

**GREENSBORO VOICES/GREENSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY
PROJECT**

INTERVIEWEE: Charles David

INTERVIEWER: Eugene E. Pfaff, Jr.

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CHARLES DAVIS: It was likely at the time that I came to American Friends Service Committee [AFSC], which was in late 1956--there was a merit employment program. Of course when we came, the--

EUGENE PFAFF: A merit?

CD: Merit employment.

EP: I see.

CD: Which was--today we refer, refer to as equal opportunity. In addition to that, then, was peace--peace ed[ucation] work has always been one of the major emphases of the American Friends Service Committee. This grew out of its experience with human beings around the world. It sort of felt that war was wrong, a wrong way to settle problems, differences, et cetera. So that, that was another one of the specialties that was in operation at that time.

Beyond that, then there was material aids. It's an aid program that began as a result of this experience in World War II. It was kind of like an adjunct or equal to maybe the American Red Cross in some extent, because it tried to rectify some of the devastation of wars. And so that material aid program, which was designed to collect clothing and money--your money contribution to the American Friends Service Committee could be earmarked for one of those specialties, or it could be left to the discretion of the Service Committee to put it in a specialty that they felt more desperately in need of.

Then there was the school segregation program which I worked with--with--was being put together in 1956. John Alexander, who was in the field of sociology, was the first to come on the staff. And then he, along with the national office, sort of conceptualized what would be a program they thought that would assist communities to

make that transition then from segregated to desegregated school system. And they wanted a biracial team to carry that assistance. And, therefore, I was lucky enough to be the first black man to help form that team.

EP: Were there many blacks in the AFSC at that time?

CD: The time that I came, the office had three other black staff members: Sarah Herbin, who was doing, I believe, secretarial work at that time; Mrs. Reese, who later on would become one of the outstanding educators--she now, I think, works for the Richmond school system or some place in Virginia as superintendent; and--

EP: Do you remember her first name?

CD: No. But I know she's probably listed in the telephone book. I think her husband may still be here. He worked at the Post Office department. Mary Reese was her name. She probably was in the area of bookkeeping at that time [at AFSC]. And then Henry Catchens was in the area of merit employment. And, of course, then I came in in the area of public school desegregation.

EP: What sort of activities did you do in this role of public school education?

CD: Well, our function was to try to help the school system, the communities that wanted to move forward in the implementation of the court's decision at that time, to make that transition as smoothly as possible. You might well know that the initial reaction on the part of many, many communities was that, "We're going to do it and we're going to do it right." That was before the politicians' voice became heard.

Following the reaction of the politicians, which was more resistance, then we discovered very shortly that there was a need for a support group for the school boards, the school officials like superintendents, any teachers or principals who had quality ideas along this line, people in the community--white and black--who thought that the decree ought to be implemented.

There was a need, it was soon discovered, to form a support group to sort of give some support to these individuals. So, we began then to formalize what we would call interracial organizations, committees, or what have you.

We tried to find through newspaper articles, through word of mouth, individuals who had strong enough social concerns to feel deeply about moving forward within the realm of the court decision. And--

EP: Who were some of the--I'm sorry.

CD: Well, initially, from North Carolina, for example, the Greensboro School Board, right on the heels of the court decision, came out with positive response. And you can check that through your newspaper files there.

I think we found that maybe Winston--all the larger cities--sort of indicated that, that there was some positive reception to the idea of implementing the court's decree before the politicians came in. It was, I guess, just incidentally that American Friends Service office was located here in Greensboro at that, at that time.

EP: You say it was incidental--

CD: Well, I say incidental--the move here to Greensboro preceded that, because what the Service Committee, out of its long history of support for needy people around the world and for peace ed work--it had centered its activities up to that time in history mainly focused in those two areas. Peace education was the main focus of it, and probably still is.

EP: Did they move here because of Guilford College?

CD: No, because of the number of Quakers within the general area--the religious Society of Friends, or the members of it, are referred to as Quakers. That's sort of a synonymous term for that body. So I don't know the year that the local office was established, but it had been here in a sort of educational role playing that kind of function for some while.

