to do it was just try to get together at least once a month maybe for dinner and have a long, relaxed evening. And we selected, I guess, twelve or fifteen people that we thought would be potentially interested in this. One of those we started with was [L. Richardson] "Rich" Preyer, at the time. Ed Hudgins was another, Bob Frazier, and then—well, we could track down for you the names of all those other people. But Ben Smith was a very helpful, useful member of this group. And Bob Moseley, who also at that time was a

lawyer for the school board, was again a very interested participant in this. And the McClendons, both Mac Junior and Senior, participated in this with great enthusiasm and pleasure. And that was a very useful avenue of communication on many of these issues that Greensboro was facing.

WC: Did this group—

TB: Now with Ed Hudgins and the school board and that kind of entre of what was really happening in the city, it gave us a chance to understand and make often useful suggestions about resources that might be available that would be helpful in getting Greensboro to accept the changes that were taking place.

WC: Do you recall those conversations and the kinds of advice or questions which were—which you would have talked about? I guess I'm interested particularly how you and the other members of that group saw things at that time in terms of what might have been possible, whether—

TB: Well, these were very unstructured kinds of things. We'd gather for dinner and people would relatively be late on occasion and come in and join in the middle of the conversation and the dinner. Usually it would start off with some report or reference to a recent event that had taken place in town. Obviously we each had our sources of information and understanding of what was happening in Greensboro. Perhaps Warren and I and maybe one or two others, perhaps Mac[Neill] Smith, and usually with a black member or two of their group, obviously with much more contact and understanding of what was going on in the thinking of the black community in Greensboro. I would feed in with very often of that kind of, you know, of reporting what some local group of black leaders were saying or doing, or reporting something of a personal experience that we had had, or a response that was illustrative of the kind of reaction that could be expected in the black community.

WC: Were there any blacks in the group itself?

TB: Yes, there were. You knew there was always someone like the president of [North Carolina] A&T College [now NC A&T State University]. There was a very knowledgeable and articulate black doctor.

WC: Dr. [W. Lloyd T.] Miller?

TB: He was later, I think. No. The name escapes me, but he was a very excellent participant in this group, able, you know, really to say it like it was, and this was awfully good for

people like Ed Hudgins and Bob Frazier who were prestigious lawyers; liberal and fine though they were, they were not accustomed to having really very frank reactions from some of the black people in the community. So this was quite interesting.

WC: Right. So that the discussions would be vehicles for conveying information and experiences which would not be generally part of their world?

TB: Exactly. [William] “Bill” Snider of the paper was another very regular and enthusiastic participant.

WC: Would someone like Ed[ward] Zane have ever taken part in that group?

TB: We had—and we specifically tried to reach some of the prestigious business leaders. I remember, I guess, the architect—

WC: Lowenstein.

TB: Ed Lowenstein was one and he had access to some people. I don't remember Ed Zane's name in this, and he was never, during the time that I was there, actually in the group.

WC: Now, this group would have started sometime in the early fifties?

TB: No, I don't think quite that early.

WC: Not that early.

TB: You know how dates get away from you, but I would guess—well, maybe so. It must have been about the time of *Brown* in '54.

WC: And did it continue all of the time that you were in Greensboro?

TB: It continued for a long time.

WC: I'm trying to in some ways get a fix on who the black members would have been. I doubt if Dr. [Ferdinand] Bluford would have been there from A&T before he died because—

TB: He was not. Dowdy was there soon after that. Vance Chavis, I believe, later was in that group also, if I recall correctly.

WC: Dr. George Evans?

TB: George Evans is exactly the person I'm trying to think of. George Evans was in it from the very beginning.

WC: That's very helpful to know, because he still I think—

TB: Is he? How is he?

WC: Well, I haven't talked to him, but he's still there.

TB: Practicing, really?

WC: I'm not sure that he is practicing. But I need to talk with him.

Do you recall any conversations with Hudgins or Smith about their expectations of what would happen when the *Brown* decision came down? Now the board had—Ed Hudgins had brought the resolution to the board right after the decision for compliance had been passed 6-0. But one of the questions that I guess I wanted to pursue is what did that mean? What did they think it meant? What did you and your group think it meant? Did it mean desegregation quickly? Did it mean desegregation six years later? Did it mean a large number of black students and white students going to school together, or did it just mean two or three or four? I'm intrigued by what exactly people's expectations were—even though we know how it turned out—what they might have been thinking at the time.

