

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

INTERVIEWEE: Reverend John F. Hatchett

INTERVIEWER: Eugene E. Pfaff

DATE: May 28, 1981

EUGENE PFAFF: --ascertain on tape that you're aware this conversation is being taped and we have your permission to do so.

JOHN F. HATCHETT: Yes, you do.

EP: Fine. If you could go over once again your biographical background, please.

JH: I was born in Pontiac, Michigan, attended public schools there. I attended Wayne University in Detroit, Michigan, from 1950 to 1955, graduating with an A.B. in sociology. I then attended the Boston University School of Theology and graduated from there in 1958. I was the acting college chancellor in Selma, Alabama, at Alabama A&M College for one year. That was from 1958 to 1959. From that point, after that, I came to Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina, where I worked as assistant professor from 1959 through 1963.

EP: When did you become involved in CORE [Congress of Racial Equality]?

JH: Well, now, initially, as just background--I think it's important. There was no CORE chapter in North Carolina until at least the year to year and a half after the sit-ins had started. What I would like to do, because I think it's very important for anyone who's going to avail themselves of records like this, is to set a longstanding historical record straight, something that has not been done to my knowledge.

The sit-ins, which started in January of 1960, did not come about in some sort of political or social vacuum. The persons who should have received full credit for the idea behind the sit-ins never did, mainly the young women at Bennett College who were members of the college chapter of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] there. They had asked me to become their advisor. I agreed. And one evening in November of 1959, we sat down to discuss and plan what

course or courses of action we could take to, as we put it, to make Greensboro a more open and receptive city for blacks.

Now, we researched carefully what was being done in other parts of the country at that time, specifically in Oklahoma, where sit-in demonstrations had been occurring. We took this idea to the president of the college, who was at that time Dr. Willa B. Player. She was receptive to the idea. But she cautioned us that, since Bennett College was a residential college and the holidays were approaching, what would happen if we started the sit-ins and then all of a sudden most of the people involved were--had to go home on vacation. We saw some merit in her point. And it was at that point that the young women from Bennett College invited some young men from A&T College [North Carolina A&T State University] to come over and participate in the discussion, participate in the planning.

Now, Mr. Pfaff, I do not know how it got into the record that four young men were sitting in their dormitory alone and suddenly thought of this idea. That simply is not true. These young men were part and parcel of our discussion. And actually, we urged them to seriously consider doing this kind of action, in the event that the young ladies at Bennett could not participate fully, but that we would back them up.

What I'm trying to establish here is that there were a long period of discussion and planning that took place prior to January. And that what occurred on January, while being of importance and, to be sure, of significance, again, let me point that that did not start in the kind of manner in which the newspapers picked it up. And, of course, everybody else came to accept the point of view that those four young men, and those four young men only, were both the initiators and the major participants, in a manner of speaking, in the sit-ins.

EP: Who were the principal students at Bennett who were members of the NAACP that asked you to become their advisor and, and initiated these joint meetings?

JH: I wouldn't be able to call a single name at this point.

EP: Do you recall any of the young men from A&T that came over to Bennett and attended these meetings?

JH: At least two, possibly three, of the four young men who ultimately went down to sit in were at some of those meetings. I'm, I'm positive that, for example, Mr. [Ezell] Blair was there. I can't recall the other, the names of the other gentlemen at this point, at the meeting.

I have even recorded this in a semi-autobiographical manuscript that I have written that is yet to be published. And I have no personal axes of any sort to grind here. It's just, it's something that I felt that should be entered into some sort of record and the

whole issue be clarified and, and credit be given to those young women who were courageous enough to at least want to start doing something at that time in North Carolina.

EP: Well, were you and the students at Bennett surprised when the sit-ins occurred?

JH: No, we weren't surprised. We were surprised by the statement that was made. But in order not to create any confusion at that time centered around what was happening, we agreed that we would not say anything about the role that we played. We just simply became active participants, in order not to create any sort of impersonal or interpersonal conflict between the women at Bennett and the young men at A&T. And that's one of the reasons--that's not the only reason--that was one of the reasons for the longstanding silence around that.

EP: Did large numbers of Bennett students participate immediately in the sit-ins?

JH: Yes, they did. In fact, in spite of the fact that Dr. Player had cautioned them about the holidays, that did not stop them entirely. In fact, sit-ins occurred after part of the holidays had ended. And they were the major supporters. It was very difficult to get the bulk of the students at that time--I'm talking specifically here about 1960--to get the bulk of the students at A&T to participate. So the young women at Bennett carried the--almost the full brunt of those day-to-day marches in front of the Woolworth's store.

EP: Did you participate in any of the sit-ins yourself?

JH: Yes, I did.

EP: Do you recall any specific incidents that occurred?

JH: At that time, I was trying to function mainly as an advisor to the NAACP group on the campus. And my role, to a large extent, was to offer some sort of protective and comforting influence, because there weren't that many men, or young men, involved at that particular time.

It was good that I was there, because threats were received. There was a great deal of harassment. In fact, one young white boy said that--he accused me of being the leader, and said that he would like to do something to me. And I didn't reply to him, because I didn't feel that he was going to do anything anyhow. But there was a great deal of verbal and, of course, very subtle mental harassment that took place during that period of time.

EP: In reading the newspapers, it sounds like there was a great crush of people, both on the sidewalk and in the stores surrounding the counter area. They say in that small area, as many as six hundred people were crowded in there. Is that the kind of conditions that you witnessed?

JH: There were large numbers of people outside. I didn't--it could have been crowded at times on the inside. But the days that I went inside, I didn't see that many people.

Of course, each day that we would sit in, the counters were--[coughs] excuse me--virtually empty. People just--there were a lot of people who were curious about what was happening. But I didn't notice a large crush of people inside. But there were a large number of people outside who were either participants or onlookers in terms of the demonstration.

EP: Did you witness any of the things that have subsequently been reported, like cigarettes being put to the faces and scalps of the sit-inners, and sugar and ketchup and so forth being dumped on them, and some of them actually being pulled off the stools?