EP: Who were the principal people, both white and black, that you worked with to facilitate the transition to integrate the schools--

CD: Oh--

EP: --which, if you sought them out?

CD: Yeah. Well, for example, I'll just use an example of a community. We would go and talk with the members of the school board, the mayor. Always let police, chief of the police department know you're there, because sometimes they get suspicious a stranger's in town. And they want to know what they're doing and who they are. So we got around that barrier. So he knows if somebody called and wanted to know what are these guys doing here. It was not common at that time to have interracial teams going from office to office, from house to house or whatever.

So, we sought community officials and interested individuals. We'd go by and talk to school superintendents to try to feel some reaction or response from them, whether there was any concurrence on school board members and superintendents. If we could

find teachers in the community, we'd try to talk to them--ministers, lawyers, doctors, the whole range of people in the community.

EP: Did you find the school board here in Greensboro receptive to your--

CD: By the time I got here in '56 they were very cautious, very cautious.

EP: And this was not the same school board that had initially passed the resolution to desegregate?

CD: Some members probably were the same. Superintendent, you know, was the same, Ben L. Smith, at that time.

EP: I assume you found him receptive--or not.

CD: Well, he had put himself out on a limb at a board meeting when the board's--at that board meeting, the board had probably taken the position that displeased a lot of people in the community. And they were told in no uncertain terms by some members of the community that their decision was unacceptable. And so that things had begun to sort of freeze up. You know, by the time that, that we arrived, I think, those people who had strong religious conviction, even though their actions had to be curtailed, their beliefs probably remained constant. They just had to adapt what they did to the prevailing sentiment in the community.

EP: Can you think of any individuals that seemed particularly receptive or forthcoming?

CD: Well, Greensboro was one of those communities at the time had what was called an Interracial Commission. You might go back and check on that. And some of the key figures who--there ought to be a membership roll somewhere. So that that body was one where you could air your views.

EP: Now I--

CD: Black and white could come together and air your views. And out of that body then, we could find individuals who wanted to deal specifically with the school segregation and its attendant problems. And so we formed little committees that would meet in somebody's home. We sort of had problems in the white community even meeting in churches. You know, of course, the homes that were willing to admit us, those families were sometimes looked upon with sort of a jaundiced eye by other members in that particular community.

I remember one particular church--I wouldn't want to call its name now, but the minister was on what was termed the liberal side at that time. And he gave us permission to meet at the church. But when the membership learned about this, they insisted that a police officer be present. Well, you know, I can kind of guess some people had some concerns because there were church bombings. Not as prevalent initially, but which developed later. And that was one of the feelings, I guess, that some of the members had.

I know several meetings that we had--and you might check with the retired police [Chief William] Jackson. He--I remember very clearly--he sat right beside me at one of the meetings that we had. So that we met mostly in black churches and people's homes, in a public building like a library, a courtroom, where there was little resistance to people holding public meeting on any issues.

EP: Was this largely in the black community?

CD: Well, we had--you know, Greensboro was one of those places that always on the surface seemed to be an open community. So that it was not a closed doors in the white community. You had access to many institutions and homes and churches, etc. It wasn't the place--the meeting and discussions--that was a problem. It was how many people attended and what kind of direct action program you could generate out of those meetings.

EP: It is my understanding that among some of the early efforts that were made was--there was an effort in the black community to get parents to register their children for, to be transferred to white schools. Was this the case?

CD: Well, let me restate that in this way. There were many people who felt very strongly about the inequality in the quality of education. And there were a number of black parents who felt very strongly about this. And it was those individuals who surfaced initially and when they heard about a meeting would attend those meetings. And it was through those meetings that we learned there were a number of parents and children who were ready to make that move then from segregated to desegregated schooling. In the interest of what they saw, they had an opportunity to have better facilities, updated books, the whole realm of what they look at as quality education that was uppermost in their mind.

So where those people surfaced on their own or where we could take the initial group, form a committee out of it. And they became sort of a recruiting group for other people in their community that might be interested. We then met as a support group with that, that body of people.

