

# CIVIL RIGHTS GREENSBORO DIGITAL ARCHIVE PROJECT

## William Henry Chafe Oral History Collection

INTERVIEWEE: Hal Sieber

INTERVIEWER: William Chafe

DATE: circa November 1974

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WILLIAM CHAFE: You came to Greensboro in '65?

HAL SIEBER: I came to Greensboro [in] June 1966.

WC: Nineteen sixty-six. Where did you come from?

HS: Chapel Hill.

WC: How long had you been there?

HS: I had been in Chapel Hill fifteen years, over a twenty-year period. I went to Chapel Hill in 1947 as a freshman, stayed until '51. During the Korean War I was in service, returned in '54, was in business until '56. I had written two books during that period. Then went into Washington, D. C., for three years, came back to Chapel Hill, and stayed.

WC: What were the books?

HS: I wrote a book of poetry in 1954, which was nominated for the National Book Award, called *In This, the Marian Year*, and I wrote another called *Something Westward*, and then just poetry. In 1957 I wrote *The Literary, Political, Legal, and Medical Status of [Ezra Pound, sic—The Medical, Legal, Literary, and Political Status of Ezra Pound]*—and that was based on the Ezra Pound treason case, which I was the director of the congressional investigation for the Library of Congress.

WC: So you were director of the congressional investigation when you went to Washington for that interim—

HS: Among other things, while I was in Washington.

WC: That's an incredible. How did you get involved in the chamber of commerce kinds of things?

HS: Well, first of all, there aren't any traditional chamber of commerce kinds of things that I have been relating myself to over the years. Basically, I was involved with nontraditional things that are only chamber of commerce things because chambers of commerce are involved with them at that point.

[Discussion of Sieber's work with the Library of Congress, various senators, and on the Ezra Pound investigation is redacted.]

WC: That's fascinating.

HS: It's not related to desegregation in any way—

WC: Right.

HS: —I suppose. Although I was, during that period, interestingly enough, accused by a lot of people—because I was involved with the concern for civil rights of Pound, because he was incarcerated, in a sense, with a life imprisonment without trial because he was mentally incompetent to stand trial—accused by some people as being a supporter of this political enthusiasm which I couldn't have supported under any circumstances. And ironically, that was in contrast of some of the criticisms I received ten years later.

WC: Where did you grow up?

HS: In western North Carolina, Brevard, twenty miles from Asheville, in the mountains, and Hendersonville, which is twenty miles from there, between Asheville and Greenville, South Carolina. And the man who is the president of the Dallas Chamber [of Commerce] right now was a high school classmate of mine in Hendersonville.

WC: So it was a mountain community?

HS: Yes.

WC: What were your folks' attitudes toward race?

HS: I'm the first generation of Americans. My folks—my father was born in this country but was raised in Germany, and my mother was from Germany. Their attitudes were, I think, more liberal than the people in the community—although there weren't many black people in Brevard, and it didn't take much to be liberal or conservative, and really race had nothing to do with that position. I think my folks were very supportive of the fictional concepts of equality, and they sort of believed that that's what we had. And I think my concerns more or less came out of seeing, as I grew up, that what I had been taught existed—and not that they had taught me into taking a position. They hadn't. Neither one of my parents would have agreed to tackle the authorities on anything. They were very typically German in that they were submissive to the power structure of the community.

WC: And you were—do you recall when the first time you were not submissive to the power structure of the community?

HS: Yeah. When I was a little kid we had milk wagons drawn by horses, and there was a black horse. My mother spoke German, and the German word for Negro was "Schwarz," but you didn't use that word because it meant "black one" or "black." And it was considered, like "Nigger," not a very good word. And I had always been taught by my mother and by my aunt to say "Colored." And so when this milk truck was drawn by a horse, I talked about "Look at that Colored horse," and I was about four years old, I guess.

But I wrote an article in the *North Carolina Catholic*, which was a [unclear] of the newspaper. And I wrote a poem that was in the same newspaper during World War II, and it was violently—I have a copy of it somewhere in the house. It was very strongly, militantly against what was going on at that time. A lot of the same rhetoric that I found myself using twenty—

WC: Going on in what?

HS: In terms of race relations. And in 1939 I wrote a poem that was published [unclear] *Times*, which had to do with the needs for justice and equality in specific dimension of black and white, maybe because black [unclear]. I'm not sure now, but—

WC: How old were you at this point, sixteen or seventeen?

HS: Oh, no. In 1939 I would have been eight years old, nine years old. And it was published in 1940. I was nine years old. So I don't know. I can't explain it except that—

WC: It's obviously a system that goes back fairly far.

HS: Yes. At the University of North Carolina, I was very much involved in—as a student—in activities related to opening up the university in the late forties. And the president of the university at that time was Frank [Porter] Graham, and I was one of the four or five students that used to always be at his house. Al[lard] Lowenstein was one of them, Bill Matthews was another. And this group was sort of enrolled in a one-man university of Graham University, and we were conditioned a bit by—condition is a wrong word. We were influenced a good bit by the geniusness of Frank Porter Graham. In fact, we were so concerned with people.

WC: And you were a student together with Al Lowenstein and others. Who would be at his house?

HS: We would be on the front steps of his home, and Sunday afternoons and Saturdays we would sit there for hours talking with him. I have some pictures of that, too. But Frank Porter Graham was one of the few people who had any influence that I can tie in, because he intellectually had the ability to put it all together; everything else was just environment. But one that did happen was that he encouraged me to go in 1950 to the encampment for citizenship, which was sponsored by the Ethical Culture Society [sic—New York Society for Ethical Culture]. I don't know if you are familiar with that program.

WC: No.

HS: Al Lowenstein also went. The Ethical Culture Society in New York—and it's a very liberal type of church, loosely organized, Unitarian type of church leadership—sponsored an interracial, intercultural, interregional political science seminar—that's the best way to describe it—that met in Riverdale, New York, [the] last week in summer. And Graham got the money for me to go. And I met a young lady there who was black, [who] I've kept up with in the last twenty-four years, I guess, and I still keep up with her. I talked with her this morning, but I would say that she was very influential. What I just said could get my ass in a sling, but [unclear].

WC: [laughter] Everything we are saying here you will get a chance to look at, and anything you want off the record—

HS: That's not necessarily off the record, but I would like to have it used judiciously if you are going to use it, because I was married most of that period.

WC: You were in Washington in the late fifties?

HS: Yes.

WC: And did you work in the administration with President Kennedy?

HS: No, he was a senator. I worked in the Library of Congress, was assigned to his staff to work on the study of the 1956 election. In '57, the next thing that happened was that among other reports and studies—and all of a sudden I got the assignment to work fulltime on the Pound case. And after I completed that, because of the fact that there were pages and pages of my study in *Congressional Records*, and it was all over the newspapers and what have you, a man who was a former editor to the *Boston [Evening] Transcript* and former governor of Alaska—asked me whether I would join his staff when Alaska became a state. And he expected to be a senator for Alaska. So I was a special staff assistant of [unclear] from Alaska until I came back to North Carolina.

WC: When—you came back to North Carolina at the point at which you joined with the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce?

HS: I came back to North Carolina in 1959, after a three year period, and went to Chapel Hill. And I spent six years in Chapel Hill as the director of the North Carolina Heart Fund and public relations director of the North Carolina Heart Association.