JH: No, I don't recall that. I'm sure that if I had seen it, I certainly would have remembered very vividly.

EP: Did any of the students recount to you their experiences while sitting in?

JH: Most of the accounts shared with me centered around a great deal of--and I'm, I'm looking back on this in retrospect now--a great deal of psychological pressures that they felt and experienced as they did this, because, obviously, that was there. These were pressures engendered in part by a very real fear of certain things that could have happened to them.

There was no widespread protection on the part of the police, to my knowledge. I mean, they may have been there. But essentially, in terms of a demonstration of that nature, I would say that we were basically very vulnerable. And I think a lot of the young women, especially, experienced this kind of sensation.

EP: So you didn't see a heavy presence of police protection.

JH: No, I didn't.

EP: During the course of the interviews, did you--did the students at Bennett evidence any resentment at not being on the Student Executive Committee for Justice that was formed at A&T?

JH: Not, not to my knowledge. I think what they really were concerned about was really trying to make, in their words, Greensboro an open city.

A number of the women from Bennett--not all of them, by any means--but a number of them were, of course, from areas where in terms of eating facilities and what have you, these things were not closed to them. And I think that they resented the fact that they had to live in a city--and even though they had chosen to go to Bennett College--that they had to live in a city where they could not attend a movie unless they sat in a certain area, or could not eat at a lunch counter, or could not participate in other, what we would have to call social activities, that they were accustomed to doing from the areas that they had come from.

So their main interest at that time--it was not, I would not call it politically sophisticated. But it was a desire to open up the city in terms of activities that they could participate in.

EP: Did you attend any of the negotiating sessions between the students and the Greensboro Citizens Association that acted as a conduit of their demands with the city and the, the stores involved?

JH: Yes, I did. I, I can't recall all that transpired there. The best I can do is give you a kind of interpretation of what I felt occurred, because we are looking back over a period of twenty years or so.

Once--I think once the city saw that the students meant business, that they weren't going to withdraw from their position--and, and by this time they had gotten a very effective boycott going--the city finally decided through this organization that you have referenced to that they would negotiate with us.

EP: Did you have any dealings with what came to be known as the Zane Committee [Human Relations Commission]?

JH: Yes, I did.

EP: Did you think that it was a sincere, effective committee to try to negotiate a settlement?

JH: No. Because most of the participants--I'm talking about on the side of what I would have to call the Greensboro power, Greensboro power structure--they were not sincere in either listening to or wanting to meet the demands put forth. They were essentially, many of them, businessmen accustomed to power and influence, and not accustomed to dealing with black people who were, at that time in their eyes, very active, very--and I want to put this word in quotation marks--very "belligerent," very outspoken.

And I think that initially we had a tremendous communication problem, because we were making demands. And they were not in a mood to listen very sincerely and very openly to our demands. So I was not very happy with that particular committee, and not very happy with certain subsequent things that came out of it.

EP: Did you speak personally with Mr. [Ed] Zane or any of the other principals involved?

JH: Yes, I did, to the point that--I believe I'm correct here, now. It was either Mr. Zane, or he suggested that the mayor at that time, and I can't remember his name--

EP: David--Oh, George Roach.

JH: Yes, that the mayor call my college, Bennett College, and put pressure on the president to silence me. Because the president called me in her office and said that she had received such a call, and that the person [who] made the call had made the suggestion because I was too outspoken. I was an outsider by their standards. I did not know the, the social mores, social etiquette of Greensboro. And I was not a part of the local black establishment there. And because of that, they did not feel comfortable negotiating with me.

The president assured me, and reassured me, that she had no intention of honoring their request and that what I did--not only did she commend what I did, but she gave me full rein to continue. I have to commend her for that.

EP: Did she identify the caller?

JH: She may have. For some reason, I'm not sure. I can only speculate. Either it had to have been Mr. Zane, or he was able to get the mayor to do it. And I'm not sure which one of the two actually made the call.

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

JH: I don't recall being a member of that particular group.

EP: The reason I ask is because I've gotten the impression that Dr. Hobart Jarrett and Dr. W.L.T. Miller were two of the principals involved in the Greensboro Citizens Association that essentially formed this committee of leading black citizens who presented the student demands to the Zane Committee, and through them to the businesses involved. Would you say that that is an accurate or inaccurate statement?

JH: That probably is accurate. If you're, you're talking primarily about--and still it's 1960?

EP: Yes.

JH: Yes. That would have probably been accurate. It was, it was felt by some of us who--the "us" referring to the students and myself--that in the best interest of some sort of progress, that it was not necessary for me--and I, of course, I had to agree to this. I mean, when I say "had to agree," I wanted to agree to it, not because of any pressure brought. That it was not necessary for me to continue to try to negotiate with people who did not want to negotiate with me or with us.

EP: Did you negotiate independently, or did you attend these meetings and air your opinions at that time? Is that how this resentment to you came about?

JH: No. I, I think after the initial--that was from earlier meetings that took place. And after those initial meetings, I made a decision to play a less active role in terms of negotiations, and to allow the two men in particular that you named to assume that kind of function.

EP: Did you--?

JH: I don't want to sound presumptuous here, but that--that's how it came about.

EP: Did you talk with the leaders of the Student Executive Committee for Justice?

JH: Again, I guess this would be because it's been such a long time has passed, that that particular organization is, at this point, not familiar to me, in terms of the name of it.

EP: The reason I ask is I get the impression that the four men who originally sat-in went back to A&T. And at a night meeting on February first, at one of the dormitories at A&T, this organization was formed, and that whenever a statement was released to the press, it was under the name of the Student Executive Committee for Justice. And the principal leaders were Ezell Blair, David Richmond, Frank McCain, and Joe McNeil.

JH: Such an organization may have been formed. I--although I may not be able to recall the names in all cases, I want this record to be as fair as possible. It doesn't mean I'm going to be totally uncritical and not give as clear an indication as possible of what was happening. I, I think that a certain amount of constructive criticism, looking back over these events, is very important for persons who want to sort of examine the record as clearly as possible.