EP: Did--

CD: We then tried to help them cross racial lines for discussion and get some feel of how white parents who met with them felt about that.

EP: I get the impression from reading William Chafe's book [*Civilities and Civil Rights*] that what the whole school board was--you admitted by this--I mean you stated by this time that they were pretty cautious on their initial resolution. And he seems to say, "Yes, even to the extent that they found reasons to turn down the initial applications of transfer of black children to predominantly white schools." Is this the experience you found?

CD: Well, I think people's concern at that time was, how do we best deal with the fears of the white community? And I think one of the fears of the white community [was] that integration will do damage to the schools, to the quality of education in the schools. And so that the interest of the school officials at that time was to have those initial pioneers make that transition successfully, so that, I would surmise, that if they look at transcripts of students who sought to make that transition, they would be selective on those that they accepted, as well as those that they rejected. And out of the initial--I don't remember the number that was processed here in Greensboro. Initially, there were something like one senior high school student and maybe five or six junior high school students who were admitted.

EP: You're referring to Josephine Boyd at Grimsley [High School].

CD: Yes. Yes.

EP: So the AFSC directly sponsored those--

CD: No. We don't--we didn't--we supported.

EP: Supported.

CD: Yeah. We tried to be a link between white parents who were willing to accept and white parents who were willing to support, who were willing to form a communicative group--

EP: How did you support--would you go to the houses and talk to the parents?

CD: We would talk with them on an individual basis where needed and a group session where needed, and then where we could bring together a committee of black and white citizens who were not pioneers, but who were interested in seeing the transition made peacefully and constructively. We would bring them together and they were seeing what we and

they could support the school board, support the school officials, you know, teachers and superintendent, et cetera.

EP: I--in speaking to Dr. Warren Ashby, he said in the late forties and early fifties there were, what he would term, conversation clubs or informal discussions and/or dinner gatherings between individual black and white members of the community. He frequently referred to the YWCA. He referred to Mack Smith [McNeill Smith], Kay Troxler, as individuals, himself--

CD: They were very instrumental in getting a lot of things done. They were well on the way before we even got here. I think these people were people who grew up with social concerns about a better world. And so it's part of perhaps their basic religion, so that these are individuals that you didn't have to try to bolster their resolve in any way. Their resolve was operating at a high level already. They were--

EP: Did you become a part of this?

CD: Yes.

EP: And began attending these functions?

CD: Yes. The thing that--I don't want to get into name calling, because it's so easy to remember some who were very instrumental and forget some who were equally as supportive and instrumental. And some of the names who were prominent at that time I have lost in my memory.

Kay Troxler would probably be one who could give you a long history of interracial involvement in this community. McNeill Smith was very active. You know, he headed the first advisory committee of the Civil Rights Commission and did some studies that were very efficient and effective. He would be a person you could talk to. I don't know in the field of education. The superintendent at that time is--you know Ben L. Smith died. There was a [John] Foster, I believe, who was chairman of the school board at--

EP: Yeah, John Foster.

CD: --Foster at that time. We talked to school board attorneys. I think the attorney at that time--I know the attorney at that time. I don't recall his name, he had died. And Kerr[?], attorney for the school board, could trace back his predecessors and give you those names.

EP: Well, I was wondering if I could move forward a little bit. I'd like to get into the sit-ins. And we've talked about the initial inspiration of the Greensboro schools in '57--

CD: Right.

EP: And the beginning of the sit-ins in '60. During those intervening three years, what did the AFSC do?

CD: Well, we, I think--I'm trying to think of the year--whether it was '57, '58, or '59 that the initial school integration took place. I haven't thought about that--

EP: It was my understanding that both Grimsley and Gillespie were integrated in September of 1957.