And you asked me how I got into the chamber of commerce, and I never fully answered that. Legislative relations and public relations are concerned with—unless it's propaganda or con-artistry type of thing, our concern was making up your mind what you want to do, what you want to be like, and making sure of everything you do and everything you don't do leads towards sustaining what you say you want to be. That's not the only way public relations is conducted, but that's how I viewed it. So given the opportunity to be with the chamber of commerce where there are urban problems that were—that required facing up to certain issues, whether they were race-related or not, I generally followed the rule that if the chamber wanted to look like it was progressive to young people, then it took staff leaders and the management to make sure that it was progressive toward young people, rather than changing the mirror and saying, “Well, in order to look better to young people, we need a better mirror.” So I was involved in getting the chamber to be involved with high school kids and college kids, blacks and the poor people in Greensboro, because I felt that there was an opportunity [unclear] and not pursue that opportunity. Because if the chamber said that it wanted to be involved with the whole community, I took them at their word.

WC: So in a sense, what you are saying is the whole conception of public involvement was to make—from the age of nine on—was to work toward making the words consistent with [unclear]?

HS: Actually, I didn't give a damn about the words in most cases. I found most of the people in the communities where I lived concentrating very heavily on such things as faith, witness, words, scriptures, whatever it might be. And I never could quite figure out, in a society that was so heavily well-governed by scriptures and what have you, that there was so much overlooking of the—faith without deeds really didn't mean much. I took James or somebody in the scriptures seriously, and I think I was more concerned about deeds. Because I don't think that communication leads to actions, and I don't think that exhortation really changes very much in most cases. Most ministers preach every Sunday morning at 11:00 against adultery, and they may very well get hung-up with a very pretty chick on the way out of the church before they even get home to dinner, and [that] doesn't seem to me to be leadership.

WC: I'd love to pursue that a little bit, but let me first ask you this: who invited you to come to Greensboro? How did that happen?

HS: Hargrove Bowles, "Skipper" Bowles, who was chairman of the board of North Carolina Heart Association, was aware of the fact that I was a little unhappy after six years, because it was not as challenging. Bowles, as a matter of fact, ran for governor a couple years ago and lost. But he knew my ability, lack of ability, in a number of areas, and he knew what my strengths might be. And he had heard that the chamber was looking for somebody who could handle what the chamber thought was a complicated public relations job, and so he recommended me. And there was a second man named Allen Wannamaker, who was the president of the North Carolina Broadcasting Corporation[?], and the head of WBIG, and a friend of Skipper Bowles, and a third man named Dr. Edward Benbow, who was a pediatrician in Greensboro. And the three of them got together and told Bill Little, "You ought to talk to this guy." And I came over and attended an interview with Bill Little one day, and I got a telegram a week later telling me that I was hired.

WC: I want to go back a little bit.

HS: And Bowles was on the board of the North Carolina Fund, for an example, which shows that Bowles was not a typical Greensboro, North Carolina, leader, either.

WC: Yeah, but you say they wanted a—what they saw to be a complicated public relations job. How did they see that? How as was that presented to you?

HS: All right. It was presented to me not in terms of race. Believe me race had nothing to do with it.

WC: Okay.

HS: The chamber didn't put me up to working in race relations and race.

WC: Was that ever mentioned during that first set of interviews?

HS: I don't think so.

WC: Okay.

HS: I think that what was mentioned was the—one of the missions was to bring more members into the chamber at a time when the chamber was already the—from the membership and dollar point of view, on a per capita basis, the most successful chamber in the country, regardless of size. That was one thing. And the second thing was that they wanted to have—and Bill Little mentioned, “We want to have some sparkle put into our program. And we are doing everything right, but we need to give it a magic touch of some sort.” And they wanted to have the publications and everything else and to sound and be innovative.

WC: To sound and be innovative?

HS: I'm not going to quote anybody. I don't know whether those words are precise to use, but that was the concept. And I would not go along with sounding innovative without being innovative, and that's where my first battles were with people like Bill Little. But I would say that Bill Little was extremely supportive for a number of years, because for five years or so—and I have all those materials here when the chamber was valued as the most innovative in the country. And he was always [in form on chamber executives?]. He was extremely supportive. He only became less supportive when it became politically very difficult to be supportive because of the race factors. And I would say not so much because of local leadership, but because of such things as the president of the United States right in the middle of the chamber of commerce's program to get the community to be responsive to school desegregation and the law of the land. The president of the United States would make some jackass comment about the vulnerability of the law of the land, which would really then create political problems in Greensboro. And so I don't blame Bill Little on that. I don't blame the leadership of the chamber. But the reality of

this is that this is where it became more difficult to support activism within the established institution of the chamber.

I think the other thing that was sort of a complicated thing, from the way they presented it, was the chamber, while it had good income or what have you, was not prepared to spend a lot of money in public relations activity. And so the stress was on being extremely resourceful, not spending money, and finding ways to use leadership. And since that was the area that I had worked in pretty heavily before, it was sort of hoped that I could pull little rabbits out of the hat that wouldn't cost things—that wouldn't cost much.

WC: So they wanted you to make them sound innovative for not too much money.

HS: That's right. And I wanted to take that opportunity to be innovative because it was a professional challenge. I thought it was an ethical opportunity.

WC: Where did the ethics come into this if there was no mention at all, during this whole period or process of interviewing, of race?

HS: Where was the ethics?

WC: Yes.

HS: There is more to ethics than just race relations.

WC: I realize that, but where was the ethics of it?

HS: I think simply in the fact that if an organization commits itself to being for the total community, for example.

WC: Had they committed themselves to that, or was that your phrase?

HS: Well, it was phrased—but in the political process of that first year that I was at the chamber, three things happened. I felt that one of the best prospects for chamber membership were the nontraditional chamber members, such as blacks, such as school teachers—whether they were black or white—such as agencies executives, such as young business people, young professional people. So within that first year at the chamber, we had about 150 black members, for example, for the chamber membership. During that first year, I established something I called the Curbstone Conference—which I'm doing the same thing here right now—which opened up the chamber so that they would—so that the chamber would be publicly on record [as] supporting free enterprise in the



marketplace of ideas, and not just in goods and services. And there was constantly a controversy of ideas. And out of that, the bait of the first year, and the fact that I got to write the speeches for the president and the executive vice president and the chairman of the divisions—and when you have a chance to write the speeches, as well as to manage the way things get into press, while on the one hand, professional ethics might say that it is manipulative to put a consistent point of view in a speech and then make damn sure you get caught in the act of doing a good deed, on the other hand, I would say it is personally ethical not to stay away from controversy if as an organization you have the responsibility to solve problems, and if the problems are controversial and they are the only ones that you have got. And if it isn't controversial, there would be a consensus and you don't need a chamber of commerce to solve it, that maybe it is professionally ethical to have some guts.

So I did, I think as tactically as I could, put things in speeches. And I'll give you an example of how it was done, in a manipulative sort of way, and I'm not ashamed of it at all. The president of the chamber during that period was Marion [unclear]. He knows what happened. At the time he didn't. But I thought I had had a hell of a time getting some of the conservative leaders to go for total community. But I think that I could get them to go for total development, so I started talking about total community development, and then I dropped the word development. And that's what happened over a six month period in Marion [unclear] speeches. Well, as the president of the chamber keeps using those words, Hal Sieber was never—he never made any speeches. It helped to mold through his leadership, because it was he that was willing to say it and he had to be given credit for it, understanding what he'd said and understanding that it was ruffling some feathers. And his personal history is one of being fairly courageous. He compares with other people that—that had as much to do with changing things during that period as anything else.