At some point--and I can't pinpoint this in terms of time, dates, what have you--at some point there, there was somewhat of a disenchantment between the students at A&T

and the students at Bennett College. Now, this could have grown out of a number of factors that had nothing to do directly with the sit-in demonstrations. There was--to my knowledge, there has always been a kind of rivalry between the two schools.

There could have been some--and I have to put it that way, could have been--there could have been some resentment and disenchantment on the part of certain of the young women at Bennett who had been in the forefront of the struggle and the young men at A&T who had also been in the forefront of the struggle. And this could account for why that organization was composed primarily of the young men you mentioned, at least in terms of the leadership. Because, I notice, you did not mention any female names.

EP: Well, it is true that no names of females came to my attention until much later. That is Lois Lucas, Frances Herbin, Gloria Jean Blair, Antoinette Thomas are the only women's names that I have.

JH: Right. And they came--they did come much later, I think in the late 1961 through March 1962.

EP: So you're—

JL: I'm sorry, go ahead.

EP: I was going to say, so your activities centered on the Bennett campus.

JL: Yes, they did. We were not--because there were certain differences, it did not stop us from doing those things that we felt committed to, and did not stop us from continuing to work with the persons at A&T. But my activities were confined primarily to Bennett campus, and working with that group of young women who were part of the NAACP there.

EP: Well, as I understand, the sequence of events is that there was a--approximately a nine-week truce, or cooling-off period, in which the Zane Committee tried to effect some kind of resolution. But that by April first, none had been forthcoming, so that once again, there was picketing and sitting-in at the stores. And forty-three students were arrested at the Kress store, but that those were the only large numbers of arrests during the sit-ins at Woolworth and Kress. And that then, most of the college students went home at the end of the spring term, and that negotiations continued through the Greensboro Citizens Association. And the picketing was, by and large, some A&T and Bennett students who were residents of Greensboro, and students of Dudley High School under Bill Thomas. Is that correct?

JH: That's--I believe that is.

EP: And I understand that on April twentieth, I mean on July twenty-fifth, Woolworth's and Kress did agree to desegregate, and the first blacks served were their own employees, who were told to go home, dress up nicely and, and were served at the counter. Then, according to the newspapers, there wasn't much reported of activity. Did your own activities as advisor to the Bennett students continue, and did meetings occur, and were tests made periodically of other businesses in Greensboro that fall?

JH: Yes, our activities did continue.

EP: What sort of activities were these?

JH: Before I answer that, one of the reasons I think why the negotiations were successful--this may have come out in the newspaper at some point, I'm not sure. But one of the reasons is that the national office of the five and ten stores acknowledged that, because of nationwide sympathy to what was going on there, they had suffered very heavy losses economically. And that it was this kind of pressure, along with what was happening in Greensboro, that forced them to capitulate and decide to open their lunch counters.

So that it was this dual kind of thing that was operative at the time. The sit-ins had captured the attention of the nation, of course, in part because of the media coverage. And people nationwide had made decisions to, to boycott Woolworth's and Kress's--I mean, Woolworth's and Kress stores. And because of that tremendous economic loss, they decided to capitulate.

Now let, let me see if I can answer the basic question you raised. We, again meaning the NAACP chapter at Bennett College, were not satisfied with just merely the opening of lunch counters at Woolworth's and Kress. And we tried to determine what other activities could we participate in that would, again, open the city up even more. And the, the targets were places like bowling alleys, the movies, and other eating establishments that were throughout the city.

EP: What was the nature of these? Were they just tests? Did students go up to them and ask to be served and were refused?

JH: Yes, initially they were basically tests.

EP: I see.

JH: There was no--no one agreed that we would challenge to the extent of being arrested, not at that time.

EP: Was this organized on the A&T campus, the Bennett campus, or a few individuals from both?

JH: A few individuals from both participated in that.

EP: Were they centered in--these meetings that occurred, were they centered in people's homes, at various churches, on the campuses, or what establishment?

JH: Many of the meetings occurred on the campuses. I can vividly recall a number of meetings that took place on Bennett's campus at one of the dormitories. Eventually, the meetings did get out and into some of the churches. I do not recall any of the large meetings being held at anybody's home. There may have been certain strategy sessions attended by a few people that met at homes. But for the most part, it would have been either one or the other campus. And, as I said, eventually, one of the churches in particular opened up its doors in terms of us being able to hold meetings there.

EP: Which church was that?

JH: Oh, let me see. It was--I guess the closest I can come is to indicate that I believe it was a Baptist church.

EP: Providence Baptist?

JH: It sounds like it was Providence.

EP: Who was responsible? Was there any one individual, or group of individuals, that were responsible for organizing these meetings and the tests?

JH: No. We, we attempted at some point--I'm, I'm trying to focus sharply enough on the chronology here, because I don't know if we're up to the point of CORE's coming into the area and the formation of a CORE chapter.

I know prior to that, a few of us did serve in varying capacities as spokespersons. And I suppose the responsibility for calling meetings, for deciding on what places we would attempt to test out, would have been made by just a few of us.

EP: What individuals were--which individuals would this be? Who took it upon themselves to be spokespersons?

JH: I think at that point Lois Lucas had become involved, some of the young men from A&T. Again, without the material that I had mentioned to you before, it's very difficult for me to recall actual names.

EP: Was Reverend [James] Bush involved at this time?

JH: Oh yes, yes, very, very definitely. In fact, from the outset he played a very prominent and very active role. But neither one of us, neither Reverend Bush nor myself, attempted to function as leaders. We were never considered to be leaders. We never--that designation was never, to my knowledge, applied to us. And, although I think some of the local black establishments may have viewed us in that light, or may have viewed us as, again, in a very quaint sense of the manner, coming in from the outside to stir up difficulties--

EP: Oh, so there, there was resentment expressed in the black community towards you all?

JH: A fair amount of resentment, a fair amount, especially among the ministerial establishment. Reverend Bush had more encounters with them than I did, but enough to know that there was a certain amount of resentment, which we tried to allay by saying that we were not the leaders of anything, that we were at best advisors, at the least active participants.