CD: Okay, September of 1957. From '57, then, forward--as it relates to schools and school officials--we were again playing that supportive role. We found literature, for example, that psychiatrists, sociologists, educators who had some feelings about what ought to be--and what could be the best results that could come out for white and black. We sort of shared this with a doubtful--or even those people who had strong opinions--in a piece of literature or a particular subject that you might be interested in reading. "Here's a piece that might sort of help provide some sort of a guidelines." So we did a lot of visitations of communities who had not been a part of that initial three. You had Charlotte, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem who moved concurrently.

So we then took the whole--we had what we called a region to work. And that's in places like Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. I think it was about seven states. But we sort of limit our initial role to functioning right here in North Carolina. We eventually moved into Virginia and into South Carolina. But we had to then try to find a resolve that was ready to take some action and be a support group for that group, whether it was just individuals who wanted to get together in a community and meet but wanted some guidelines, some support. We sort of went from community to community, as called upon by leaders in those communities to "come and share with us what you have done and what you're doing and what we can depend on you for."

EP: Did you find the officialdom here in Greensboro receptive to your literature and your visitation or increasingly hard-line?

CD: No. We did not find hostility to visitations any place. But mostly the visitations initially were based on referrals. Some school personnel in Greensboro will say, you know, somebody in High Point--which may be just a teacher who has some strong feelings and

who's going through some emotional trouble, just needs somebody to talk to about this. Some Sunday school teachers had the same ideas, some ministers had the same idea.

I know one minister in South Carolina, for example, invited the team, the two of us, to come down and talk with the Presbyterian session. He'd been trying to deal with that question in Sunday school classes. And so he wanted us to come down and share that with his session.

Well unfortunately, he did not brief the session on his agenda for that meeting. So that--we had arrived, we were sitting up in the room. When they came in in time for the agenda to be viewed, the item--that discussion on how you read this question in Sunday school was introduced. And the chairman frankly told the pastor to leave that issue alone.

EP: So you didn't even get to touch it?

CD: We didn't even get to touch it. They made it very clear that they were not ready to have the minister proceed with that issue in the church.

EP: What sort of thing--

CD: And there were many church bodies who had individual Sunday school teachers who would give us an invitation to come and sit down and talk to a Sunday school class--with a Sunday school class about the question. But then many of them had a closed-door policy on it.

EP: What sort of things would you discuss in these meetings?

CD: People's fears, their expectations.

EP: How would you counter their fear, for instance, that integrated schools were going to--

CD: Okay. There were many, many people in the field of education: psychiatrists, sociologists, you name them, who had written tracts, books. And so we never tried to push our viewpoints, if we respected the piece of literature that we could get our hands on--and we tried to be very selective and to qualify these. We would give out a lot of material we bought out of our budget, and we would give librarians a bibliography or something that could be put in the library that would be helpful to people. We would give information on stuff the Sunday school teachers could use. If a superintendent over here had not seen a document developed by somebody else, we bought that stuff and we shared it. We were disseminators of information.

EP: Moving along then to the first, really, what I would term confrontation or beginning of the student phase of the civil rights movement and the sit-ins, was the AFSC involved in the sit-ins that began in February 1960 in Greensboro in any capacity?

CD: The sit-ins were a fait accompli when we heard about it. It was an ongoing thing. But from our experience about people who were pioneering, we know the need. We knew the need then for some sort of a support group for that group. So we offered our services to those people who were the initial demonstrators.

EP: So, primarily you're talking about students at A&T [North Carolina A&T State University] and Bennett [College].

CD: No. Well, let's start with the five young people who sat in. During that time, you had highly controlled communities. I mean, you could find the leadership in the white community who would speak to the leadership in the black community to control things. So I think that one of our more significant contributions to the sit-in movement as it unfolded in Greensboro was to keep those initial young men from being discouraged and stopping their effort. Because there was a time when the white community would say to the black community, "you've gone far enough now, and let us have time to work this out."

And we had learned by that time that you couldn't have bought a situation without achieving any of your goals without having that support group. So that at the time that black leadership, even, was saying to those five young men, "You've made your point," you know, we had to say to them, "No, you haven't made your point." And we had to be a support group for that group.