[I'll] give you another example. The Curbstone Conferences started off. The word Curbstone Conference sounded sort of Mickey Mouse, and nobody knew if that meant that you were having a sidewalk conversation or what it was. So then within six months, I had the idea let's call it something controversial, which made everybody perk up their ears. And I—poor Marion [unclear] developed the strategy to saying, "Look, if the Communists can have discussions themselves, why can't you have the same thing in favor of capitalism?" Well, that sounded patriotic, so we had discussion cells. Now, people don't even remember how the word "discussion cell" came into the Greensboro vocabulary. But there are a lot of organizations that have little log groups, or Wednesday afternoon home circle things that they call discussion cells, and they don't even recognize the controversial sound of the name. But it had something to do with giving a new flavor. We developed a new character named Nate Green, who was a sort of a modern counterpart to Nathaniel Green.

WC: You [unclear].

HS: I skipped something, because I then gave [unclear], who is a cartoonist for the paper, to come up with, and it came out of something that my son had said. My son couldn't pronounce the name Nathaniel. We were moving to Greensboro, had brought a little turtle, and every time he saw a turtle he called it Nate Green because he couldn't say Nathaniel Green. And he had seen the name in a chamber publication, and it became such a household term around our household I figured if that catches on like that, maybe it will catch on in the community. But then if Nate Green was a spunky, dynamic caricature symbol for Greensboro, then that spunky caricature—since the average leader is a little flabby and a little slow moving and what have you—could maybe be an example. And so he started saying things like, “Get off your high horse,” and stand there looking at a horse and whatever it might be. And the next thing you knew, you had Nate Green, black as well as white, mainly because I didn't just want to see white faces in the publications, so it wasn't so deliberate, yet it was controlled.

And I did control what the chamber gave the press. Not too much that I wanted to manage the news as I wanted to manage the chamber and figured that if it didn't get into the newspaper just because somebody is a chamber chairman, that he would try real hard to do a job as chairman and if he did a good job as chairman, he would end up being in the newspaper. And so I used it sort of a little bit as a [unclear]. I got caught. I got in a trouble once, at about the third of fourth year. I was getting a little more permissive.

WC: A little bit more what?

HS: A little bit more permissive. And I realize that during that period, because I was so intense after two or three years, that if I hadn't constantly had to evaluate reaction and response just as on the matter, that the whole operation would have been too tight and could have been very destructive. Here I was interested in opening up dialogue and discussion and what have you, and then controlling—and there had to be some happy medium. And there were a lot of people who were very helpful in the next year or two, because I was close enough to them to—they were close enough to me to tell me, “Look. See where you'll head? You are going to trip and fall on this, and you are going to go too far if you do this.” And I had a lot of people constantly giving me a lot of feedback: Sol Jacobs and Henrietta Franklin, David Morehead, Isaac Miller, Lewis Dowdy, John Marshall Stevenson [now Kilimanjaro].

WC: A lot of those are black—

HS: Nelson Johnson, Al Lineberry, Allen Wannamaker, Cecil Bishop. And I would say 50% were black.

WC: And they were telling you to be careful.

HS: They weren't telling me to be careful for like slow down, they were telling me what feedback they got. Like, "I was at a meeting the other day, and I heard so-and-so say, 'That son-of-a-bitch at the chamber sure is doing such-and-such.'" And they would tell me. Because they told me, I knew I had to size up the situation. Because I knew how to size up the situation, I didn't act like a damn fool, and I could use better judgment.

WC: Was this '70-'71?

HS: Before that, actually, '68-'69. For example, when Martin Luther King was assassinated, during that whole night we were on the radio urging people in Greensboro to share the grief with people of other races on the matter, urge them to be respectful of the feelings of other people, pay tribute on behalf of the chamber of commerce, without a board policy taking a position, pay tribute to Martin Luther King, and the next day help organize a memorial tribute.

WC: You did that?

HS: Pretty much on my own, but with Allen Wannamaker—

WC: But speaking for the chamber of commerce?

HS: Yes. And then the next day, Allen Wannamaker, who was very supportive, said, "Yeah, I agree we need to move on it." And they didn't go to the board with everything during those days. And what you do? You do it. And if you didn't get any criticism, you would do a little more. And if you didn't get any more criticism, you would do a little more. If you started getting some criticism, you would say, "Let's sit down and talk. And when you point, we do a little more." I mean, it wasn't that you would say, "Look, we can't have Farmer, for example, James Farmer speak at a meeting next week because it might be too controversial." We would invite him to be speaker at the meeting. We invited all the members to come, and announced at the press that the chamber was having a meeting and James Farmer was speaking. I might have had it on February 15, which is King's birthday, or on the fourth of April, which is the anniversary of King's death. And the chamber members showed up. The fact that they showed up seemed to be a positive response. If there was a lot of flack, maybe the next we did it a little bit differently.

I'd say my personal ego—in a sense that I am a sort of a stubborn man on given responsibilities I'll follow through on—it may have had something to do with some of it, after a period. Although at the beginning I would say that I was quite unaware of what the

consequences would be and sort of the notion that some people like—some people would say things like, “It doesn't make any difference to get the credit, as long as you get the job done.” I'd say, “It doesn't make any difference if we get the blame for it, as long as we get the job done.” And I took a lot of blame because—I figured because I felt that Bill Little would back me or—nobody else was paying my salary, except Bill Little of the chamber, and so for a period of time I was—I didn't have to worry about my ego.

WC: The thing that kind of puzzles me is that race was not mentioned in this discussion of your job, as being what you call “complicated public relations mission,” and yet within eighteen months it really becomes the centerpiece of your tenure.

HS: I tell you why. It becomes the centerpiece of my tenure right here in Dallas right now, too. I have the feeling that if—I had the feeling then that if you are going to tackle problems—such as unemployment, underemployment and discriminatory housing and substandard housing and non-existent housing and the need for community supported housing—and tackle questions—such as how to prevent urban decay and all the other things that are a part of the urban package that are really a part of community development objectives of the chamber of commerce—that the solution is not in the spending of millions of dollars as diversionary tactics to keep from facing realities—even though it may take millions of dollars to correct some mistakes that were years in the making—but required facing some issues.

And it happens that most of these problems had a race-relatedness or the direct consequence of very expensive and elaborate community systems that produced racial isolation, and so I don't think it is very inconsistent. You know, for instance, you asked me what the number one problem is of Greensboro right now, I would not say race relations. If you asked me what the number one problem is in Dallas right now, I would say it would be two things, and they would share the spotlight: the lack of a feeling for popular leadership, that is the leadership is very [unclear], and the second thing is race relations. And that's the nature of the [unclear] and the chamber of commerce. If it brags of a community development corporation, it can't really just be concerned with just bringing in new industry, especially if those industries are going to compound the problem. Is that a satisfactory answer?

WC: Yeah.