TB: I think our expectations—and when I say “our”, I mean the staff of the American Friends Service Committee, our committees, the sort of people that we were in touch with in the black community, the leadership in the church groups—that the anticipation was that there would be at least token desegregation without any very dramatic events or reactions to that, and that there might possibly be something a little better than token desegregation. Knowing the pattern of the schools in Greensboro, which were, because of residential segregation, pretty well fixed, one wouldn't anticipate until, you know, there were further legal and other developments on the residential front, one wouldn't anticipate a whole lot of change. But there were certainly some border schools which made no sense at all in the pattern of school attendance where you could look forward to something more than token desegregation. And I think here, because the newspaper was well respected and one that editorially was generally quite reasonable and non-inflammatory, I think these people that I'm talking about at least anticipated that the newspaper would be a help in conditioning a response of the community to this. Then there were lots of other resources in Greensboro—the church groups, the university and

college-related persons—who were there that we anticipated would help Greensboro in accepting the changes that were legally mandated.

WC: Do you recall how—what Ben Smith might have envisioned? Did you have any conversations with him in which he shared his either hopes or fears?

TB: Ben Smith knew, and certainly I think said to me on a number of occasions that there were some very real hurdles that he and the school board would have to join to get over. As you've said, he had a six-to-nothing decision of the school board to accept this, so he knew that to that extent he had the support of the school board in going ahead with the implementation of plans. But he knew that certainly there were many elements in the PTAs [Parent-Teacher Associations] in the city that would be prepared to resist to the end. He knew that the teachers were not prepared to go along very well this yet. He knew that there were certain principals and other school officials who were going to be extremely resistant, and they were horrified at the decision of the school board. So Ben Smith knew that he had a battle on his hands.

WC: Do you think that he was—

TB: And he was looking for a ways to do this constructively, with as little detriment and disruption of the school process as he could. But I think [he] also determined, as I understood him from many personal conversations, that this had to be done, that he had to help to see this through.

WC: I've often gotten the sense that he would have liked to begin sooner than in fact desegregation did occur. Is that your sense as well? Desegregation occurs three years after the *Brown* decision in Greensboro on a token basis, and there are a lot of events in between that I want to talk with you about. I just wondered whether it was your sense that he would have been just as happy to proceed immediately.

TB: I really can't put my finger on anything specific enough on that. Obviously, his general attitude and position would support this theory and idea, but I can't really, I don't think, substantiate that claim.

WC: There is a—as I mentioned to you on the telephone, I've seen some letters that you sent to Governor [Luther] Hodges, I believe in 1955. It may have been after that too, but certainly in that period of time and the year after the *Brown* decision when you seemed to want to have at least some input into his decision and to bring—to discuss with him some experts from, I guess, from your national staff. Could you just talk a little bit about those

contacts with the governor and your perceptions of him and what happened at those meetings?

TB: I think my first contact with Luther Hodges was on the occasion of an annual event sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee that we called the Carolina Institute on International Relations. This was a week-long affair usually housed on the campus of the Woman's College. Residential people came from several states in the southeast; usually, I guess, in attendance of something like two-hundred people full-time and with larger crowds for the evening events, at which we would sponsor a nationally known speaker talking about various aspects of American foreign policy. Luther Hodges was invited to come and be one of our speakers at this event one summer. That was shortly after he had been involved in the Marshall Plan, if you recall—some national appointment as a leader in the Marshall Plan—and had gained some national prominence as a result of that. And he was speaking on an appropriate topic about the developments in United States/European relations. Mr. Hodges accepted, he came down, we had a little private dinner for him before that evening, and he made a very acceptable and useful appearance at the event, and that was my first personal contact with him, as I recall.

This was in part arranged through a mutual friend, Bob Frazier. Bob and Mr. Hodges had known each other very well. Bob Frazier was at that time the chairman of the regional executive committee of the American Friends Service Committee, so in a sense was my boss or my principal liaison with that committee. Then—trying to recall the chronology of those events—Hodges was lieutenant governor, if you recall, and the governor died in office. Hodges filled that out and then ran for office one year.