And then when the students began to coalesce around those five, we had to come in and share our experience on how you best move the thing forward with them without trying to direct it. We attended meetings. We sat by, and we tried to raise questions that made them think about the options, the consequences--and how you have to be prepared to deal with some of these, or how you have to be prepared to run the risk of following your convictions, without knowing what the consequences actually are going to turn out to be. You just follow your convictions.

EP: What was the AFSC's attitude on nonviolent direct action?

CD: Very positive. We disseminated literature on that. We encouraged workshops on that--that first workshop that was called in Raleigh by the student movement, we attended. We always had a literature table. So again, his viewpoint on that nonviolent direct action was one of the first documents that we explored on that table.

EP: I know that in talking with Ezell [Blair Jr., now known as Jibreel Khazan] and Frank [McCain] and Dave [Richmond] and, and--I can't remember the fourth [Joseph McNeil].

CD: Richmond, Dave Richmond?

EP: Dave Richmond. They said that they appreciated all this input from organizations in the black community. But they decided they were going to form the Student Executive Committee for Justice and they were going to direct their own activities--based upon the advice, of course--such that they didn't even accept direction from CORE [Congress of Racial Equality], which had been invited down here by Dr. [George] Simkins, as I understand. Did you, as a representative of the American Friends Service Committee, work with any other organizations with the students, or did you discuss any--

CD: Well, we had an ongoing working relationship with all of them.

EP: You mean like--

CD: The NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], CORE, all of them, the Greensboro Citizens Association. Having membership in those, whether I had been a member of the AFSC or not the AFSC, I was always an active member in those kinds of groups.

Now, what you hear now and what went on then is almost, but not totally, factual. And I don't think it should be totally factual because if you can energize a person to do something, that person is entitled then to all the credit that comes from having done that. So in many instances we were the energizing and the catalyst that put something together, that kept it going, and yet we were never seeking, claiming, or wanting credit for that. Our prime interest was a smooth--we wanted it to happen because we believed it was good for the country. So our interests were not in any credit for anything that went on. Our interest was seeing the thing unfold and seeing it unfold creatively.

I think one of the main contributions that we could make in any community was to see that a movement was not squelched prematurely. So we sort of had that broad base of people in the community, not broad-based, but broad spectrum of people in the community that--

EP: Were you a member of the Greensboro Citizens Association?

CD: Yes.

EP: And the NAACP?

CD: Yes.

EP: Were you a member of CORE?

CD: No, but I might as well have been because--we had no philosophical differences between any of these groups at that time.

EP: Did the--

CD: We were all on the same key.

EP: Did the NAACP resent, then, CORE coming down here wanting a chapter, recognition?

CD: No, no. The NAACP has had a special function and role that operates at a local level but also at a national level. A local chapter can become involved in almost any act of, correcting any act of injustice that it can. But it's always been limited as to how far it could go and the expenditure of funds for it, because, you know, funds--most of the money the NAACP has to operate on is from membership. And so those memberships, a portion of that went into the local chapter and a portion went in at the national level. But the portion that went--when you divide them both up, it wasn't that much going initially to support the national office or the local office. So that both of them had to become extremely selective in how it uses its money. And so what the national office finally decided upon was that, with the meager resources it had, that it needed to invest those in what they term class action suits. So that the impact of what they did could be felt broadly, nationwide.

EP: So I assume--

CD: CORE then sort of had not that restriction upon it. And they were doing some sort of direct action-type thing that NAACP was not doing at that time. And so that's why Dr. Simkins called the director of CORE to come down and sort of help motivate the students and help motivate the community at large. So that was a sort of joint effort. There was no--

EP: Was there much involvement of--by the adult black community with the sit-ins? You see a lot more of it in the mass marches in '62 and, well, '63. But you don't see much of it in the--

CD: It wasn't publicized as much.

EP: But it was there.

