

**GREENSBORO VOICES/GREENSBORO CIVIL RIGHTS ORAL HISTORY
COLLECTION**

INTERVIEWEE: Julius A. Fulmore

INTERVIEWER: Kathy Carver

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[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

KATHY CARTER: All right. If you could state for the tape your name and your title here, please.

JULIUS FULMORE: I'm Julius A. Fulmore. My title with the Greensboro Public School System now is that of Assistant Superintendent for Personnel.

KC: How long have you been with the Greensboro School System?

JF: Well, I usually respond facetiously, because I say I've been here since day one--but I am in my thirty-fifth year with the Greensboro Public Schools.

KC: Are you a native of Greensboro?

JF: I am not. I am a native of the southeastern part of the state, Robeson County--at Maxton to be specific. But I had my first teaching experience in Davie County at Mocksville and from there I came to Greensboro.

KC: So you've seen a few different places. And Greensboro, I imagine, is quite different from Robeson County and certainly different from Mocksville.

JF: Oh absolutely.

KC: Tell me a little about growing up in Robeson County then.

JF: Yeah, I grew up in rural Robeson County in a family of eight students, which actually was an interesting experience, because living in the rural area, we had three ethnic groups there that we intermingled with on a regular basis: the whites of the county; the other

minorities are Negroes, we were called back then, and then the Indians who inhabit Robeson County. Worked right alongside of whites, Indians, blacks--Negroes, if you please--many, many days down in Robeson County. I attended a rural school to begin with up to grade seven, and then, of course, we were transported by bus to nearby Maxton and later moved to Maxton. I attended high school, grades eight through eleven. That shows you how long ago--

KC: Certainly is.

JF: High school didn't even have a twelfth grade in high school then, but that's the way it's gone. So I set a goal of changing that kind of lifestyle early on and aspired to do something different than remain in a rural setting for the rest of my life. Successful upon completing high school, successful to have had awarded to me a work scholarship to the college and upon successful completion of four years of college, I have actually not lived in Robeson County since I finished college back in 1948. I go back into the area to visit on a regular basis, and I always enjoy seeing them, including a couple of sisters that I have that are still living in Maxton at this time.

KC: So you were a farming family?

JF: Yes, we were.

KC: Did your family own the land?

JF: It was land that was rented, yes.

KC: I see. And you got by all right.

JF: Yeah, we managed because we grew a lot of the things that we needed working on the farmland. There were items that we couldn't grow such as rice, sugar, coffee, those kinds of things. But the vegetables, fruit, mainly, not mainly, but pork and beef we grew right there on the farm. Because of proximity to the coastal area in North and South Carolina there, it was easy for us to enjoy foods from the North and South Carolina coast.

KC: That's one of the great benefits of living in eastern Carolina. [laughs]

JF: That is right. So, we grew chickens right on the farm and of course we had poultry products. We never had to worry about that. We grew our own wheat that we took over to Laurinburg in exchange for flour for making bread that was needed in the homes. So, we were pretty equipped, to tell the truth.

KC: Pretty self-sufficient it sounds like.

JF: Yeah, that's right.

KC: Was the church important in your family?

JF: Oh absolutely. I still communicate on a regular basis, as a matter of fact, with the wife of one of the ministers who served a little church while I was a teen. I try to remember them on special days. I just got in the mail early last week a Mother's Day card to her. Both of them are confined to the home, and when I'm back down--they live over in South Carolina, they're a skip and a hop away--and when I'm down there and I have the time I usually pick up my sisters and we drive over to Bennettsville, South Carolina. We try, you know, to share a little sunshine with them because both of them are confined to their home. They're just great people, highly oriented people--people-oriented is the way I want to say it.

I was telling a colleague of mine here recently, I remembered them because in growing up down in the community I knew that the folk who were member of the little church had very limited resources that they could share with Reverend Mr. Grace. Even with that, when I was there on weekends or holiday service, Mrs. Grace would frequently say, "Reverend, you know Julius is in school. Don't you think we ought to try to share a little piece of money or something with him that he could use." I'll always remember that, you know. It was that kind of easiness with them, the church and the people, the minister and his family, who serve the church. That's the one I singled out--there were others but they were there during the time I was attending college and you know, a small sum, but was greatly appreciated, you know.