We felt that there was a lot happening in the state that Mr. Hodges just did not understand, and that he had entirely too rosy a view of the race relations in the state. If you recall, this is at a time when under his leadership they were putting on a tremendous effort to attract industry to North Carolina, and they were going all over the country, and I guess principally to New York City and the major centers with a big pitch for North Carolina, as I say, for industrial development. Was it Dwight Gilmore, at that time—did you ever run into that name?—was sort of director of industrial relations, promotion for the state. In any event, they were selling what we thought was a very distorted view of how good race relations were in North Carolina, and this began to be a matter of greater and greater concern to me and to the others who were associated in the Friends Service Committee.

We thought there were some opportunities that Mr. Hodges, if he were willing to assume the leadership, could grab at that time really to do some fairly useful and good things in race relations in the state. So we wanted some opportunities to try to plant some of these ideas with him, and it was on that basis that we sought appointments with him and went and tried to help him to understand what we understood from our experience in the black communities across the state of the discontent, the frustrations, the sense that

they did not have anything like adequate avenues of communication to the power structure in the state. And all of these problems were apparent all over the southeast at that time. Mr. Hodges listened politely. We did not think at that time when Irene Osborne, who was my Friends Service Committee associate, came out of the office and said we hadn't convinced him of anything other than we had broadened his understanding very, very much of what was happening in the state. So it was one of those appointments/interviews where you come away feeling rather frustrated that you haven't done what you had hoped to do and that we had just had not opened up the kind of communication link that we had thought might be possible. It was not that he was entirely negative, but that we didn't really get down to the nitty-gritty with him.

WC: He didn't—

TB: We didn't feel that he was really open to that so that he was interested in exploring [unclear].

WC: Were there just a couple of those meetings?

TB: As I recall yes, just a couple of those.

WC: Because, of course, it's shortly thereafter the Pearsall Plan gets introduced and the governor is really taking a position of rather adamant opposition to change.

TB: Remind me of the chronology of the Pearsall Plan and the resolution in the state legislature in which they declared once and for all North Carolina would never do that.

WC: Well—

TB: What was the date of that?

WC: The—I think that your meetings with the governor—if I'm, don't—I may be off a few months—but I believe that your meetings with the governor took place in the spring or summer of 1955. In the spring of '55, the legislature passed a Pupil Assignment Act which in effect remanded control over the schools to local districts to avoid a class-action suit against the state. And the governor, in August of '55, went on a statewide TV hook-up to announce his voluntary segregation plan. I think your meetings with him took place before that. And he then went to the Black Teachers Association and asked them to support voluntary segregation, and that fall is when he came to A&T and the students booed and hissed him. And then that fall and spring he introduced the Pearsall Plan in special session, which would have provided for tuition support and the closing of schools

in these districts which voted to close schools in the event desegregation occurred, and then those constitutional amendments were passed in the fall of '56 by a five-to-one majority statewide in the referendum.

TB: So much of that gets away from me in the rush of events since then. I'm trying to recall whether prior to that session with Hodges we had had the meetings with Charles Carroll, who had become the superintendent of education. He had been at High Point as superintendent and then he went to the state education system as superintendent. If I recall correctly, Charlie Davis, Bill Bagwell, and I had been to Charles Carroll, whom we had known slightly in High Point, to try to persuade him that there was some very interesting and valuable experiments going on in other places in the country of people who were trying to find ways to respond constructively to the *Brown* decision, and it would be a very good idea if he could send a study team to two or three of these places, like Louisville for example, to see what they were doing and how they were handling some of these problems, and then to take a look at whether any of this experience was transferable to North Carolina. We got a very negative reaction from Carroll, who looked out of his window and said, "Well, over there is where the power and these decisions are to be found," and he was looking across the street at the Capitol, where the state legislature meets. He just didn't seem at all interested in trying to find some sort of a constructive way to deal with the matter seriously.

WC: Would he have been referring to Hodges in looking across the street?

TB: He was really referring to the legislature.

WC: To the legislature.