HS: I don't want to be evasive, but I think that's part of it. I think the second part if, if you are involved in a total community approach and you are involved with people in a community, in a neighborhood discussion or what have you, you are sooner or later going to be involved with people who have a lot of bottled up reactions to the established institutions and the established ways of doing things and what have you. And you are

going to be exposed to the very intense feelings that have developed over a period of time among white poor, the black poor, the Indian poor in Greensboro, and if you are exposed to those things, you are going to be exposed to them on human terms, rather than statistical or paternalistic terms, and you are probably going to be more responsive than you might be if you had never opened up that Pandora's box. So I think that probably some of it has to do with distortion of the perspective that is a non-momentary one, which then helps you to establish a broader perspective than you would have had otherwise.

WC: Do you know who the first black person was [unclear]?

HS: Yes, a man named Harold [Lancer?]. He was a retired army colonel, ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] officer, and who is now the director of corporative education in Greensboro. I called him within days after I was there and told him I wanted to sit down and talk with him to find out about the city from his perspective, and we got to know each other during the weeks to come, and we agreed we would help each other. He had a lot to do with the recruitment of most of the blacks which were on the chamber during that period.

WC: Who were the first ones to be on the chamber during that period?

HS: There were blacks in the chamber already. There was a man that you [should?] point out in a number of ways as having been instrumental in not only having blacks, but quite a few blacks on the chamber during those early days, '54-'55. A man named Michael Fleming, who is co-owner of Fleming-Shaw Tran-Moving [sic—Fleming-Shaw Transfer and Storage].

WC: You don't mean '54-'55, you mean '64-'65?

HS: I mean '64-'65. I'm sorry. I definitely didn't mean '54. Now, the first chamber members who came in during that period—and he was the one who recruited them—were a man named Coley, who is the manager of the North Carolina [Mutual] Life Insurance Company that is black-owned.

WC: Do you know his wife, by the way?

HS: Yes, who is an English teacher, who went to Japan last year, a very brilliant lady [Nell?]. Henry Frye, who is now president of the bank and a state legislator, who led the ticket for the state legislature in Greensboro. Kenneth Lee, who is a sort of a senior black attorney in the city, not necessarily in years, but in power and prestige and security and also a relationship with the white community.

WC: Did [unclear] join around this time?

HS: No.

WC: When did he—

HS: Otis Hairston is a clergyman, and Otis Hairston was somewhat reluctant to identify with the chamber. There were very few clergymen in the chamber, and it was sort of unheard of that clergymen were pushed. And about the only clergymen that were in there were the clergymen of the big white churches. They were [unclear] inactive, and got in at five or ten dollars, and somebody else paid for it. Otis Hairston used to skip around, was involved with the emergency committee. I'm trying to remember the name of it. It's the emergency committee—but there is another name for it, like the Negro Emergency Committee or the Black Emergency Committee—that organized a boycott in 1968, I believe it was. And it was a time the Community Unity Division was about to be organized as a community unity committee. It was the time that Martin Luther King was assassinated, a time that Allen Wannamaker committed himself at the end of 1967 to name.

And this was based on—and this shows how coincidental things can be: Allen Wannamaker comes out from having just been elected president of the chamber. The press is there waiting to find out what he is going to do the next year, and he said he hadn't even thought about what he was going to do the next year. He comes over to me and says, "What am I going to tell them?" So I say, tell them so-and-so. One of the things he told them was that he was going to make sure that the minorities had a stronger voice in the chamber, and that was being more or less responsive to the new membership complexion of our membership. But he promptly, out of—he had the opportunity to name eight at-large members, and four of them were black.

WC: Of the board?

HS: Yeah, as the president he had the opportunity to name four at-large members by appointment. Four of them were black. Otis Hairston was one of them. I don't think Otis Hairston had even been a member of the chamber. I think he got into the chamber at the point to be able to get on the board. I think that needs to be checked, but I am fairly certain that's true. And I think he can tell you better than anybody else. Otis Hairston and Cecil Bishop—who was the vice chairman of that citizens emergency committee, and who is pastor of the Trinity AME [African Methodist Episcopal] Zion Church, and was chairman of the Human Relations Commission, and subsequently board member of the chamber and vice [chairman?], and had a lot to do with helping our operation, my

operation, and later the chamber getting credibility in the community. The first black board member was named by Marion [unclear] in 1967, the year after I got there. And that was a courageous thing for that particular year.

WC: That was [Lewis] Dowdy, wasn't it?

HS: That was Dowdy.

WC: Wasn't he elected?

HS: No. There has never been a black elected to the board of directors of the Greensboro chamber to date. They had only been appointed by the president and then elected by the board, rather than the membership. There has been one black board member ex-officio as chairman of a division, the chairman of the [unclear] communication divisions who ex-officio, then was on the board of representatives, which is my division, was a man named Joe Shaw[?]. S. J. Shaw, chairman of the school education [committee?]. So he was neither appointed nor elected. He was appointed as chairman of a division and then automatically a board member. And you asked me, "Who were some of the blacks related to during that period?" Did you ask that question?

WC: Yes. I guess I've asked you who were some of the blacks who came in.

HS: Some of the blacks who came in early—I would say almost anybody who was a chairman of a department at [North Carolina] A&T [State University], who was a physician in the community, a lawyer in the community, or a CPA [certified public accountant] or a clergy of a large church that was activist. And there are some black churches that were not involved with activism within the black community, but most black churches in Greensboro were. All these people joined the chamber.

WC: Did George Simkins join?

HS: George Simkins never joined the chamber. His partner did, but he never did. He never did for two reasons, from what I could gather: at first, complete disbelief that the chamber could be for real. And even after the chamber presented him an award for his leadership over many years, and lost dozens of members because of his getting the award, he still didn't have a hell of a lot of faith in the chamber, because he said, "Well, it's a one-man affair. And once that guy is gone, [it's] not going to necessarily mean that the chamber has changed." Second thing was that he indicated that his—as president of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], he should preserve his independence, which I respected, although I didn't fully believe as much as I did when

somebody else said it. Like, for instance, when a judge said the same thing, and I believed it a little more. But then even there, sometimes I figured that maybe the person didn't want to spend ninety dollars or a hundred dollars because there were other things that they could do with their money or what have you. But there were several people like George Simkins who did not join the chamber. But again, if you are talking across the board, I would said that just as 90% of the business leadership in the community, generally black or white, belonged to the chamber, I would say that almost everybody whom you would think would be a likely chamber prospect would have joined.

WC: How about Julius Douglas?

HS: Julius Douglas was chairman of the chamber committee. In fact he was chairman of the chamber's Martin Luther King observance one.

We were talking about some things related to my views as a child about ethnic backgrounds and justice and what have you, and the thing that I mentioned was somewhere early in the forties. But during the war, I had been told by my school principal, J. E. [unclear], to come to a chapel program next Wednesday dressed in a suit or something or other, because I was going to get the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] Citizenship Award. I'm not sure that he said I was going to get the award, or alluded to it—at any a rate, came Wednesday, and I didn't get called forward. He told me that he hoped that I understood that the DAR had decided that since we were in the middle of the war and since my background was German, it really didn't seem like it was too appropriate.