KC: Yeah. The thought as much as the amount, right?

JF: Oh, absolutely.

KC: Tell me about school in Robeson County. You spent eleven years in the public school system, tell me about your teachers. Were they strict?

JF: Yeah, very strict. But here again, very attuned to what I like to call in today's jargon the learning needs of the students who were in the school. I remember having gone to a rural school where it was a man--a husband and wife team plus two other teachers; there were just four teachers in the school. It really sort of became a part of the family of the husband and wife of the youngsters who attended that little school. So much so, even though they lived back in the little town in Maxton, they maintained their affiliations with

the two small churches in the community, one Methodist and one Baptist.

She was a strong leader in the little Methodist church, and in like manner, he was over in the little Baptist church. They continued that because they grew up in that kind of church environment, his being Baptist and hers being Methodist. I think to a great extent they'd seen the need for some trained leadership in the two little churches, and it was greatly appreciated, and it was relied upon to a great extent.

And, incidentally, the gentleman who was principal, who was my elementary school principal, is still living. He's in a nursing home in Durham and has one daughter who lives in Durham. And I go to see him as often as I have an opportunity. His recall is not what I'd like it to be. He knows who I am when I drop in and see him. While he does not call my name he always says to me, "How are things going with you and your people." He doesn't remember the names of those people but I'm aware that he's referring to the folks back down in the little community of Maxton when I go by to see him. But anyway, my sister and others still worship in that little church, as they have an opportunity to come up and visit him the folk from his church or the little Baptist church.

I shared all that with you to indicate that it was really sort of one big family in a sense that folks looking after folks. His name was Washington Hawkins, his wife's name was Esther. His family grew up down here near Asheboro and just sort of became involved with, as I indicated earlier, all of the families that are in the two little churches and the little school in the community.

KC: And you got a scholarship to go to college.

JF: It was a work scholarship--I went to Fayetteville State [University, then Teacher's College]. I had my mind, having grown up as a teen in a rural setting, had my mind made up that I wanted to come to A&T [North Carolina A&T State University]--it was a college then. And thought I was perhaps going to pursue agricultural studies, reason being I had my mind set on perhaps returning to that kind of--I mean to that particular setting or that part of the state, if you please, and seeing if I could be the vehicle in helping many of the other people improve their plight, or to work with them in the whole matter of trying to become landowners or to become more diversified farmers, whereby they could, you know, expect to live just a little bit more enriched kinds of lives. But it turned out I got the work scholarship, and I went to a teacher's college and ended up in education. So things have gone well for my wife and myself.

KC: So you don't regret having done that.

JF: No, I've had the opportunity. I've had the invitation to return to Maxton in an administrative role. And my wife and I talked about it and concluded early on that, no, this is going to be better for us, a better situation or setting for us to remain in Greensboro

as opposed to going back to Robeson County with very, very limited resources for education.

KC: Talk to me a little bit, if you wouldn't mind, about race relations in Robeson County when you were living there.

JF: Yeah, I shared with you in the early part of my conversation was the fact that it was not uncommon to have a black man living in one home and just up the road a piece there would be a white family and somewhere around there would be one of the Indian families living. We just sort of shared with one another wherever we were, and this actually happened wherever we were at lunch time. When we decided to stop for lunch, we just ate. If we were at the white family, we all sat down and ate together; if we were with the Indians--and we understood whatever they had for lunch at that time, the thought was their willingness to share it. And we partook of it and survived and went right back to our work for the second half of the work day.

And I would say that the relationships were very good.

Case in point: before I began driving a school bus, my sister, if my younger sister and I would miss the bus, we were supposed to ride from our community over to Maxton, both of us were in the high school there, we just flagged Doug Rich down, the driver of the bus for white students. We just flagged them and he'd pull over and open the door and we climbed aboard and we rode on up to Maxton on that bus, because most of the students on that bus were students that we worked alongside. And he could not leave his planned bus route to take us over to the black school that we attended when we got into Maxton and we knew that; we knew we still had about a mile to walk to get over to our school. But we never got overly anxious about it and we knew that there was a separate bus that we were supposed to ride. But if we ever missed it and Doug would come along, we'd just go out and flag him down and climb aboard.