CD: It was there. It was the most beautiful experience. People would come home, get their dinner out of the way by five o'clock and assemble at churches by six, six thirty. It was at those meetings at churches where the students would decide to either go on a march tonight or not go on a march. And the adults would go with them. I would dare say that--you see, the adults also had to put up the bail money and when those kids were arrested and carried out to a place for incarceration, they often went without toothpaste, toothbrush. So, adults had the money ready to pick up all these little things that kept the morale of the group up. So, they were very active, far more so than what's reported.

EP: Did you attend CORE chapter meetings here in Greensboro?

CD: We--there was not that much division between NAACP memberships and CORE memberships in the civil rights movement. They all sort of melded together then. That was a time of coalescing. And one did not think about membership into the Citizens Association, the membership in the NAACP, or membership in CORE. It was parents supporting children, adults supporting children, individuals supporting the movement. There was no ideology, division, or organization struggles or divisiveness going on. It was just one community effort.

EP: Did you attend--when you say you attended these meetings and provided this support, be it the sit-ins at the lunch counter or later the picketing of theatres and restaurants, did you attend as an individual or a representative of the AFSC or the Greensboro Men's Club or the NAACP? In what capacity did you attend?

CD: I sat at most of them as a member of the AFSC. We wanted the AFSC--we wanted them to know the philosophy of the organization, the support of the organization, the role that the staff was playing in that area.

EP: And I suppose to encourage the--

CD: They knew that I was in the school desegregation staff. They knew that Dick Ramsey was in the college discipline.

EP: I came across a story, which I'd like to get your version of, if I may. I mentioned Harry Boyte. One source has told me that he was, in effect, fired from the AFSC for being too much involved in the demonstrations in Greensboro in 1963. Is there any truth to that allegation or not?

CD: I would say no. No. [Pause] My memory may be hazy. But I don't remember Harry Boyte's involvement.

EP: And a couple of newspaper stories accuse him being arrested for picketing or going up-- for instance, he was arrested on Thanksgiving Day--

CD: Okay. That kind of thing--many adults in the community were arrested. AFSC has, and still is, has been, and has always been an agency that provided an individual the opportunity to express his or her convictions fully.

EP: Even if it goes to the point of arrest and convictions?

CD: As long as you are doing peaceful demonstration, yeah. There's no, no question about whether or not we could be arrested for marching with the students. We had to make the decision as to whether or not it was more valuable for us to be out drumming up financial support than to be moaning in a jail. To be sure they had the legal services they need than be sitting in a camp of incarceration with them--and, that was one of the decisions.

There never was any restrictions placed on what the staff did. I've never seen organizations provide one with the opportunity to think through clearly and logically and come up with a decision based on intellect and go ahead and implement it. There were no restrictions.

EP: So you participated in marches?

CD: Well, yeah.

EP: Were you ever arrested?

CD: No. Because I see my role as being more useful to be arrested than to be--I took it to be more useful to help meet the need of those who were arrested.

EP: Can you--do you have any knowledge then of why Harry Boyte left the AFSC?

CD: No. I don't.

EP: I'd like to know--

CD: I tell you what, not on the basis of his participation, because we had all kinds of participation by staff members, and nobody, nobody from that day to this day has been arrested, I mean, has been fired for that on those grounds.

EP: And there was no--whenever the AFSC would meet in staff meetings, there was no question about your being able to participate?

CD: Oh, no. We already made a report. Each discipline ran itself. We reported to the executive director. He was well aware of what we were doing. But the decision on what we did rested upon us.

EP: How about Dick Ramsey? What was his role as an AFSC member?

CD: Okay. He's staff on what's called College Programming, which means he related the college programs all over the state. So then he, prior to the sit-ins, knew some of the students. Because what they tried to do was to provide, especially in the summertime, opportunities for students who wanted to make a contribution to some social need or place, information or places where those needs existed, what those needs were. And then you could match students who wanted to go to this place, whether it was in this country or abroad.

So then again, I think that all of the AFSC staff[s'] role--and we all tried to play this--was to be sure that students thought through very clearly, logically, what are their options, what it is we want to do, how it is we want to do it, how are we going to deal with the consequences, before they got in to it, so that you can go into something and based on your convictions at that time, you can feel that the consequences are something I can deal with.