And I became quite pissed off about that, no question that it affected me. I thought it was unjust. I thought it was unfair. I suppose in the same way that we think that having to wash your hands before dinner is unfair, but it was a major thing in my life because I had memorized all four stanzas of the “Star Spangled Banner” or whatever it was, three of which were very non-functional—or two of which, whatever it happened to be. And I had also made good grades in civics ever since, and there was no way of going back over that. And so I remember thinking as I was a little kid—as one of the two times as a kid that I ever even thought of a bad word, because my family was so strict that I couldn't look at *Life* magazine for fear that there was a nude statue in it. I called the DAR “Damned American Reactionaries.” And I was in high school, and that is one of the few times I can remember as a kid that I said “damn” about anything. My father promptly told me I couldn't let this affect me, though. He was very authoritative. I hope that helps. I don't want to blame the DAR for what's wrong with me.

WC: I think the DAR can take whatever blame it needs to take.



HS: Since that time, I have sort of gotten to know that a lot of these sweet little ladies and people that belong to the DAR have to have something to keep themselves amused and they can't help it.

WC: Yes, they were a good separatist organization in 1919. I don't know what happened to them. Interesting.

HS: Maybe they felt most women were white. [laughs]

WC: We were talking about the fact that, within a few days after you came to Greensboro, you talked to Mr. Linear[?] and asked him for his perspective on things. I just want to pursue that a little bit. Who talked to you about race relations in Greensboro?

HS: Nobody talked.

WC: Who did you ask about it?

HS: I asked everybody I could ask.

WC: From day one on?

HS: But I also asked about other things. I asked, "Could you tell me?" I would sit down with somebody just at a game, and it didn't make any difference if he was white or black. I would say, "Who do you think are the four most powerful people in Greensboro?" or "If you mayor of the city for the day, what would be the one thing you would want to solve?" And I was always asking questions like that, didn't make any difference if the person was black or white. But if he was black, I naturally heard things from a black perspective. And they became part of the inventory or feedback I got on what was right with the chamber and what was wrong with the chamber, what its community potential was, the history of the community.

WC: What did the white people tell you about race relations in Greensboro?

HS: Several things. I heard—first of all, in 1966, the sit-ins were very clearly in the memory of most people, black and white, and only then what seems like days since Jesse Jackson—now the Reverend Jesse Jackson of Chicago—had led the massive three-thousand strong sit-ins in the square of the city. And I remember hearing Bill Little tell me, during the first month or two that I was there, that he stood on top of the Jefferson building—which was the only really tall building in the city at that time—and looked

down on the square and he saw a solid mass of people. And he said that goose bumps went up the back of his neck. He didn't say whether he felt justified or weren't justified.

There was an [awe?]-the people in Greensboro, to a certain extent, black and white, [awed] by the prospect that Greensboro was a part of national history. But when I first got there, I heard the white power structure condemning the four sit-ins, as if they were subversive, in the same way that we now talk about Rap Brown's and Stokely Carmichael's. Four years later, five years later, I heard the mayor of the city brag about the fact that we were the home of the nation's first sit-ins, as if we had invented the electric light bulb. It was a resource by that time, or an asset, but in '66 it was a painful memory. That was one thing.

I think the other thing that I noticed was that there was a tendency to talk about outside agitators, and that most of those problems, whatever they were, were always thought of in terms of the outside agitators, rather than the local leadership responding to local hurts and pains. There was another thing though that I heard from people like [McNeill] "Mac" Smith. And I would say Mac Smith-although he didn't spend a lot of time with me, but because he was chairman of the North Carolina Human Relations Commission's study on segregation in North Carolina, the civil rights study-did I say the North Carolina Human Relations? I'm sorry, the North Carolina-

WC: Commission on Human Rights?

HS: Commission on Civil Rights.

WC: Right.

HS: When he told me in his quiet way about the Quaker traditions of the city, and then I learned in rapid order certain things like this-and let me mention to you what I think maybe the ten or fifteen things that make Greensboro unique, even if there had not been a decade of the sixties. I happen to believe that Greensboro didn't have a destiny or cycle of events that led to certain things, but I think it created a climate where certain things were possible. It isn't surprising to me, and it's sort of natural and fits in with the history of the city, that the chamber should have taken leadership in race relations, or would have permitted the people to take leadership within its structure. To me it's logical that the sit-ins could have begun in Greensboro. Going back, Greensboro voted twenty-five to one against the secession before the Civil War. And Ethel Arnett, a very sweet little old lady, who wrote the history of Greensboro for her husband who had died, made mention of this in some of the things she wrote. It struck with me as, you know, twenty-five to one against the secession makes Greensboro a different kind of city, because there were some places in the South where people didn't vote against the secession [unclear] were succeeded.

And then the fact that the Underground Railroad began in Greensboro, Guilford County. And he would tell me, “There on Cedar Street is where the first station of the Underground Railroad was.” Or “Levi Coffin and his family started the Underground Railroad in Guilford County, and then went to Indiana and continued it, and began a national network which became the Underground Railroad.” And that to me was unique. I mean it didn't start in Transylvania County or in Mecklenburg County of Buncombe County, it started right there.

The fact that the abolitionists and manumission movement activity was so highly developed in Guilford County, and that the editor of the *Greensboro Patriot*, named [William] Swaim, could have been so articulate on behalf of manumission and abolition in Greensboro and had been allowed to prosper as the editor, and one of the prominent editors of the 19th century. The fact that [Albion] Tourgée, who was called the carpetbagger by a lot of people, but nonetheless became an author of the North Carolina Constitution and a founder of certain types of education in North Carolina, some distinction of the state. And the fact that he wrote his novel that I remember reading, [*A Fool's Errand, by One of the Fools*]. The fact that Tourgée prospered in Greensboro, even though O. Henry poked fun at him and everybody else seemed to poke fun at him. I thought was interesting.

The fact that the Quakers in 1890, in 1880, were already organizing in North Carolina, out of Greensboro and Martinsville and Guilford College, to set the slaves free and passing resolutions. The fact that a black slave happened to—read somewhere, some history—was then released to fight the Revolutionary War on the condition that he would be then freed after the war, and then we he wasn't freed and he had to go into court, I think, in Northampton [County]. I forgot what the name of the man was, but anyway he had to go to court. The legislature had to resolve the issue. A man Griffin[?]; I have forgotten his full name. During the American Revolution—did I say Revolution? That was the Civil War. During the Revolution was the fact there was a black man who was the sort of the band leader for the Lord [Charles] Cornwallis, a man named Jonah, and the fact that this guy Griffin that I mentioned, another black that fought with General Nathaniel Green in the Battle of Guilford Court House. You never heard much about the blacks, but there were blacks there. And the fact that Indian scouts, the Catawba scouts, they were around what is now Greensboro, had a lot to do with Nathaniel Green taking on Lord Cornwallis at that point.

You see, the white ethnic relations—it seems to me that somehow or another the Quakers in the Greensboro area had a certain militancy unbefitting a Quaker, and had to do with sort of like a [Barry] Goldwater militancy in the defense of [unclear]. Okay. And at the same time, a very strong passivism in that fact that Greensboro was formed as the county seat of Guilford County, and Guilford County was first called Unity Parish, and it was formed because Lord [unclear], representing the crown, felt that he had to separate the insurrectionists from Rowan County and Orange County. And so we started out at the

very beginning being insurrectionists that the English couldn't cope with. And all these things somehow gave Greensboro special character, I think, the fact that we have a high percentage of Quakers in our little village population.