TB: But if I recall correctly, we reported this to Hodges when we saw him, our disappointment that no constructive planning was going on, that it was all apparently of a negative kind. Everybody, with the governor's encouragement, were trying to find ways to avoid the *Brown* decisions and indications. And we were saying to him, you know, that the black community in the state and a lot of elements in the white community in the state are not going to buy this. We were trying to persuade him to come forth with some more constructive, progressive leadership. And we thought we had some leeway with him because obviously the race relations posture of North Carolina was of very great importance to potential industrial clients in the state. But, again, they didn't see that soon enough, and Hodges thought they were going to be able to persuade people, apparently, that because things were rather quiet in the state, because North Carolina was developing its own sort of unique response to this, that this would be quite good enough and [unclear] to a point, perhaps, in some cases. [unclear] good enough.

You might, if you're interested in pursuing that, check the chronology of those events, whether actually Charles Carroll was in at that time as I think he was and whether that preceded those events you referred to, the Pearsall Plan.

WC: Okay, I'm almost positive your meeting did come before that August speech, because in a sense, I think it recognized that the governor was about to do something, and you wanted to—yet—

TB: We were afraid of what it was going to be.

WC: You were afraid of what it was going to be, yeah. And I also get the sense that there was a network of people like yourself across the state who you were in touch with, because there were an awful lot of letters to him at this point in time from people who are urging a more liberal stance on him. I don't know whether that rings any bells in terms of your having contact with people in Charlotte or Durham or Raleigh.

TB: Well, we were in touch informally with lots of those people across the state, and I'm sure we were, though I don't remember any campaign, any specific—

WC: Charlie Bowles from Charlotte wrote a letter, a Reverend Bowles. Now, I don't know, you have been in touch with him.

TB: We were, had many meetings in Charlie Bowles' church, and were in touch with him when Bill Bagwell and Charlie Davis would go to Charlotte. Charlie Bowles was the sort of person to be seen all the time, seeking his council about what was going on in Charlotte and how to work at it.

WC: But Hodges was not listening, not willing to even listen?

TB: Incidentally, what has happened to Mr. Hodges? Is he still alive?

WC: No, he's died.

TB: I wasn't sure. When did he die?

WC: About three years ago. His son, as you probably know, is going to run for the senate in North Carolina.

TB: No, I wasn't aware. Really?

WC: Yeah, and he will probably get the nomination.

TB: Luther Jr.?

WC: Luther Jr. and he's going to run against Mac Smith in the Democratic primary.

TB: Oh, that will be fun.

WC: And there will be two or three other candidates, and the likelihood is strong, I guess, that Luther Hodges Jr. will prevail because—

TB: Mac is running for the U.S. Senate?

WC: Yeah, in the Democratic primary.

TB: That is very exciting. It certainly is.

WC: I wish he had more of a chance. I don't think he has much of a chance.

TB: What's the relation to this to Rich Preyer, any? Rich decided not to try?

WC: I think so. I think so. I think that—my sense, at least, is that his position in the House [of Representatives] is one of such influence and prestige at this point that to give that up in order to run a very doubtful race against [Jesse] Helms—not a doubtful race, but one certainly in which the chances would be no better than 50-50 of winning—would not be worth the sacrifice. I have a sense, I guess, that Preyer is now one of the ten or twenty most respected people in the House, and probably has a lot of clout, so that he may think he can be speaker [of the house] some day.

TB: Well, that would be quite a team from North Carolina, Greensboro, if you could have Mac and Rich.

WC: It would be. It would be, absolutely.

TB: A far cry from some characters we've had. [chuckles]

WC: Yes. [laughter] Absolutely. I think this thing is probably—well, no, not quite run out on that side. It doesn't have a buzzer on it. I have to keep on—

[End Tape 1, Side A—Begin Tape 1, Side B]

WC: —the politics because I guess it's been my sense that there was an awful lot more room that he had, that he thought or that he gave voice to, that he could easily have moved in a very different direction and still not have lost a great deal of political support. And I guess one of the things that I'm interested in is how the people in that luncheon group would have responded, because the *[Greensboro] Daily News*, for example, gave pretty strong support for the Pearsall Plan.

TB: I know.

WC: Was that discussed at all?