EP: So he and you participated as individuals--

CD: We, we--no. We were there as--we were there--they knew that we were AFSC. That was very strongly emphasized. That was an institutional support that they were well aware of. And it was not one where we were trying to direct anything. We were trying to be sure that they had all the information they needed to make a decision.

EP: Would you, then, in your capacity as AFSC representative, would you attend the meetings of CORE and speak? Would you speak at mass meetings?

CD: I would raise questions. No, I never was a mass meeting speaker.

EP: But you did attend CORE meetings?

CD: We attended the meetings. We raised questions that we would raise at staff, and we did not try to divide any division between questions we would raise at staff and questions we would raise at [meeting] members or just a concerned citizen.

EP: Did--were you invited by CORE, or did you come together with CORE through a mutual third party, or how did your association begin with CORE?

CD: Well, my association with, I'd say, the NAACP was carried over from South Carolina, where I'd been a member before I came here.

EP: Oh, so you had been a CORE member in South Carolina?

CD: No, no. I said NAACP. And then my association with Citizens Association grew out of my own concern as a citizen. I learned about CORE after my arrival here. So it was not a question of being introduced to a new philosophy; it was just being introduced to a supportive philosophy of something that we've already got started and got moving on.

So, it just was a matter of getting to know each other, you know, the members of one group. Some people felt more comfortable functioning--and that's because many individuals want an opportunity to play leadership roles, be a part of a group that advises them, more opportunities to be expressed, expressive--so that I felt very comfortable in all of them.

And the thing that I think you might make note of is that as a history, the long history of the involvement of Quakers--from the time of slavery with the underground movement of the slaves going north, their roles have healed the wounds after World War I with an oversea mission--there was a long history that blacks appreciate--the long history of the Quakers and the religious Society of Friends have their philosophy, et cetera, that most blacks, if not all blacks, appreciate very strongly. And they appreciated having that institution on the side of justice and that be concerned enough to express it vocally. And so that there was always that acceptance, there was never any rejection or suspiciousness on the part of people across the state or the South about, about the American Friends Service Committee. Its history and records are pretty well established.

Now there were many blacks, in particular, who had never heard of the organization. And that's because the Quakers in North Carolina, for example, are sort of concentrated right around in this area here. You can go down east and did not know they ever had any religious Society of Friends down there.

EP: Given the fact that you were also a member of the NAACP, when the NAACP met, would they discuss what CORE was doing?

CD: Not what CORE was doing but what the student movement was doing and how we supported it.

EP: Okay.

CD: Okay? And you've got to--sometimes there was that division of labor. You know, so-and-so's doing this and we're doing this and somebody else is doing this. We tried to bring a total amount of support that's needed around the movement.

EP: Well, I wonder, did they ever have any reservations about some of the things that they were going to do, like the "jail no bail" philosophy, the mass arrests, the sit-down in the square [1963]? Was there ever any reservation on the part of the NAACP about this happening?

CD: That was not its business. We sort of kept that clear--that this is a student movement. And that's what I meant by you think through these things before you do it. So we kept organizations out of the decision making. That was one function that we, the AFSC, tried very hard to raise questions, to be sure that NAACP could clearly see that the decision is whether you have bail or no bail is up to those people who are the demonstrators; it's their decision to make.

EP: Did--

CD: And that's because the NAACP wasn't available, that kind of thing. Remember now, the only time that we ran in to problems was--you ought to check on Dr. [Boisey W.] Barnes, who is now deceased. And Dr. Miller. I don't know more, that's why I don't want to call names. But a lot of those men had the bond money and the NAACP didn't have any money to put up for bonds. I'm telling you we didn't. [laughs]--

EP: So they didn't pay the legal fees, for instance.

CD: Well, the lawyers had cases from time to time. Now where there may have been a split between NAACP and CORE was if CORE activities in a community generate some bills and they didn't have the money to pay those bills. And it looks like somebody needs to pay them, and it finally becomes that NAACP is the one that has to pick up the tab. And so that's where the rift came in between NAACP and CORE. And, you know, it's like I don't have the money and you don't have the money. So, you don't take on actions that's going to result in my having to pick up some bills, pay some bills that I don't even have the money to pay for.