That fact that the elm trees were planted by a freed black named Gill[?], and the fact that there was a free black in Greensboro, at that time, who owned a store and whatever it was, and living among the Quakers. And the fact that the first Soul City in the United States was Warnersville. And the Quakers had built as a black city, but now is part of Greensboro, which is where Shiloh Baptist Church is, which is Otis Hairston's church, and it's been many years before before Soul City. And the executive director of CORE [Congress of Racial Equality], [Floyd] McKissick, started monkeying around with Richard Nixon to get a Soul City. This happened in Greensboro a long time ago.

And I think, to many, that had something to do with—if the community could tolerate a Warnersville for whatever reason, even for some adaptations of racism by current values, if Greensboro could tolerate the Quakers and the editor and the other people who lived there, who were abolitionists and who were acceptable to people like George [unclear]—if all that took place, then I think that it is not surprising that the chairman of the school board in 1954 would have said—even if he didn't know how to go about it, even if he didn't have the public opinion resources to get it done—said it in a Populist sort of way, and maybe in a provincial sort of way, “We will not leave it [provincial? provisional?], because we are from the right province, and we are going to abide by the law.” And so that the *Brown [v. Board of Education]* decision response in Greensboro was a positive one, even though the school board didn't bend the way—the way it needed to, but acted as if it was going to bend. And if you had the history of what Ben Smith had to say during that period, you know that he didn't sound like the typical school board chairman.

WC: There's something there though which I find interesting. It acted as if it was going to comply, but it didn't comply.

HS: Yes, I know that. It didn't comply because of the way the city was—because of the way the history of the larger population was, but acted as if—and got by with it, and got by with acting as if—because there was a tolerance for a change, if you could get by.

WC: That looks like that was advocating.

HS: Yes.

WC: Acting as if something had happened and displaying a tolerance for it can be the most effective way of keeping something from happening.

HS: It can be, but I think it may very well have been that result. But I would say the motivation of some of the people around Ben Smith were not obstructive-ness so much as they were helplessness in the face of the preferred social patterns of the larger community.

WC: I would agree.

HS: So that a Mac Smith, even though he was liberal, had to take a relatively moderate or conservative stance in order to get into the State Senate or into the State House of Representatives, General Assembly, the first go-round. That a Skipper Bowles, although he was a board member of the North Carolina Fund, had to sound real somewhat conservative, and actually ended up losing the election, but sounded somewhat conservative running for governor, even though he may not have been basically as conservative as he sounded, or he may not have been as intellectually consistent as he may have sounded, and therefore it didn't make much difference. I'm not going to get into that. But I think it does make a difference whether the vocabulary of change is tolerated at a given moment, because if Nixon had resorted to the vocabulary change instead of the vocabulary of status quo, we would have had more change. Whether he himself led the change or not was beside the point.

WC: Let's talk about that later on. It's not relevant here, but it's worth discussing. You said that in talking to white people, after you first came to Greensboro in '66, that they would talk about the sit-ins. They would talk about outside agitators—

HS: And about how terrible Ralph Johns was because he betrayed white people.

WC: Did they also say that race relations were now good in Greensboro?

HS: At that time they did not say it.

WC: They did not?

HS: About two years later I started hearing it, and I heard it from everybody except blacks, and I was also encouraged to say it.

WC: You were encouraged to say it?

HS: And I kept sneaking into the speeches of the president of the chamber that although people may say that we have good race relations, we have got a long way to go in whatever it might be.

WC: Who would encourage you to say that, that relations were good?

HS: All people, like Bill Little.

WC: [unclear]

HS: People all around me would say. "Look, Hal, it's not as bad as you say it is." I'm in the same things in Dallas right now. Dallas has about the worst race relations of any major city I know of. I think it's natural that people will say that. If they have pride in their community and are forced to say something, they are going to say, "We don't have pollution. We have good race relations. We have no poor. We have no slums." It's a generalization and exaggerating, but I think that it is human nature in a community to have boosters overlook faults.

WC: Tell me about the black people who were telling you about race relations in Greensboro in the same period.

HS: One of the first things I heard about was Gillespie Street and Horton's Row. I heard about that in 1966, and I'd heard that from then on that there had been an effort to tear down those old houses. I started then moving into trying to get those houses down, and it took from 1961 to 1973 to get those damn houses torn down. And that, to me, was a symbol of how difficult it was to bring about certain changes.

WC: In other words, the blacks wanted those houses torn down?

HS: Yes, because they were not only inhabitable, but the man who owned them, a man named Horton, who lived in High Point, was the symbol of the absentee landlord who collected his rent with a pistol at his hip. And because the houses were shotgun houses, they [lended?], they had abandoned refrigerators in the backyard, they had broken glass all around. They had kids playing with their bulging bellybuttons, their drooping diapers at age three, playing in the glass and with the rats and snakes and the condoms in the fields. And they were just terrible symbols of what was wrong with Greensboro.

I heard such things as A&T wasn't getting support from the legislature and UNC[G] [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] was—that was Woman's College at that time. I heard such things as the streets in southwest Greensboro didn't get paved like the streets in northwest Greensboro. I heard such things as Buffalo Creek, if it stank in northwest Greensboro the way it did in southwest Greensboro, it wouldn't be allowed to be a creek running through a city uncleaned. And there wouldn't be a sanitary fill and sewage disposal plants in the middle of a residential area. I heard some black

people—no matter what anybody tells you, there aren't really any black leaders who are involved in any community affairs except as people at the periphery. They would go on and say that whites appoint black leaders and make them into their white [unclear] puppets. There were certain names mentioned of people who were black who didn't seem to be, in their opinion, representative of the total black community.

WC: Who were some of these people? What names would have been mentioned in this connection, without—

HS: I'm not passing any value judgments on what I heard, but the names that were mentioned of people who were on the one hand, either ultra-conservative or “whitenized” or reflected too much white favor, are people like the bondsman—

WC: Waldo Falkener.

HS: No, the other bondsman. Waldo Faulkner was mentioned sort of halfway between. Waldo Falkner was mentioned as a man who was a city councilman and was in the forefront of change years before, but who somehow either chickened-out and became the quiet [unclear] bondsman, looking out for personal [unclear]. Nobody blamed him, necessarily, though. He just wasn't taking any strong leadership.

But [Conrad] “Connie” Raiford was the bondsman. He was a man who would always point out that he wasn't black, he was Negro. And he would point that his skin color was fair skin or fairer-skinned, that he was neither colored or Negro, and that he went to the Warnersville School for Negroes, and that nobody could speak for him and call him black. He would be one example. There were a number of professors at A&T that were so described. There was a second layer of people who were considered to be not Uncle Toms or [unclear] “whitenized,” but were considered the useful strategists and middle of the road, walks-both-sides-of-the-street type of people, including a person named L. R. Russell[?], who was a quiet-mannered black politician, janitor at the [Greensboro] Coliseum, that somehow or other was always with his little [unclear]. And folks say [he] would go around and say things that somehow had political influence. But I don't remember a lot of—I'm generalizing some of the things. It's hard to remember some of the names of people, because first of all, I've been away from Greensboro, but I've also been out of the situation of Greensboro for several years.

WC: Among the professors at A&T, where would Cleo McCoy have been in this description?