I don't know if he ever got chastised for permitting us to ride that bus. I don't know that anybody other than the students that are on the bus knew it. It's highly possible the principal at the white high school never knew that he gave us the opportunity to ride that bus on up to Maxton so that we wouldn't miss a day out of school. So it was that kind of relationship, unique in itself I must admit, but I think the fact that we had the kind of community, understanding, and relationship is what attributed to that kind of opportunity for us.

KC: Then you left Robeson County.

JF: And went to Fayetteville.

KC: You went to Fayetteville. And you went to Fayetteville State and got your bachelor's

degree?

JF: That's correct.

KC: And what did you concentrate in?

JF: Elementary education.

KC: And you got your first teaching position then straight out of Fayetteville?

JF: Out of college. The work scholarship that I had was that of living in the home of the college president. They had an aged mother. My responsibility was to take care of her home. I drove for him, the president, and generally the kinds of chores that needed to be taken care of around his mother's home. That was the first priority. The driving he would do it himself, if she needed me to be at her home on the weekend or whenever. If he was taking trips of some distance out of the city and I knew so long as it didn't interfere with my class schedule too greatly, I was to be available to drive for him.

He was very sensitive to that, he always checked it out before he even told me, related to me that he had a trip out of town to make sure that he was not going to interfere with my class schedule. So that was the work scholarship: my tuition was paid, my meals were provided for in a college dining hall, and all I had to be responsible for was to purchase some textbooks and any laboratory fees that I had to pay.

KC: How about the quality of instruction at Fayetteville State. Did you have some good instructors?

JF: Yeah, they're unusually good. The institution was small at that time during the years that I attended there as a student. We never got more than five hundred students as a maximum number. The college president, everybody from the president on down to the man who was in charge of the operation plant usually knew just about every student on the campus.

My college president, I like referring to him because I learned a lot from him. He took what I perceived as being a fatherly interest in every student there on that campus. The scenario that I shared with you regarding his wanting to, being reluctant to pull me out of class, he believed that I ought to be in class and that I ought to be in class prepared for the activities of the day. College instructors that we thought took a genuine interest in every student that are in the classes that they taught. I had a laboratory right on the campus at that time.

I'll--to show you the kind of interest that was there, I tell everybody [that] as we talk about it, pretty much of what I know about teaching methodology I got from the

teacher who supervised my student teaching in that laboratory setting. We had to prepare a written lesson plan before we were permitted to go in the laboratory school, written lesson plans that had to be approved by your cooperating teacher before you stood before a group of students in that laboratory school. The principal was just that strict about it. We went over, when we would report, when we reported to begin the student teaching experience, we met with the principal. She was very adamant, very up front about it.

“I have instructed my teachers to say to you the morning that you come into either one of these classrooms unprepared to teach these students, you don’t teach that day. You will make it up at the time that is going to be worked out between the teachers. You will not get the student teaching grade until you have made up those classes that you missed.”

A friend of mine, who was an associate superintendent down in the Durham city schools, and I still talk about how we used to chide one another Sunday afternoons when you were walking around on the campus with your female friend. It wasn’t unusual for Frank Weaver to yell across the campus if he saw me. We sort of took a lot of pride in doing that to one another. It was a friendly kind of thing.

“Julius Fulmore, Miss Callender needs to see you.”

It was true. It was something that she wasn’t satisfied with the lesson plan that I was supposed to use on Monday morning. And he says, “Tell you she’s going to be in her room.” She lived in a dormitory on campus. I said that was a mistake--they should have given her a home off campus so she couldn’t get to us. [laughter]

But as I’ve grown older, I really needed that, with the kind of background that I took to her at the state. And having gone to a small high school, very small, I needed that kind of one on one attention to help me to be prepared to meet the instructional needs of students when I came out of there.