EP: Did that happen here in Greensboro?

CD: I don't think to any large extent because, there were local individuals here who had enough interest in it to put up the bond money for those arrested.

EP: Were you a member of the Coordinating Committee of the Pro-Integration Group?

CD: The first--well, yes. If there was a second one, I was here. But I thought you were going to talk about Student [Nonviolent] Coordinating Committee [SNCC] who had its initial meeting in Raleigh.

EP: Well, SNCC. Let's talk about SNCC.

CD: Yeah, I was down--I was down there at that meeting encouraging attendance from North Carolina schools to go to that meeting. Communities that were having desegregation problems, lunch counter demonstrations, anything--we encouraged representatives from those communities to be at those meetings and we went with them.

EP: What did you think of that meeting?

CD: Very significant. Students got a chance then to meet each other, to talk about what's going on here and what's going on down there, and sort of get a feel for each other and a feel for the broad base of the movement and some appreciation for what each other was thinking and feeling.

EP: Did you continue in any capacity with SNCC?

CD: Not as a membership role. I had, you know--we were AFSC. And we were a lot of other things. But we were AFSC at--you know if I'd go to a NAACP meeting I went there as the NAACP. I mean, say in another city, I went there with NAACP staff. I went there with literature. I went there with information. I went there with words of encouragement. I went there to share information of what's going on elsewhere and possibly what you can do to get your movement started here and to make it known that we are available as a resource.

EP: The Coordinating Committee I was referring to initially was, it is my understanding, sending representatives of CORE, of the Greensboro Citizens Association, the NAACP and the Ministerial Association, and also at least seven individuals from the community at large. About thirty-five individuals met to try to share information about what was going on during the time of the demonstrations.

CD: Yeah, I was a member of that group.

EP: You were a member of that group?

CD: Yeah.

EP: Did you attend as a member of which group or organization?

CD: The AFSC.

EP: I see. Yeah. I mean you didn't attend as--

CD: We didn't--there was no question of who attends. People who attended were people who had strong feelings. You know we wanted as many people to come as--you didn't have to represent a body to be a member of that group.

EP: Did this organization meet very often?

CD: About once a month. I mean we--a lot of us attended the meetings with the students, so that we had a feel for what's going on. It wasn't something like you had to come to the meetings to get information on what was going on. Almost everybody knew what was going on--was supportive of what was going on. So, it was just a matter of comparing notes or something like that.

EP: And did CORE share with this organization or committee what they're going to do?

CD: Okay. When you talk about--we never had in Greensboro a strong adult unit of CORE. Most of it was the students. For example, there are two young people who--a lot of people's names have never surfaced who were instrumental in keeping the thing alive and going, and one of them is William Thomas and his sister [Antoinette Thomas]. They were students at A&T. He was the chairman of the student group from A&T and Bennett and from the city that met weekly, that became the meeting place for the demonstrators. And so he was probably "Mr. CORE" in this community. But he was also a student at A&T. And so that--the membership role and function was not emphasized at that time.

EP: Now the--

CD: A lot of that came on later. That came along later after the battle. [laughs] And then people reverted back to organizational status.

EP: But at the time the activities were going on, it was just interested people.

CD: Just interested people. You sort of drop identification as what organization you belong to because that was not important.

EP: After the demonstrations ceased, did you continue to have any kind of working relationship with the students as an AFSC member?

CD: Yes. As long as there was enough interest on the part of the students to meet, we met. Now, what happens is in the summertime that gap between the end of school and the closing of school and the opening of the school--so that the decisions about integrating the lunch counters came shortly before the end of school. So that once the students went home that summer, when they returned that fall, they did not return back in the same organization or structure they had at the time that they left. They returned to enjoy the fruits of their labor. That was an objective accomplished. So that what we went back to doing then was supporting the community adult groups to keep those lines of communications open.

[End of Interview]