EP: Who were some of the black ministers that were sympathetic at this time?

JH: My not being able to name any wouldn't mean that there weren't any. There were some. Again--

EP: Was Otis Hairston sympathetic?

JH: I believe he was, yes. As you, as you call the names, they are sounding familiar to me.

EP: Some of the names that come to my attention are Otis Hairston, Reverend [Richard] Hicks--

JH: Yes.

EP: Lorenzo Lynch.

JH: I believe so, yes. There weren't that--given the number of ministers in the area, there weren't that many. But, thank goodness, there were enough that it made a difference.

EP: Well, were there any who were demonstratively or outspokenly opposed to what you were doing?

JH: They were more opposed by their silence, by their not, let's say, opening up their churches, by their not encouraging their membership to take an active role in what was taking place. It was more a posture of silence than it was of open and active opposition.

EP: I have spoken to several of the leading members of CORE. And they gave me a certain scenario that I was wondering if I could go over with you, and ascertain from you whether you thought this was an accurate sequence of events.

JH: Okay.

EP: Jibreel Khazan, who was Ezell Blair back then, said that after the summer, that several of the students from both campuses continued to meet informally. And they mention at least one meeting at Reverend Marion Dick's house--Marion Jones, I beg your pardon, Marion Jones.

And he says at one point they asked CORE to send a representative to them, and this, I believe, was Reverend B. Elton Cox from High Point, but that they did not form at this point. They continued to do these spot testing on an irregular basis.

And that some time in the spring of 1962, they decided to form a CORE chapter, and that initially--I've forgotten the man's name, young man who was the first president of CORE. It was Wendell Scott, I believe. And then he had to resign for some reason.

And Ezell Blair became the temporary chairman that summer of '62. And then he had to resign because--to take on the duties as president of the student body at A&T. And then Bill Thomas was elected. Does this sound like the correct sequence of events?

JH: To my knowledge, it does.

EP: Did they consider forming other organizations, or affiliating with other organizations besides CORE, such as the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference] or SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee]?

JH: Not to my knowledge.

One thing that may be missing from this is that there was a young man who was sent down--I'm not sure whether he was sent down from New York City or from elsewhere--and, again, sorry, but his name I can't recall--who was instrumental in helping to form the CORE chapter. I don't--I, in all honesty, I don't know who made the initial contact. I got the impression that what took place--this is an impression, but a rather vivid one--that the young man in particular was on his way somewhere else, because CORE

had initiated a series of Freedom Rides at that time. And he was simply stopping off in Greensboro, and somehow was asked to stay around for a while and to assist us in our fight, and assist us in what we were attempting to do.

I--again, I'm looking back on this. I get the feeling that somehow CORE sort of drifted, but not accidentally--sort of drifted into this and managed to place themselves as an organization in a very favorable light and to impress the persons involved in the, in our own demonstrations that this would be the best possible organization to handle what was taking place in Greensboro at that time.

EP: Do you recall the actual formation meetings that resulted in the official formation of the CORE chapter?

JH: I recall sitting down with the gentlemen that I have been talking about, with Bill Thomas, with Lois Lucas, and perhaps a few other people that I can't name at this point. And we did discuss, you know, certain things about how CORE would be beneficial to us.

I was not that favorably impressed at that time. And I think that subsequent events proved me to be correct in terms of my not being favorably impressed.

EP: Why were you not favorably impressed?

JH: Having come out of an environment where I knew certain people connected with CORE, I, I didn't like the whole approach that they took to the Freedom Rides. I felt that large numbers of people were being asked to have all manner of violent physical assault heaped on them and not to resort to any defense whatsoever. And although, to be sure, there was no physical altercation between myself and anyone else during the sit-ins that started in Greensboro, I was not then, and am not now, an advocate of what people have come to call nonviolence. I believed then in self-defense. I believe now in self-defense.

And I was a bit uneasy that if an organization like CORE became the leading organization for what we were doing in Greensboro, that this was going to mean that a lot of people, including a lot of very young black women, could possibly be very badly beaten and otherwise brutalized, because they would have to pledge allegiance to the principle of nonviolence, you know. That's part of why I felt that way.

EP: Did Reverend Bush share your reservations?

JH: Yes, he did.

EP: Did anyone else?

JH: I believe that Lois Lucas at that time understood. I have to, have to say this not because of any subsequent friendship which may have developed, because we did become very good friends. But even at the time that she was a student at Bennett, she was a very, very perceptive and very aware black woman. And I think that she understood what I was attempting to articulate at that time. There may have been some others, but in terms--oh, I did, I did say this. But I was sort of, in a sense, outvoted, or reassured that this was not going to take place, that my fears would not be realized, and that it--meaning CORE--could be a very effective force for change in Greensboro.

EP: In looking at the CORE papers that I've received here at the library, I came across a series of events in this period--'60, '61, '62--principally around '62, after CORE was officially formed. I was wondering if I could go over them and see if this is an accurate sequence of, of these events.

The first that I have is the sponsorship of the Freedom Highways Project training session at Bennett in July 1962. Are you--do you recall that?

JH: No, I don't. There is--I'm not, again, sure, but we didn't spend that much of our summers in North--we spent summers--not that much of our summers in North Carolina. So there were certain events that could have been going on that I was not aware of.

EP: Oh, you mean your, your family didn't stay in Greensboro?

JH: We were there for part of that particular summer. But I don't believe we were there for that entire summer.

EP: Did you participate in either the planning or the carrying out of the picketing at the Hot Shoppe?

JH: Yes, I did.

EP: Can you describe to me how that came about?

JH: I'm not, I'm not sure why that particular target was chosen, but as I said, we had decided to step up our activities, to open up a number of places. And that was one of the places targeted, I think in part, yes, in part because if I'm not mistaken, it was a national chain--if not a national chain, at least a regional chain. And the feeling was that if we could put pressure on restaurants that had affiliations elsewhere, then perhaps we could do the same with them that was done with Woolworth's and Kress.