I had my own classroom up in Davie County in Mocksville and I won’t ever forget it. There are things that I shared with teachers when I became principal of an elementary school in the district, things that I learned from Theresa Callender, my supervising teacher down in Fayetteville. So all in all I would say yes. They both came with the genuine interest in helping those students who left that college campus to be prepared and to be the best teachers they could be and assume responsibility for a classroom of students. I got a double dose of it because the college president’s wife was also my general science and biology teacher--but as I was in and out of the president’s [house] I was still getting some unsolicited tutoring in a sense.

KC: Now before it slips my mind, tell me what the president’s name was.

JF: Dr. J. Ward Seabrook.

KC: You said you received good solid training and education.

JF: I would say yes, to the extent that--the institution is much larger than it was back then. I said to Dr. Charles Lyons, who was a subsequent president and chancellor--he was the first chancellor--

Dr. Lyons, I'd say, "I want to let you know I'm real selfish about this institution." Always in my mind I had hoped that the institution would continue to be that small teacher's college, preparing good strong elementary teachers.

And he looked at me and he said, "I can believe you," he said, "because you deal with Dr. Seabrook. But, you know, to survive, Julius, numbers make a difference. Because of the portion of the part of the state that we have to offer programs to meet the needs of people out in Fort Bragg or in the southeastern part of North Carolina." I said, "We've got the programs if they want to be teachers." And he and I had a friendly chat about that. I'm being serious about it because of the one on one interest that they had, the genuine interest that they had in developing the teachers that came out of that institution.

They didn't win them all. Obviously, they didn't win all. As Dr. Seabrook used to say, "Some of the folk who came to Fayetteville looked upon that as something of a winter resort," he used to say. And didn't have good intentions of really buckling down and studying. When they came, many of them came from a rural setting as I did and they got to Fayetteville and saw all the pretty bright lights and the college campus setting--this was a time to relax, recreation, socialize, much, much more than they should have been doing. Of course, those finally got weeded out. They were the ones that didn't make it, you know.

But unfortunately, the institution is up to between twenty-five hundred and three thousand students now adays, including the Fort Bragg campus, probably more than that now. And it's much more diversified now than back then.

KC: You were in a program that taught you to be the best teacher. And they were preparing you to teach in a segregated system in society. And of course that's no surprise, anyone that went through the system at that time. Were there any ways in which that aspect of teaching in North Carolina was addressed? I imagine not formally, but maybe informally.

JF: Not that I can recall. Back there in the late forties when I was a student, I don't suppose very many people had really begun thinking in that manner. There would be a time when we would have a school system in Greensboro and youngsters would be coming from all quadrants of the city here and end up in the same classroom. But, you know, it finally came and it was the kind of thing that we had to become sensitized to and we've got to cope with.

KC: Was there a sense of responsibility that you're going to be teaching young black children in a segregated society, a sense of responsibility to instill a sense of self-pride and worthiness? Is that part of being a teacher?

JF: That was always there. You want to be prepared to help youngsters master the kinds of survival skills, if you please, for the environment that they find themselves in. So I can relate back to the rural school because there are--at that time there were, North Carolina was just dotted with all over, with two-, three-, four-teacher schools all over the countryside. And for the most part they knew that many of us would end up in those kind of school settings, and so the complete role of education got to be an ongoing part of the curriculum in our school. And if you didn't get it there, there were old deans, supervisors back then who went out all over the county helping to indoctrinate you with that once you had gotten to the field.

KC: What kind of survival skills would you want to or be expected to teach students?

JF: As I said, how to relate to, how to use the land that's around you and help in the procurement of the foodstuff that's needed--actually, helping students to be able to use that to a good extent. Since, as I said, in my own home environment, you ought to be able to grow a large percentage of the food stock that you are going to need. Because mainly then we knew, as I indicated to you, pork, we knew beef, we knew poultry, we knew fish, seafood products, as the main entrees for meals. We knew that the eggs had to be gathered up out of the barnyard to be prepared for breakfast. We knew that those same eggs were used to prepare the foodstuff and so forth. And we knew that while we had a lot chickens around, we had a place where we confined those chicken that were going to be used for family consumption to sort of, I guess, maybe purify them. [laughter] But you would have to see about--

KC: Isolate them or something. So they're real practical skills that you're talking about.