HS: Cleo McCoy is a fair-skinned clergyman, might be considered intellectually, philosophically, spiritually black, and a good counselor for students, and a spiritual leader who would not be disowned. Even if he were articulate, and even if he had been very

outspoken in certain areas, some people would have [unclear], saying “He is so white in skin color that probably it’s a pain listening to him saying it. But if, say, you were three shades darker, you would have trouble.” Cleo McCoy I don’t think was somebody though that I would have heard smoking up very much in terms of change in the city. He was never—there were forty thousand blacks in the city of Greensboro, and most blacks, given enough days to have enough conversations, are going to say something that going to effect the change of lives. But there were some people who, in Greensboro, by anybody’s standards, were very, very, active people. And dozens and dozens of people—Greensboro had a lot of good black leadership, over a long period of time.

WC: Let’s begin there, talking about who were some of those people were who either you knew, or whose names were reported to you, as having been in that kind of solid leadership position with support from the community.

HS: Depending on the constituency. For instance, Nelson Johnson was the master organizer, I think that was his title, of the Greensboro Association of Poor People [GAPP]—and who was the national convener of the Student Organization for Black Unity [SOBU], and who was vice president of student body of A&T University during the so-called uprising which included, among other things, the casualty—a young man was killed on campus—and the conflict that involved the high school, Dudley High School. I think Nelson Johnson was not only a force to be reckoned with, but was very influential. But there are some people who wouldn’t say so. But I would say the way he rallied people into the library for a meeting on housing at a very critical moment, the way that he didn’t take too much lying down, and even the way he went off to jail for something that didn’t seem to be all too important, except making a [unclear] of himself, made him, I think, a very important person.

I think the fact that a man like Howard Fuller, who is Owusu Sadauki, was the head of Malcolm X University. He called himself HNIC, Head Nigger in Charge. The fact that he never got himself too involved and Malcolm X University, never got too involved in Greensboro politics, Greensboro affairs, indicated that he who was one of the most effective black leaders in the city. And the state recognized that Greensboro was in fairly good hands with the black leadership that it had, without him. And so he went on with other things. But now I mentioned just extreme activists.

Now getting into the stable, solid, year-in, year-out leadership, I would say that among the politicians, the blacks who were involved in the middle of every Democratic Party strategy meeting of any import—if Skipper Bowles had a meeting and he wanted to hear what the community had to say, the black who was always there was David Morehead, who was the executive director of Hayes-Taylor YMCA, and who is now an official with HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] in the regional office on Cone Boulevard, and more influential than the average person recognizes.



A similar—or a person who was always with him during that period, a jolly little peoples' man—I gave him the name “Peoples' Man”—but who was not intellectually very deep and politically very [unclear] in terms of getting things to happen necessarily, but very [unclear] in terms of preserving his [unclear] and leadership ability [was] Jimmie Barber. Mild-mannered, very mild-mannered, who would be considered Uncle Tom by some, who would be considered a crude politician by others. Would be considered too much of a “Yes sir, Boss” smiling, typical black leader in the minds of some people who used the stereotype rhetoric, but still in the middle of things [he] needs to be given credit for having been in the middle of things and often having said the right thing at the right time.

I think Dr. Dowdy, and later Isaac Miller when he came into the city, during that period of the sixties on was very influential. And a lot of times people looked at him as being very conservative, but he frequently was forceful when you could recognize he was. And so he would be—in exchange for being forceful with the white power structure, he would then turn around and play their game by being forceful with the students to make it look like he was a little more conservative. And I saw him—I think Dr. Dowdy was one of the more influential people during that period.

I think George Simkins, the way he was always willing to take lawsuits into courts, didn't take any shit lying down or standing up, was un beholden to anybody. He caught hell for everything he did. They should have a monument for that guy. And there were a lot of people who didn't think he was very ethical. There were a lot of people at the police department who thought he was crooked as hell. There were a lot of people who didn't trust him. There were a lot of blacks who thought he was self-serving, self-seeking, and sure, he liked to play tennis and play golf and what have you, and he wanted to make sure he had a damn golf course. But on top of that, it took guts for a dentist to do some of the things he did, and he did them and other people didn't do them.

L. R. Russell, who was that janitor I was talking about. A man named Dr. Barnes, an old, old man. I look at him as if he was monument at this point himself—a real old, wrinkled black dentists, the father of Dr. Milton Barnes, and who was retired, I think, for as long as I was in Greensboro.

WC: I think Milton Barnes had died.

HS: Yes, but his father, a remarkable man. And was sort of a grand old man who in a wise few words would put things into perspective, and sometimes put powerful whites on their tails for trying the wrong thing. John Marshall Stevenson, who never minded giving somebody—even when he was wrong, he always gave them a piece of his mind, even if he wasn't too sure whether the piece of mind was currency. He the habit of talking too much, sometimes talking himself out of what he had just gained, but in a foolhardy sort

of way, a brave man in a number of ways. There was a student named Thomas, and I forgot what his first name is. His last name is Thomas, and he was the head of CORE.

WC: William Thomas.

HS: I think was very influential in the community. Jesse Jackson was, when he was a student, very influential in the community. The four sit-ins certainly were.

WC: How about Chavis?

HS: Vance Chavis I think was, of the two city councilmen who served during the last seven or eight years, was a more courageous, probably the more objective, the less political. [He] was called “Indian Chief,” and because of his fair skin and because of certain prejudices that has to do with skin color, was probably never quite given credit for having been as gutsy as he was. I’d say that neither of the city councilmen were as influential as Mr. Jimmie Barber was as a politician—was Dave Morehead, or Vance Chavis as a Hayes-Taylor Y man, with Dave Morehead—they both worked with Dave Morehead.

WC: Why do you think Dave Morehead was so effective?

HS: Because Dave Morehead was respectable as an executive director of the YMCA, which was financed by the Caesar Cone family. And because he knew how to talk quietly and without alarm and was fairly articulate, and he also mended his fences and [was] a rather nice person.

WC: With whom could he mend his fences?

HS: With whites and blacks, because in order to be the executive director of the Y, he always had to mend his fences with the Central Y in structure, because a black Y and an independent black leadership was never too popular in Greensboro, or it wouldn’t be anywhere. And he had a [unclear] of his own board members, some of whom were white, but he also had a [unclear] of blacks who saw him as being too moderate, and he was constantly persuaded to look on both sides. He wasn’t an activist; he was more of a peacemaker and compromiser to keep from having too many ruffled feathers sometimes, to show that he could do it when nobody else could do it. But because of his reputation, always got in the middle of things. Because he got in the middle of things, people would ask him, “What do you think?” And the mere fact that he was black meant that he didn’t like discrimination, which meant that he was influential.

Now there were some—I’m skipping some people. There must be fifty to a hundred blacks every bit as important as many of the blacks I have just mentioned. There

are some whites though that I think you ought to mention. Ed Zane, who was chairman of the Human Relations Business [sic] Committee to talk to businessman [unclear] to protecting public accommodations, with or without an ordinance, with or without a law, and because we didn't want any more of these sit-ins and demonstrations and what have you.

WC: When was this?

HS: This was during the '63, '64, '65 years. The man who was mayor of the city, who was scared out of his mind that the city was going to go out of control, [David] Shenck, made some rather strong decisions, and we delegated some people to go to the chamber of commerce and talk some tough talk. And the way to pass the buck and take off the heat from the city government, but another way [unclear]. People like Nate Smith[?], who got pretty mad at them at times for saying certain things.