EP: I gather that this campaign didn't last very long--just a few days--before the Hot Shoppe management capitulated. Do you recall the specifics of the sitting-in and discussion with either the management or their legal representative, Armistead Sapp?

JH: Oh, I recall some of that. [Laughs]

EP: Could you convey that to me, please?

JH: The reason I was laughing is because the attorney that you made reference to--I guess as part of his duties, they decided that he would conduct a kind of witch-hunting campaign.

He was very adamant in terms of the Hot Shoppe management not capitulating to our wishes. He claimed this on both legal and other grounds, and suggested that we were picking on the wrong people in the first place, and that that particular kind of target was not important. In other words, he attempted to, to belittle our negotiations. Why he did not succeed, I cannot say. But I think that part of it was because--if I am correct in my assertion that Hot Shoppes was either a regional or, at that time, was either a regional or national chain--I think that they feared certain pressures outside as much as they feared the fact that we were concentrating on them in terms of trying to open them up.

[End of Tape 1, Side A--Begin Tape 1, Side B]

JH: --the scurrilous detective work of Mr. Sapp, he was able to determine that somehow this particular woman [Alice Jerome] had connections with the Communist Party. Whether those connections were as intimate as he suggested, I don't know.

What he was able to do in an area of the country that was--no, I won't categorize it in that way. The entire country has always had a very hysterical and paranoid point of view about the Communist Party, about communism. Not so much the Communist Party, but communism itself. And I think Mr. Sapp both knew this and understood this quite well. And so he used this as a potential means for destroying the entire movement.

That was really his aim. It was not to remove Mrs. Jerome from either her position at Bennett College--which he was subsequently able to do--or to prevent her from participating in the movement, which he was also able to do. I think his aim was really to destroy--no, I'm sorry, not think--I know his aim was to destroy the movement by suggesting that we were very actively controlled by the communists.

He never said Communist Party; he said the communists. And because of that kind of attention that was focused, I do recall, along with Lois Lucas, having to go on television and say to, I guess, the entire city of Greensboro and to whatever other media would have been involved in terms of how far this information was able to go, that historically, black social protest movements have not resorted to affiliation with any agent or agencies of powers outside the country.

EP: Was this part of the news broadcast, or was this a special television program that was--

JH: I believe this was part of a news broadcast.

EP: How did the exposure, if we can characterize it that way, of Mrs. Jerome come about, and what kind of pressures did this put both on the Bennett administration and CORE?

JH: I'm not--now that again[?]-I hope that the persons who avail themselves of these tapes will understand why I may have difficult recalling some things. As I said before, it's because it's been a long time. I don't have a script here in front of me.

But I do recall that Mrs. Jerome's husband, who apparently was a very high official in the New York chapter of the Communist Party, had come down to Greensboro to visit her, and I believe to do some lecturing. And somehow, Mr. Sapp was able to find this particular information out. At that time, he had no information on Mrs. Jerome herself. But because of Mr. Jerome's prominence in the party, he was able to make the connection. Once making this connection, he was able to use it as a very effective leverage.

The--he put us all in a bad position, a bad position in terms of in a sense forcing us to compromise, and in some instances, apologize, when neither was needed. But we did it at that time, ostensibly to preserve the movement and to let people know that we did not need anyone from the outside guiding us.

Now this, all of this is true, I mean that we did not need or require anyone from the outside to guide, or direct, or to lead our movement. But because of the scare tactics employed, the Bennett administration was put on the spot. The Bennett College administration was put on the spot. And the board of trustees--I think, I believe now they had to call a special meeting for the board of trustees.

And as you well know, boards of trustees of any college are notoriously conservative. And they said that her presence at the college would not be in the best interests of the college, that this kind of publicity would adversely affect the college. And that because of that, and since she did not have tenure, she would have to be dismissed. And she was so dismissed.

EP: Were, were you friends with Mrs. Jerome?

JH: I would say that I was friends with Mrs. Jerome, because I met her under very pleasant circumstances. And I never forgot those pleasant circumstances. I'm going to be as honest in this interview as I can, because I think that what maybe future historians may need is a little bit of honesty. And I have nothing, really, to hide here.

The saddest role that I had to play during the entire time that I was involved initially in the sit-ins, and later as what we have come to call the movement, was when I had to say to a packed meeting--I believe at the Providence Baptist Church--that because of the pressures that were being brought against us by forces over which we at that time had no control, that we could no longer allow Mrs. Jerome to be actively involved in the demonstrations.

EP: Was she a member of CORE?

JH: I--now that I don't know. I would have to say I don't think so.

EP: Did you ever discuss with her this incident and its effect on her?

JH: Yes. She was, she was, of course, keenly disappointed. There was no rough putting down of her on my part. I didn't stop associating with her after she was no longer an active participant in the movement. I continued to talk with her. And we were, as much as anyone could be, friends from that moment forward until the time, of course, that she left Greensboro.

I probably can't add any other additional light on that. I think she, she--to her credit, she understood and she agreed basically with the tenor of what we were attempting to do at that time, because I believe that she understood that this kind of mass hysteria that can be generated when someone shouts "communism" in the United States. So that I think that she sort of, as much as possible, gracefully removed herself from an active involvement in the movement.

EP: Was Sapp ever able to strike this kind of pay dirt with anyone else?

JH: No. That was, that was his swan song in terms of that.

EP: Was Sapp a constant pressure on you? Were there confrontations with him or meetings with him, or was this very sporadic?

JH: It was somewhat sporadic, because, to tell you the truth, after that particular incident I don't recall, I don't recall any other encounters with Mr. Sapp. So I think that--from my point of view now--he sort of merged into oblivion, in the sense of not being actively opposed to what we were attempting to do. Now, maybe somebody else would, would know more about this than I would. But I don't recall ever having any more encounters with him after that.

EP: When you spoke with the managers of these different establishments, did you speak with the managers, or through Sapp or some other legal representative?

JH: At times, we spoke directly with the managers.

If I am allowed to sort of, like, editorialize in terms of what we're doing here, I think that what Mr. Sapp was after was a great deal of publicity, a great deal of notoriety, and an attempt to get himself well known. He succeeded in part in that. And I think that this governed his decisions to, to meet with us as much as possible. But we did meet with managers of some of the places at some, you know, at certain times.