JF: Yeah, this is true. And that is part of what you do, to use the products that are grown on the farm. There were no farm freezers or no electric refrigerators back in the time or the early years of my life. How are you going to be able to preserve the foodstuffs once you have grown it on the farm or what have you to tide you over for the winter months when it's not possible to go into the garden to harvest the cabbage or the radish or the beets, the carrots, the beans?

And so we learned how to can those products. My mother was very skilled at it, and it's something that she learned through trial and error I think for the most part. But canning the fruits, making the preserves, canning the vegetables, and the list went on and on--even got into canning, learning to can some of the meats that were grown, such as chicken. Some of the--how to preserve the beef that we slaughtered and had processed right there on the farm.

KC: I'm going to change the subject for just a minute because--

JF: I'm probably running long.

KC: No, it's all real interesting. I'm glad you're talking about it. But I am interested in the difference that you would have encountered going from, well, of course, first, from Robeson County to Fayetteville State, then to Mocksville, but from Mocksville to Greensboro must also have been--

JF: A tremendous--

KC: A difference.

JF: Difference. I'd like to share also, both of whom I taught--a former president and chancellor at A&T was the individual who recommended me for a teaching position in Greensboro. I had been taking graduate level classes in the early evening and night from Dr. Lewis Dowdy.

One night he was lecturing and right in the middle of a lecture he stopped and said, "By the way, Mr. Fulmore, do you not have elementary certification?"

And I said, "Yes."

[And he said] "See me after class."

Well, prior to that, we had invited Lewis Dowdy up to Mocksville to speak to our North Carolina Teachers Association unit there, and he came early and I was president of that unit at that time and was the one who extended the invitation to him to come. And he came early and naturally came to my class. You know, I went right on with what I had planned for my students that afternoon. He sat in the back of the classroom, he made himself comfortable after we received him, moving around looking at charts and posters and so forth in the classroom, looking at the things that had been created in the classroom that money was not available to buy and so forth. So when he spoke to me at the class session that night, he said "I have been asked to recommend a male--he'd get in trouble now if he'd single a male out [laughter]--teacher for one of the schools here in Greensboro." He said, "I've been pleased with your performance in my class as a graduate student, I was very pleased with the observations that I saw when I came up to your classroom the other day."

And I said, "Now you tell me."

He said, "You know, I sat in the back of the classroom for a little while and then I made myself comfortable moving around looking at the learning resources that were in your classroom." He says, "If you are interested, I'd like to recommend you for the position, for a teaching position here in Greensboro."

There were some other contingencies that I'm not going to talk about. One of

them was that the principal of the school preferred to have a male teacher who was married at that time for some strange reason. And I was not married, I was going to get married that summer and I had all that in the bag. I don't necessarily want to get married and then take off over to Greensboro and leave my wife and everybody, her family back up in Mocksville. So I got in my car and drove back to Mocksville and went by my fiancée's home later that evening and we talked about it briefly and she said, "You're crazy. You should have told the man, 'Yes, I'll take the position' right then and there."

When you think of the opportunities in Greensboro as compared to Mocksville and Davie County--there are good people up there, I had established my roots there, a lot of friends. I've still got a lot of friends up there and I really wasn't anxious about pulling up and leaving at that time.

KC: How long had you been there?

JF: I was into my sixth year there and thoroughly enjoying it. I had a contract to go back there to teach the following year but the two of us made the decision to come on to Greensboro and I've not regretted that. I've had numerous opportunities since I've been in this school system. But just the comparison of the resources for education in Greensboro as compared to Davie County, they're worlds apart.

KC: Well, how about Davie County?

JF: Good county. They've got some--since we left Mocksville and came to Greensboro, they have built a number of new schools in the county. They have some very good facilities. They've got the programs going in Davie County--they were not there at the time we were there, the facilities weren't there, the programs were not as well organized and implemented there. But they've come a long, long way because of some more progressive leadership in the county at the central office level as well as the individual school level. But the facilities in Davie County are just great and they have also, in like the last five years--which we never got it through while we taught there--voted in a small local supplement for school employees in the district. Davie County is really on the map, so to speak.