TB: I'm trying to recall. And quite incidentally there was another group that had been talking about—I think you would probably have some sharp differences of opinion in that group, because after all it was George Evans at that stage who was in. [pause] I really don't know what else to say on that. [pause]

I suppose that at least several of us, Mac Smith probably, maybe Rich, [Warren?], I, and interestingly enough, Bob Moseley, would have felt, and did feel and say, that Hodges supported—the kind of program that Hodges was coming up with is just going to be a disaster for the state. He really was obviously in a difficult position and on the sticky wicket, but that there were many more resources, particularly in the Piedmont and the western part of the state, that politically could have accepted something much better the planned program he was supporting. I don't know enough about the politics of the state, and I certainly can't recall any of the figures on black voters that would have been available at that time—not that he would have carried all of them—but certainly the east/west division in the state was a very sharp one. And one certainly has to admit, I think, that the eastern part of the state was, you know, just lost, in so far as political support for any sort of progressive acceptance of the *Brown* decisions and its indications. But I don't know that Hodges had ever had any great support there anyway.

WC: They weren't his natural constituency?

TB: They were not his natural constituency.

WC: Well, one of the things that puzzles me is that, as I can gather it at least, in the entire group of people at you mentioned or who one might identify as the white liberal leadership of Greensboro, only Ben Smith spoke publicly against the Pearsall Plan.

TB: That puzzles me a little bit. How about Ed Hudgins?

WC: He did not, as far as I can gather, take any position on it.

TB: I'm trying to think of others who might have. Was Charlie Bowles pastor at West Market Methodist Church?

WC: Yes, at that point he was. He probably did speak out against it, yes. I wouldn't be surprised at all if he did. I'm thinking now, I guess, of things which would have been published in the newspaper or made a matter of public record. But I suspect that Bowles probably did. I've spoken with his widow. She doesn't remember exactly. I would be surprised if he did not speak out against it.

Given the strong support the newspaper gave the Pearsall Plan, that's somewhat surprising in light of the other kinds of perceptions of Hodges and his plan that you are speaking of in that group. I'm not sure what the pressures were on the newspaper. I'm not sure whether Bill Snider wrote those editorials, or whether Amos Kendall wrote them, or who, but—

TB: Both, I think, though certainly Bill must have been writing many of those editorials and, you know, was the principal formulator of the newspaper's position on these matters.

Was Major McClendon attorney for the *Greensboro Daily News* at that point?

WC: I don't know. He may well have been, but I'm not sure.

TB: Well, that would be an important, maybe, relationship to explore.

WC: Okay.

TB: I think if I recall correctly, that Major's firm did represent the *Daily News*. And I know that Bill Snider thought very highly of Major McClendon, and that they probably had many consultations about the newspaper's handling of that whole business.

Thornton Brooks was the attorney for the school board. How was he involved?

WC: He became chairman of the school board after John Foster, but that was after. That was '58.

TB: That was after Ed Hudgins.

WC: Yes.

TB: Then John Foster.

WC: And then Thornton Brooks.

TB: Oh, yes.

WC: And Bob Moseley was the lawyer for—

TB: The board.

WC: Yes. Now, would McClendon have had a viewpoint on this which Snider particularly would have responded to?

TB: I think so.

WC: In support of the Pearsall Plan?

TB: Well, you say responded to, I think he would have taken Major McClendon very seriously. And as I remember his position and in thinking on this, Major McClendon was way out on this whole business in thinking that Hodges' program and the Pearsall Plan ultimately would not do. But that's just my very personal impression of Major McClendon's convictions in thinking about this, based on a very strong legal position and questions of whether the state was going to get away with this.

WC: The interesting thing is that there weren't that many—I mean Irving Carlyle was one of the most eloquent opponents of the Pearsall Plan.

TB: Very eloquent opponent.

WC: But there just wasn't much support for his position. I mean, the newspaper published his article along with that of many other people on the Pearsall Plan.

TB: And he, again, was one of the very few people who spoke out publicly, wasn't he?

WC: Yes.

TB: I remember what a thrill it was to so many of us to hear and see Irving Carlyle identify himself so publicly and so adamantly on this. [pause] And I recall something. I remember once we had—two or three times, it seems to me, we got Irving Carlyle to come over from Winston-Salem to join us in this informal discussion group for an evening. I'm sure a lot of these [others?] were involved in it.

WC: I know that he was very close to many people in that group—Ed Hudgins.

TB: He was just a great guy, great guy. Among other things he was a fine golf player.