EP: And what would you ask of them at these times?

JH: Basically that they honor an age-old American tradition of offering fair and equitable service to whomever presented themselves at their doors.

We--I never recall, I don't recall one incident in which we approached these negotiations and these discussions with any air of frivolity or lightheartedness. We were very serious. And we were serious in what we were asking.

Their usual response was that, because of the mores of the area in which they were located, they could not honor our request, because to do so would mean that they would lose their white clientele and that they would eventually go out of business. Our response was that we didn't think that would happen, but that even if that did happen, we were operating on principle and not solely on economics, and that we thought it was our right, our duty, to attempt to desegregate these particular places. That was basically our approach.

EP: Did any businesses agree to voluntarily desegregate?

JH: I think some of them did. I don't--I think once the--again, this is careful speculation--but I don't think it's unfair speculation. I think that once we were able to prove that we could do certain things and that we were, quote, "responsible," unquote, that we didn't have to go through the whole demonstration, sit-in type procedure in order to persuade a place to open. So I think there were a few places that opened voluntarily once we approached them.

EP: Did you ever meet with such individuals of the Greensboro Community Fellowship as McNeill Smith, Warren Ashby, or John Taylor?

JH: I think at some point. I don't, I don't have any vivid recollections of those particular meetings. But I'm sure at some point we did. My active--incidentally, my active participation stopped some time early in 1963.

EP: Before the mass demonstrations.

JH: Just a bit before the mass demonstrations, yes, that's correct.

EP: Well, if I could then move along and ask how were the decisions made in CORE strategy sessions? Do you recall who advocated what various positions in terms of tactics and targets?

JH: There was a hierarchy. I can't deny that. And initially, the--excuse me, the leadership hierarchy--and I don't, I didn't then, and I do not now, consider myself to have been a part of that leadership hierarchy. I was involved, but not an integral part of it.

Let me see if I can explain that clearly. Lois Lucas and myself, because of the, our manner of articulating and because we knew how to write very effective press releases and how to write very effective information in regards to what we wanted to do and where we were going, we were designated as spokespersons. We were the spokesmen for the organization at that time. And any news release and any other information pertaining to CORE had to pass through us. But ultimately, it had to be approved by what I'm calling the leadership hierarchy of CORE.

This situation, for a period of time, was very amicable. There were no major problems. But I, I think at some point--and I don't know if this impression was conveyed to you by anyone else, but I'm going to convey it myself. I think at some point one of the age-old nemeses of any organization set in with us. And namely that's jealousy. I think that the roles, or the role played by Miss Lucas and myself came to be resented by some of the persons involved. And rather than view us in the light that we wanted to be viewed--namely, simply as spokespersons--they began to see in their eyes' minds--in their mind's eye--leadership. And leadership was the farthest thing from our minds.

I'm not going to speak for Lois, although I think that would be correct in her case, also. But I had no intention of moving into any leadership position in CORE, and I so apprised them of that fact. But in spite of my assurances, certain people became rather perturbed that we were assuming too much power, we had a very vital function to carry out. And they wanted to eclipse that kind of power. And I think that happened.

EP: Would you care to name any of these individuals?

JH: In this case, I would not. I will leave that up to those persons who would listen to this tape to determine who I'm talking about. I am saying leadership. But I do not want to actually name anyone.

EP: Surely. Well, obviously, Bill Thomas was one of the leadership. Would Lewis Brandon be another? Did he have a leadership role?

JH: I think so. The name sounds, sounds familiar. I'm just not sure at this point.

EP: Were there any people that were opposed to the concept of direct confrontation through sit-ins, picketing, and demonstrations?

JH: Not, not to my knowledge. I think that you must keep in mind that the mood of the sixties was for black people a very optimistic one.

And [coughs]--sorry--and at that time we were--I have to use this word again and see if I can explain it somewhat. We were not that--and I say we, I'm not leaving myself out. We were not that politically sophisticated. We were content to do certain things that would open up certain doors for us. The sophistication, the political sophistication didn't set in until we realized that we had to go beyond the mere opening of lunch counters, movies, bowling alleys, et cetera.

EP: Did that point of sophistication come fairly early or rather late?

JH: It came late. And it came at a time when the voices of those who could best articulate that position, that those voices were virtually silent.

EP: And the point at which you ceased participation in CORE--was the goal still primarily opening up of these specific businesses and public facilities, or did the concept of increased employment and greater representation of the black community in government and other facets of the city present itself?

JH: It presented itself. This, this is what Miss Lucas, Reverend Bush, and myself were attempting to push. I don't think we pushed it too hard. I think, if anything, we didn't push hard enough.

EP: So you recognized rather early that this would have to be a comprehensive campaign to increase employment and that sort of thing over and beyond just the immediate opening up of these businesses?

JH: Yes, I did.

EP: Do you think that this was the consensus of the leadership, or were they still focused on this immediate goal?

JH: The leadership was very ambivalent around this issue. I think that's one of the reasons why, to a very large extent, they failed in this area. I do not--this is not by any means to take credit away from anyone. But I think that the record, rather than my saying it, the record stands for itself. The subsequent gain in employment opportunities in Greensboro for black people came about much later. It did not come about as a direct result of CORE's involvement. We talked about it. We drew up plans and proposals. But it did not get beyond that talking/discussion stage.

And I think one of the reasons is because of this ambivalence that I had referenced to. They--the feeling was that, at that time, that CORE was not this kind of organization. And when I speak to leadership, I'm not talking just about local leadership here. I was very, very disgusted with the national leadership and how the national leadership was able to, at the height of those massive demonstrations that led to those massive arrests, how they were able to cool people off and take away the fervor and the actual focus of those particular demonstrations. And the upshot of that was that a lot of people were arrested, and then after they were arrested very little happened. And then that leadership, meaning the national leadership, withdrew and left the local leadership to cope with all of this.