KC: Coming along. Did you find equipment and resources to be sufficient for--

JF: Limited as compared to Greensboro. When my wife and I came here--I taught here about three years before she came--and when we experienced all of the things that were made available for teachers in Greensboro, we facetiously said, when we heard a teacher who was prone to start complaining about anything, said that's one that needs to be required to teach in Davie County.

KC: There you go. In the old days--

JF: That's right. Need to be required to go up and teach in Davie County where they literally have to make things for yourself.

KC: Can you give me some examples of some things that were in the Greensboro schools that were kind of lacking in Davie County?

JF: Oh gosh, audiovisuals for example, they were all over the place when we arrived here--the same as 16mm films that were carefully chosen to be correlated with units of study. The availability of central office resources, there are persons that are in just about all of the disciplines. Until the year before I was ready to leave Davie County, there wasn't even a general supervisor in the county from the central office level. When I came to Greensboro there were several. As said, in just about all the disciplines--music, the generalist, people to help with science, with physical education, with math, you name it. The list just went on and on and on. And it's just sort of overwhelming you as to how to plan to utilize all these resources that are available to you here and certainly you want your program to be enriched. You want to use the resources and planning the best learning possible for our youngsters in the classroom.

KC: Now what year did you come to Greensboro?

JF: I came to Greensboro, I have to stop and think, I think it was 1956.

KC: OK, all right. So the school system was still segregated even though *Brown v. Board of Education* had been in effect for three years. All deliberate speed hadn't come this far, right?

JF: That is correct.

KC: Teaching in a segregated school system, did you notice any, did the resources and facilities and equipment seem to be equal in white schools as opposed to black?

JF: Having limited exposure to what was available in the white schools at that time--but I would say to you: those resources that were housed here in the central office could be accessed for whatever need I wanted to make of them down at Jonesboro School is where I taught when I came. They had the 16mm film, they had the filmstrips, they had disk recordings here in the central office and our media center, our library at Jonesboro School carried in the card catalog a listing of all those resources. And we knew that we had the

opportunity with careful planning to use those just like the teachers in the administrations at Irving Park School.

So from that vantage point, that is the centralized collection. I know that the PTA helped to gather to raise funds for the procurement of a lot of the teaching resources at Jonesboro School--could not equal what was available at say Irving Park or Sternberger schools. Overall, you see, I had to access, if from the vantage point of what I had available to me in Mocksville and Davie County. And I said, "Gosh, I can't believe I have all these things to use as instructional resources, learning aids available to me." But they were there.

KC: So you stayed at Jonesboro School for how long?

JF: Three years. And got a call--not a call--got a letter from the superintendent in the mail one Saturday morning to make an appointment with his office to come in to see him on a matter he wanted to discuss. The results of that conference was after three years there was a small school out in the southwestern part of the city, out in the Pomona area. You know where Crown Pontiac is on Wendover?

KC: Yeah.

JF: Well, before that was as well-developed and commercialized as it is now, sitting almost directly in front of Crown Pontiac over the hill over there--Norwalk Street was the way you got around over there to it--there was a little school over there. And he had sent for me to discuss with me his plans to assign me as building principal of that school, which was a teaching principalship. I taught classes as well as administered the school. And I stayed in that situation for three years, and then that little school was closed because of declining enrollment, and went from there over to Price School as an unofficial assistant to the principal over there--unofficial for the fact that I did not get paid the salary of an assistant principal. I was there two, two and a half years before I was named to my first principalship.

KC: And your first principalship was--

JF: At Hampton School. Brand new school. Brand new.

KC: Tell me about your first experience with desegregation. You would have been principal by then I would imagine.

JF: Oh I was. I was principal at Hampton School. I'm going to say my first experience of desegregation I guess would have been actually at the administrative level. For many

years there, before integration at the school building level there were integrated administrative staff meetings. When I say staff meetings, principal and supervisors meeting with the superintendent and his staff, and that had been ongoing in Greensboro for many, many years before we were integrated at the schoolhouse level. Good working relationships there among the principals, black and white principals in the district at that time. As time went along we began being assigned to certain system-wide committees as an integrated or mixed committee.