One of the instances, I think, was the two newspapers which [unclear] that although Bill Snider was very much in the middle of the power structure, which would mean that he would reflect much of the community concern, he also—because he was an intellectual and he had a newspaper that had a liberal tradition, and he was aware of the liberal tradition which went back to Swain or what have you. Because there are people like that yodeling around, and because there was a lot of recognition for the *Greensboro Daily News*, people would brag about the city. And really, if people brag about what you do, it gets you to do the things that you might have only done accidentally. And that was one of the things I always wanted to do at the chamber. If I could get people in other cities to brag about the Greensboro chamber, it would make the Greensboro chamber leadership want to do it because they liked to be bragged about. Anyway, I think the *Greensboro Daily News* and the *Greensboro Record*, unlike the newspapers in some cities, were really, I think, always supportive of change in race relations. They might have couched things in terms of being sick and tired of [unclear] and sick and tired of demonstrations, but it was always in terms of “for this reason we need to change,” and I think that they were very influential.

I don't know whether, during that early period, the television station was as influential. I have the feeling that during the last two years, especially with Chuck Whitehurst's leadership, the television station became more influential, and I think that the—not so much any activist position of advocacy journalism, but the fact that Allen Wannamaker was the head of WBIG, and the fact that a man like Lloyd Gordon was a very straight reporter on controversial subjects such as demonstrations. Even the radio stations [were] more statesman-like. I forgot what some of your questions were, but I hoped that helped you.

WC: Yeah, very helpful. You have mentioned the power structure a numbers of times, and I know that this is the hardest question that anyone can ever be asked, but who are the kinds of people who would be represented in your mind, if re-associated at this point, about the power structure of Greensboro during the period '66 to '73?

HS: Charles Myers, who is the head of Burlington Industries; [Howard] “Chick” Holderness, who is the head of Jefferson Standard [Life Insurance Company]; a number of people, but including Marion Folger[?], who was a senior vice president but not the executive. Marion was with Pilot Life Insurance Company. Bill Snider of the *Greensboro Daily News and Record*; Pete Bush, who was publisher of the Greensboro News Company; the department store executives; the people as they started moving in with new corporations, major companies. Caesar Cone certainly would have been, and various Cones. Maybe Red Lennon[?], who worked with the Cones as industrial relations [unclear]; Jack Bagley[?], who was a fairly liberal guy except on union matters, was the industrial relations for Cone Mills. This was very interesting: although he was the devil when it came to anything related to union matters, on race relations he was a leader as important as Ed Zane. And I think that with the general support of Cone Mills, I think he had a lot to do with [unclear] power structure.

Greensboro had a different kind of power structure than most cities. It didn't have the “Simon says” power structure of the Winston-Salem type where you had the Hanes, Reynolds, and Babcocks, and they could sit down and tell everybody else what to do. So Hanes went to the chamber of commerce and said—Winston-Salem chamber—“This is what you are going to do.” And somebody else went to the city council. The power structure in Greensboro included people who got elected in the position and came in and out of the structure, like Carson Bain, who was elected as mayor, Bill Trotter, who was elected mayor before him, man that was elected county commissioner, a man like Phil Weaver, who was the superintendent of public schools for a long time before [Wayne] House, so that there was a more democratic, horizontal structure in Greensboro. I am not speaking of a handful of people who can put everybody else down, I’m speaking of what seems to be the consensus of the established institution and their leadership, which includes many, many people who somehow influence each other by influence [unclear].

WC: But they do come out of essentially the same chute, in terms of—

HS: Yes, in that Greensboro was an immigrant city, you know, from the word go. It was formed as a [unclear] to be the county seat, and everybody after that point was an immigrant. And so almost everybody in Greensboro was an immigrant, and it—and he got there and conditioned by what was there before. And yes, they were all molded essentially by being flabbergasted by what they thought was a beautiful little town,

whether it was all that beautiful or not. But I think the common denominator was the myth that they helped him to create or that they responded to.

WC: Did you go to church in Greensboro? Were you active in a church in Greensboro?

HS: For a little period of time, until the bishop [unclear] in Raleigh started, I thought, manhandling some of us because they thought we were too activist, like Avis [unclear] of the Catholic Church on [unclear] Street. and the next thing you knew, the bishop had closed down that series because we were a little bit too controversial.

WC: Was Monsignor [Hugh] Dolan pretty active?

HS: Yes, but I didn't really go to his church very much. Although I was in his parish, Monsignor Dolan was very supportive of me. But you are asking me whether I was active in church, and my answer is the most active I became was after the bishop started acting that way. Some of us, including Caesar [Cone?] and I—Caesar having been a “Muslim,” but really a Catholic—and several other people, including a man named Vic[tor] Nussbaum—who is now a city councilman, and who is an active board member of the chamber, and very active in the original board of the chamber in 1963 that tackled the sit-ins—organized a group to try to get the bishop to change. We ended up with our own diocese, our own bishop. But Dolan was a moderate, not a friend liberate, but a moderate and moderating influence in the city. But I never—I'm hard to discipline, and the church is a disciplining institution. And I never quite understood the moral objectives of the Ten Commandments as well as I did the ethical objectives of the gospel.

By the way, I want to mention that there are two Catholic priests who were very helpful to me and very influential in the city, in their own quiet little ways. And I say own quiet little ways, because they were sort of inconspicuous in the way that they exercised leadership, but they were very conspicuous to me because of the effect I saw that they had. One was a priest who is the program director, in a sense, for United Way, United Community Services [of America], Jim [unclear], and who is sort of a fill-in priest for Monsignor Dolan's church. And he was always very supportive of anything that happened, and in fact, quite frequently the leader there. Then there was a Father [unclear] who was with the [Our] Lady of Grace [Catholic] Church, and is now pastor up in Boone, and who was a very young priest, in his twenties I believe, but he was always very supportive and was part of a group that included clergymen from the Lutheran church, several clergymen from the Lutheran churches who were probably the most militant of activists clergymen in the city, the white clergymen.

WC: Getting into that question sort of indirectly, what kinds of dealings did you have with John Redhead?

HS: Limited. He was considered to be a grand old man. I seldom saw him in anything that had to do with exercising leadership except from the pulpit, and that was more in a moderating rather than a leadership position.

WC: Did you see his church [First Presbyterian Church] as being a strong church?

HS: His church was considered a strong church, and the Presbyterians in the community were considered to me be among the intellectual liberals of the community. And there were some people like Dick [unclear], an attorney who was—but it was nonetheless an established, big church which—or Bill Snider in the same church, which I think was progressive in a theological sense more than it was in political sense—much more non-political, more activist theologically.

WC: Would it be as activist or as liberal as West Market Street Methodist [Church]?

HS: I never considered West Market Street as activist as some people did.

WC: Okay, why not?

HS: Because I make a distinction between people who are willing to say that's the right thing to do when asked, and people who say that's the right thing to do and then have somebody else say you really mean it. I think it's a question of whether a person is exercising leadership to get somebody to move from point A to B because it's your idea, or somebody puts a streamer up in the air and say which way is the wind blowing because the consensus says you should go so-and-so, moves the people from point A to B because that's where they want to go. And you are asking me about churches, and I would say that people like Reverend Mayer, Robert Mayer, of the Immanuel [sic—Ebenezer] Lutheran Church, Reverend Richard Rhine[?] of the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, were much more activist than Father Sheridan from the Catholic Church on [unclear] Street—it's now called [unclear]—much more activist than the established clergymen, big established churches. But two conservative people—

[End of Interview]