WC: Well, just for a few minutes perhaps we could talk about when the desegregation did occur. And I'll just—in 1957, there in the fall, six students were sent—six black students were transferred to Gillespie [Park Elementary School] and one black girl student went to [Greensboro] Senior High [now Grimsley High School].

TB: I'm trying to recall her name.

WC: Josephine Boyd.

TB: Boyd, yeah.

WC: And there then ensued essentially five years of status quo, with one or two applications per year accepted, but the overwhelming majority rejected by the school board. And you have the court case over the Caldwell/Pearson [Street] School, in which the NAACP Legal and Educational Defense Fund is taking the Greensboro school board to court in '59 asking for a restraining order on further practice of segregation. And that summer the board admits the four black students to the Caldwell School, and then subsequently transfers out all of the white students and all the white teachers, and then argues in court that the case is moot because the four students are in the school to which they applied for transfer. And the judge at that level upholds the school board's argument. It's later reversed on appeal and in a higher federal court. But that's kind of the broad skeleton of events that are transpired there. And I wondered whether any of those events were ones that you were either involved in conversations about or have particular knowledge of in terms of school desegregation process or your relationship with some of the people on the school board or someone like Bob Moseley who was the school board attorney during that period?

TB: Well, most of the concerns and representations of the American Friends Service Committee at that time, of course, would have been handled by our actual staff, Charlie Davis and Bill Bagwell. I'm sure they were, every hour of the day, day after day, seeing people who were in official positions, seeing key leaders in groups in the Greensboro community, the PTA groups and others, talking to teachers and so forth. So I did not have as many personal contacts at that point.

Though one experience that I remember—I'm not quite sure how personally its related to your question—was a visit that a friend and I had with Josephine Boyd in her home. This was a guy named Ed Randall who had worked for the American Friends

Service Committee in Philadelphia and later worked for one of the big Philadelphia radio stations. And his thing was going all around the country doing interesting tapes with people, involving a lot of civil rights and other experiences. And we went one afternoon, when Ed Randall was in North Carolina, to the home of Josephine Boyd to do a taping and a chat with her. And we happened to be there on the afternoon when she had come home early from school because a student had splashed her dress with ketchup deliberately. And it was a very moving experience, to tell it [bluntly?], to see her determination to see this through, and to hear her relate a lot of the kind of indignities to which she was being subjected, and in particular her frustrations that the school authorities were not helping very much. But a beautiful spirit, great determination, and the sort of thing that needed to be understood by people in Greensboro.

So we tried to find ways to help people there understand what the institution of racism was doing to some of the human beings that were involved, black and white, obviously. And we tried to—with some sense of not invading her privacy too much—but we tried to report this to appropriate people both in the system and otherwise. And I recall we went to see [A.P.] Red Routh, who was the principal at the high school, to raise some of these questions with him. And he was distressed about this. It was obvious that he was not at all enthusiastic about everything that was happening to desegregate the schools and was going to resist in every way that he could. But at the same time, he was certainly not putting up with this kind of behavior from the students or the teachers if he could help it.

WC: And the teachers were condoning this?

TB: The teachers were a mixed persuasion on this, and, of course, that's one of the things that obviously got to very quickly to the students, that the teachers were of mixed persuasion on this. And some of them were very glad to see any kind of resistance, and then there were some, certainly, on the other side who were prepared to abide by the law and do the best they could with it. So I'm sure that the program, in our usual ways of communication and direct confrontation and the rest of it, were working on all these questions. I don't recall any other very personal experience of that particular period. And as you recall, it to me—you know how many of these really things get away from you. I could not have recited that chronology of it.

WC: It's only because I'm working with it all the time that I can do it. I know what you mean.

One of the things that's interesting is that there was no, absolutely no publicity on the treatment that she received. And when there was a story on her experience after she graduated, it was a story which essentially said there were no problems. Only ten years later is there a story written recalling the events when the truth comes out about the treatment she got there.

TB: That's incredible.

WC: It's the 1968 news story which deals with what actually happened.

TB: Well, if you want to document that, I'm sure that we could find for you, through the Service Committee office in Philadelphia, probably the tapes of that session we had with Josephine Boyd.

WC: Oh, that would just be very, very helpful.

TB: Okay. So remember that name, Ed Randall, which you would have.

WC: R-a-n-d-a-l-l?