EP: So you're saying that CORE didn't really provide the comprehensive leadership to translate the immediate gains from the demonstrations into realizable economic and broad social accomplishments.

JH: I'd have to say they did not.

EP: Did the local CORE group insist on its own autonomy, or, or was this something that just never was pushed by the national CORE leadership?

JH: It was not really pushed. And I think that, that part of what may have transpired here [was] at that time all of us--students, Reverend Bush, myself--were relatively young. We've just mellowed a little more since then. But we were fairly young, and we had certain ideals and certain beliefs. And it was not due to a lack of trying, but I think that one of the things that happens to you when you are young and you're caught up in having to deal directly with certain very powerful economic power structures in this country, then you have to really be quite aware to realize what may be going on. The--

EP: Were you--are you saying that you were somewhat naïve about the workings of power?

JH: At that time. Not completely naïve, but naïve enough that we could not convey our sense of alarm to those who were in, quote, "positions of leadership" at that time within CORE.

What I'm very tentatively and very cautiously trying to, trying to suggest here is that if you're not used to certain things, then your head can be turned. All right? I think that when you dangle--and I'm not talking about myself, I'm not talking about Reverend Bush, I'm not talking about Lois Lucas. But when you dangle certain carrots before the eyes of the people, and they've never had a carrot before, they may want to take a bite, if I can use that kind of analogy. And I think once you've bitten the carrot, your appetite increases, and you lose sight of the time when you may have been hungry and anxious to do certain things because they were right, not because they were convenient or expedient.

Now, lest someone interpret these criticisms as being very harsh, I want to say that basically much of what transpired in Greensboro, North Carolina, between 1960 and 1963 were good. Basically it was very good. I just think looking back in retrospect that there were a number of things that all of us could have done in general and that certain people could have done specifically, to have--to further the gains that already had been made. And this was not done. And part of the reason for it was because people were too easily sidetracked into areas that were of dubious importance.

EP: Such as?

JH: Being entertained in certain fashion. And I'm trying to avoid the use of a very sharp word here. That's what I'm trying to do, to be very honest with you.

EP: Do you think that you were manipulated by the power structure into accepting short-term goals that really didn't result in significant breakthroughs?

JH: I think the power structure did that by getting through to the leadership and convincing them that the gains that they had made were quite significant, and that, to a large extent, they could rest on their laurels. And I think that the events that took place in the latter part of 1963 would bear this sort of observation out.

Now, I have no objections to other people with other interpretations. But this is my interpretation, and although certain things may seem vague to me, there are a number of things that I do remember and I do recall. And what I have suggested here did take place, because the employment gains and certain other various substantive gains were not made even two and three years after that time.

EP: What is your impression of other people who acted as advisors to CORE, such as Knighton Stanley and Elizabeth Laizner?

JH: You would ask me that, wouldn't you? [laughs] Okay. Now this time, you have supplied the names, and I'll supply the response.

EP: All right. Elizabeth Laizner.

JH: The quality of advisement made available at that point was very poor. There is simply no comparison between that kind of advising and the advice that they got from Reverend Bush, from Lois Lucas, and from myself.

EP: By that, what do you mean?

JH: Okay. If, if we have established some sort of valid chronological sequence here, the positions that they assumed came about at the time that our positions had been reduced to a state of nothingness. In other words, we weren't directly drummed out of CORE. What happened [is] the position of spokesperson was temporarily suspended and placed in the hands, I believe, of the head of the local CORE chapter. And we were told that our function would be to assist and no longer to directly speak for CORE.

Reverend Bush was not a spokesperson, but a very, very active participant. And he saw what was happening. And we all became, I believe, a bit disgusted. I don't think that's a very harsh word. We became rather disgusted and felt that our effectiveness was so severely hampered that it would not be even in our best interests to continue in a very active role.

So what I'm suggesting here is that as our roles faded into the background, it was then that the persons you mentioned came to the forefront. And the quality of leadership-- I'm sorry, not leadership. The quality of advisement that they offered simply did not measure up. This is part of what I'm talking about.

EP: How did it not measure up? What, what sort of things did they advise that, that you think were ill-advised?

JH: They, they sided with the leadership, naturally. And they attempted to suggest that some of the rather far-reaching programs that we had talked about previously were not important. They also agreed with the national leadership that certain demonstrations should be called off. And later on, they were involved in the demonstrations that led to the massive--massive arrests, which I believe was a very, very, very tactical mistake, because the number of people arrested almost literally comprised the number of people involved. And once they were arrested, the momentum of the demonstrations was slowed to a standstill.

EP: So you opposed the concept of jail over bail?

JH: Yes. Of the massive arrests?

EP: Yes.

JH: Yes.

EP: And as I understand what you're saying, it's because that kept the troops in jail, and they couldn't be out there on the street demonstrating.

JH: That's right.

EP: Subsequent--of course, some of the people that I've talked about did advocate this. And there was a suggestion among some people who've written about this that that put the pressure on the city and was an effective tool in getting the city into a compromise position. You would disagree with this.

JH: Yes, I would. The city was not really put into a very bad position. There was a great deal of talk about the lack of adequate facilities where the arrested persons were housed. There were a lot of complaints centered around that. But, in all honesty, I don't recall the city really being put in a very compromising position here.

EP: What did you advocate instead?

JH: That if they were going to continue to demonstrate in order to make certain gains that were primarily in the social field, that they should at least attempt, along with those demonstrations, to negotiate with the economic power structure in the city to try and determine if jobs could be made available to black people in the certain areas that previously had been closed to them. This was tentatively agreed to. But it was tabled in the sense that the insistence was that it needed more study, it needed more discussion, that people--students especially--were not in a mood to do anything except to demonstrate. And that to talk about issues, which they agreed were vital but not very--what's the word I want to use--not very sensational, would be to also downplay the momentum of the movement. I also disagreed with this. But it was to no avail.

EP: You've--are you putting Tony Stanley in the same camp that advocated more immediate, sensational things, such as the demonstrations and jail over bail, rather than this quiet negotiating process of increasing employment?