TB: R-a-n-d-a-l-l, I believe. They can find that for you I'm sure.

WC: I hope so.

TB: Incidentally, he would have others also that I just don't recall at the moment.

WC: I hope to go up there—

TB: I think actually probably recorded some tapes with school officials, members of school boards, and key community leaders, because this was a project that he was involved in. So that might possibly be quite valuable to you.

WC: Absolutely. I do hope to spend some time up there looking at the records that have been sent up from High Point, as well as—this is a very, very helpful source, and I hope it will work out.

Is there any recollection of that court case in '59 that comes to you or any discussion of that which might have been involved in your dinner group?

TB: Well, I'm sure we were talking about it all the time. I don't recall anything that—

WC: The board hired [William] Welch Jordan to represent it because Bob Moseley felt that he was not able to, within a court room setting, be as effective. That is one of the more discouraging examples of resistance that occurred.

TB: Now you know there was another interesting aspect of the legal developments in which people who were resisting the desegregation of the school board brought suit also, which I recall.

WC: J.J. Shields and the Patriots, I think.

TB: Yeah, and I've forgotten who actually brought the case. But I remember a very dramatic moment in the court room one day where this man was on the stand and Mr. Moseley was questioning him about that. They were objecting very violently to the assignment of these people in the early stages of the Caldwell School, as I recall. And this man was objecting not only to what was happening in the schools, but what was happening generally. And at one point Mr. Moseley asked him, "Do you really claim and feel that your civil rights are being violated when you get on the bus and a person of whatever color comes and sits down next to you? That your rights to ride that bus, to pay your money, to go wherever you want to go, are being infringed because a black man comes in the bus and does the same thing?" And suddenly, it seemed to me, to the whole court room, black/white, pro/con, and everybody else, you know, that the issue is just made ridiculous. And there was a long moment of silence and a stuttering, you know, embarrassment when this guy saw the point, but nevertheless had to claim, you know, that he was, as an American citizen, being disadvantaged by this. [laughs] Mr. Moseley didn't want to, I'm sure, publicly enjoy it that moment very much. [unclear]

WC: Right. Well, you were also—

TB: But that—let's see. That preceded, of course, then the principal case to which you are referring in which the school board [unclear].

WC: Yes, I think that case is in '57, I believe. Yeah, just as the desegregation is occurring. I think that is before Judge Preyer. I believe he was the sitting judge at that point.

TB: Right, he was.

WC: I think that was shortly before he—I'm not sure when he left the bench.

TB: Well, what was the history of that? He left that bench and then became a district judge, was he not? And he was commuting back and forth to Winston-Salem and other places around the state. Wasn't there some change—

WC: I'm not sure.

TB: —I think in the judicial system, and he had been elevated to a higher, larger position.

WC: Yeah, because he did not sit in on any of the subsequent cases.

TB: Right.

WC: Were you in Greensboro also during the sit-ins? Do you recall?

TB: Oh, yes. Yeah, I was.

WC: I guess that although the demonstrations themselves—the first sit-ins lasted only for one week, there was certainly a lot of consultations and negotiations going on. And I just wondered whether there were any particular incidents that stand out in your mind about that whole period. I'm not sure if the AFSC got involved in any way there, but whether you as an individual might have.

TB: I remember during that week of very dramatic demonstrations we were having long nighttime strategy sessions after the evening demonstrations. We had a church on the east side of town. And I remember very vividly one evening after the opposition had been particularly vocal and somebody marching [unclear], Floyd McKissick was there talking with the group of students and others, I guess, maybe [unclear].

Floyd was—particularly in his admiration for them and what they were doing, and if I recall correctly, urging them not to get involved in negotiations that would compromise their position. And he was, as Floyd always did, he was a born preacher. Floyd was preaching something that came very close to being real racial hatred at that moment. And he was saying that these white people ain't going to give nothing that they don't have to. And I remember he said, “Oh, sure, there are some few kooks or crazies among them—like Tarrt Bell back there—who are with you, but you're going to have to take whatever you get from this business community in Greensboro.” And saying to them, as I recall, almost in so many words, that they hate you and they're afraid of you and the only thing that they're going to know is this kind of language. And it distressed and disturbed me, because I was trying very hard to keep the group using the nonviolent techniques that up to that point they'd been using so very, very effectively well.

And another incident out of that week that I remember, just as incidental history, was giving Jesse Jackson a ride from that meeting at the church back to the dormitory or the place near campus where he lived, and asking Jesse how he got into all of this anyway. I don't know whether you've run into this or not, you know, but he was a football star at A&T. I think [he] was the captain of the football team that year, and when they started looking around to somebody to monitor, to marshal the marches, they thought of the A&T football team, if I have this correct, and I'm pretty sure it is. And this

is how Jesse Jackson got into it. And I think they asked him, as a matter of fact, as a captain or leader of the football team, to lead the parade demonstration that marched up West Market Street up to downtown. And Jesse was saying, you know, "I don't—I hadn't known anything what this was all about. I haven't been into this at all, and this is how I got into it." And that may very well be, you know, one of the significant early events that influenced Jesse Jackson to get into his role as civil rights leader.

WC: I think it was. That's the second time I've heard that story.

TB: Oh, is that right.

WC: It's—

TB: Is it substantially the same story?

WC: Yeah, yeah. It's quite interesting.

TB: I heard it from Jesse's own mouth.

WC: Right. I've got—the other person I heard it from is [Reverend A. Knighton] "Tony" Stanley. Do you know Tony Stanley?

TB: Oh, yeah.

WC: And did you work with him at—?

TB: Oh, we knew Tony very well and worked with him a lot, you know, on school integration. He's been in Washington [D.C.], and I'm sorry that I haven't seen him any. Do you know where he is now?

WC: He's at People's Congregational [United Church of Christ]. I saw him yesterday afternoon

TB: Oh, did you? Good.

WC: —and had a long conversation.

TB: How is he? I'm sorry I haven't seen him.

WC: Very, very well. He seems to be just in fine form.

TB: Tony was on a, as I remember, on the Employment [unclear] Committee that we worked with. He was close to the student groups.

WC: yeah. Well, he tells that same story. Did you know [William A.] Bill Thomas at all? Did you work with Bill Thomas from CORE [Congress of Racial Equality]?

TB: Just a bit. I really didn't know Bill Thomas all that well.

WC: Now the white community's involvement in the '63 and in those sit-ins was—I think there were two kinds of layers of response: one was kind of the public official layer, David Schenck and the committee he had established, and there probably was another layer, which I'm not yet clear about, which would have been the response of the larger industrial enterprises as they affected the resolution of that period. And I'm just not—I don't know if you have any insights into what might have happened then, but—

TB: I have a hard time calling any of that up, I'm afraid.

WC: At some point I think that Caesar Cone, or one of the Cone's, I think they owned the building the Mayfair Cafeteria was in. And I think at some point there was—

TB: Yeah, they did. They did.

WC: —some pressure exerted from there on Mayfair.

TB: As I recall it, much more important was the S&W Cafeteria, because that was where I think one of the big walk-ins occurred, and a court case came out of that. And again, I remember Floyd McKissick was legal counsel for the defendants in that. And in another courtroom in Greensboro, I remember Floyd McKissick getting the representative of the S&W Cafeteria chain on the stand, and how ridiculous it seemed when he asked him, “How were people supposed to know whether they were to be admitted to the S&W?” That all the advertisements said, you know, urging the public to come, and how was anybody supposed to know? And the man had a very hard time, because there were no signs that said, you know, “Negroes not admitted” or “for whites only” or anything else of the kind. And Floyd just, you know, just shredded these people [by] pointing out, you know, that they have a charter up in the state, it's a public affair, and that their advertising was all in this theme. There were no signs saying what kind of people were to be admitted and what were not. And on what basis in heaven's name did they put these people out of their cafeteria? Well, you know, again, there was just no defense of it. And Sarah Herbin, I think, our colored secretary, and a guy named [Richard] Dick Ramsey

were in that original group that were the defendants in this case, that went in the S&W that night and got thrown, raised the case. So we were just involved.

TB: Yeah, I need to find her. I know that she's working for something in Raleigh, a politician in Raleigh. Do you know?

TB: I haven't heard from Sarah lately. I don't know.

WC: I think that's the case.

WC: Well, I have taken up much more than the hour that I promised you on the telephone.

TB: Well, don't worry about that. Gee, you know it's only when you get in this kind of thing that—

[End of Interview]