JH: I would have to, because I've not--I would not include myself in this, but I would say that his treatment of Miss Lucas and his treatment of Reverend Bush was not the kindest. I think that to a large extent, he abused his position at Bennett College in terms of how he treated both persons.

That is, I'm not talking about anything that was that verbally negative. It was just the attitude that, okay, the two of you have played your part, your roles. Now it's time to move over and let those of us who have other ideas come in and play our part. That's the kind of attitude that emerged.

EP: Well, was this a generally younger leadership that took over? Were they younger than you and Reverend Bush?

JH: At that particular time, that would be very relative. If they were younger, it was not that much younger that would have made much of a difference.

EP: So it was their attitude, rather than their age, that was significant.

JH: Yes. They, they exhibited, I think, much too much immaturity in terms of what was being dealt with, and that by this kind of exhibition, they essentially played into the hands of the power structure. And the events that we have had reference to took place as a result of that. I think the massive arrests, the cooling down of the demonstrations, and the lack of focus on the more substantive issues--all of this, I believe, came about as a result of a leadership and advisement that did not realize the kind of ballpark they were in.

Now this has happened to many of us. But I think that given the fact that just prior to those massive demonstrations we had begun to involve in a very effective manner the citizens of Greensboro, the adults and people who were not connected with either college said that we were moving in the right direction. But I think much of that was lost after the massive arrests.

EP: You mean in the white community or the black community?

JH: Black community.

EP: I see.

JH: We had some sympathetic support from the white community, but, to my knowledge, very little active involvement in terms of actual demonstrations, what have you.

EP: One of the people that I talked to--and these are very highly qualified terms--characterized kind of a split in the debates within the executive committee between the moderates and the activists. And by the activists, they meant people who wanted to do something immediately in terms of sensational demonstrations, or attention-getting demonstrations, or doing something right away. And the moderates who wanted to wait

and think out what to do, and maybe hold off until the fall of '63 for some sort of buildup in the demonstrations.

And the people that were characterized as activists was yourself, Bill Thomas, Lewis Brandon, Reverend Bush, and Lois Lucas. Would you agree with, one, this kind of terminology, and two, with the people that were placed in this camp?

JH: The terminology is somewhat misleading. I thought at first you were going to say we were in the camp of the moderates. I, I would view myself as an activist--and I hope that in speaking for myself, I can speak for the other persons involved--but I would not view myself as an activist who had no sense of direction.

We were not advocating precipitous and non-rewarding demonstrations. We were talking about the very keen need to keep a certain kind of momentum going to let people know that at convenient times we would not fade into the background because it was convenient to do so, and then reemerge at another point when it seemed to be convenient to do so. It was this kind of activism that characterized our involvement. We were not activists and irresponsible. We were activists, and committed, and highly responsible.

EP: Would you--

JH: But I would have to disagree with the intent of that particular statement, and then what it could convey as to our actual role.

EP: Would you agree that these people that I named shared your point of view, or disagree?

JH: They basically shared the point of view. I think that perhaps in some cases, some of the people may have been caught up in situations over which they had no control, so that at later--at earlier and later points, it would appear that we were completely at odds with one another. It wasn't that. I think that other things were operative here that would bring such a picture to the forefront.

I think that the persons that you mentioned were very committed to one another. We had our differences, of course. But we were very committed to one another and very committed to doing some very positive things in terms of black people and their livelihood in the city of Greensboro.

EP: You have mentioned that, in essence, you and Reverend Bush and Lois Lucas were more or less displaced as spokesmen, and your goals and means of achieving these goals were displaced by other people who were for the more immediate goals and were losing the sight of the long-term economic goals that you were seeking. Were there others that were displaced with you? And, and who were the people that essentially took your places?

JH: I don't recall others who were displaced. Some people may have just dropped out because of what they observed taking place at that particular time. People drop out of movements, of course, for various reasons. Some of us get tired. Some of us become disenchanted with what may be going on at that time.

EP: Were you, and Reverend Bush, and Lois Lucas disenchanted?

JH: Not heavily disenchanted. I think our disenchantment--if I could use that word--was due to a very, very conservative posture put forth by certain people in the city of Greensboro. Many of the ministers, for example, just would not support us on anything that we did. They--I would have to say that, that they were--well, either they were imitating the wishes of the white power structure, or they were simply not willing to live in a period of time that was in ceaseless ferment and change, because they kept using terms that I would have expected the white power structure in Greensboro to use against us.

They called us outsiders, although that could not have been the case with Lois Lucas. But they didn't say that much about her. They called Reverend Bush an outsider. They called me an outsider. And although, again, I really can't name these particular persons because I don't know who they are, they kept insisting that we did not have the best interests of the city at heart, that we were essentially troublemakers, and that we would never be able to establish a firm foothold in the black power structure of Greensboro.

EP: So--but was your disenchantment within CORE itself, the direction it was taking and the leadership?

JH: There was some disenchantment there, but not as great as the one I just mentioned. I was disappointed with CORE, as I said before, in terms of their not--of their unwillingness or their hesitancy about focusing in on issues that we felt were very important.

EP: Now, do you mean the local chapter or the national office?

JH: Both. Because I think the national office did have a very heavy degree of influence over the local office that was not easily broken, if it was broken at all.

EP: Do you think that Bill Thomas supported you or these people that displaced you?

JH: He was put in the middle. I would have to say it in that light. It was a situation akin to having to--I don't know how to categorize it. It's--I'm not saying that he did it in this manner, but it could have been viewed as choosing the lesser of two evils. Because I believe that the national leadership, far more than local leadership, wanted Reverend

Bush and myself displaced. Now I have no, no concrete proof of this in terms of written documents, but there were conversations in which this was intimated--because, among other things, we were quite critical of the national leadership of CORE. We--that was--we did not make any secret about it. And I'm sure that got back to them, and I'm sure they didn't like it. So I think that the pressures applied to Mr. Thomas were just that, pressures. They were not his own personal perspective.

EP: So as, in--by way of concluding this segment of our interview, you were saying it was a mistake to focus on the immediate goal of getting into the theatres and--

[END OF INTERVIEW]