As time went along we reached a point where we were able to call up one another. I won't ever forget out at the old Terra Cotta School where I was, calling Lee Wellons, who was principal over at Hunter School out there off Merritt Drive, and to say to him we had an old 16mm projector that wasn't feeling well on a given day and we had planned to show a 16mm film in one of our classes.

Lee and I, because of proximity, he was the nearest school to me out there. He said, "Sure come on over and pick it up." I said, "Well, what I'll do, I'll come and pick it up and once the teacher has used it, has shown the film, I'll bring it right back, because I don't want to deny the teachers and students from Hunter from having access from the equipment." So it was that kind of exchange before, again, before the schools were integrated at the schoolhouse level.

KC: Tell me something about the integration process at the schoolhouse level.

JF: Okay. It was after faculty level, before the students. Hampton School was the first black, minority, Negro school, if you want to call it either, to even have a white faculty member in the district. We had been designated as one of two schools in the district to have assigned to us, on a full-time basis, an elementary school counselor. It came through the use of some of the title moneys, back then Title I or Title II, early on, yeah. But that counselor was white, coming to an all-black school, if you please--

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

JF: --and a person who had good interpersonal relation skills and got along well with that. And shortly after the counselor came we got a teacher for a section of children who was white. So the administration had begun to move toward, on a limited basis, piloting, experimentation of integrated faculties on a voluntary basis.

KC: So it was voluntary?

JF: Yes.

KC: Do you know if the faculty were carefully screened and handpicked as people who would

be likely to do well in this environment, sort of like a project?

JF: I'm reasonably sure that that was the case. At that time principals did not have nearly as much involvement in the selection of teachers to teach in the schools as they have now. Much of it was done at the central office level. But yes, the first criteria is someone who would volunteer to move from, say, an all-white school faculty to one that's gradually becoming integrated. And then, as you said, the screening--I'm sure that was done informally, if not so formally, but there, as you said, to ascertain those individuals who would likely be able to cope with the new environment.

KC: How about the integration of the students. Now when did that happen at Hampton?

JF: I'd really have to go back and pull my records out on that one, because I'm not recalling it right up front. But it was during the early years of school desegregation, after the Greensboro city board of education had made the decision that it would adhere to the law as it had been handed down to us. And they began the process of pairing or clustering schools back at that time, and it took a lot of work at the central office/school board level to put together the plan for the desegregation of the schools which indicated that black and white schools were paired together with the cross-town busing to carry forward the system's plan of student integration in the schools.

KC: And yet it's my understanding that a number of white parents opted to place their children in private schools and it made history.

JF: That is correct. We experienced that to some degree here in Greensboro, and luckily, or not luckily, we also experienced the return of many of those students to public schools. At Hampton, if you please, they were pulled out of the parochial or Christian schools, many of them were called, and were brought back into the public schools after they saw how well the youngsters who remained and whose parents opted not to pull out got along. Although I was principal of it, even though I was principal of it, I must say we felt like we had a good program going at Hampton and the word began to sort of get around that the children do have good opportunities for learning over at Hampton School.

I met in the hallway over here just this morning one of the former parents of Hampton School who continues to tell everybody, who recently rotated off our board, was a member of the school board, that the first contact that he and his wife had with anybody in the public schools in Greensboro was with Julius Fulmore at Hampton School, and after our conversations, he made believers out of us and this is why we still support public education even to this day. And they are parents who could very well afford, who could at that time very well afford to send their students to private school. It really sort of bubbles up in you.

He asked me this morning, he said, "I've been intending to call you, or my wife one. We wanted to know if Ann Bryan, our daughter, could use your name as a reference--she's going to finish her college next year." And I said, "By all means." I remembered her quite well, a good student. I would be honored to have her use my name as a reference. But that's the kind of thing that took a lot of hard work helping to provide the assurance to those parents. We cared about students in that school, the learning needs of every youngster who came into that school would be planned and provided for. A lot of apprehension there, the students were assigned to the school and I understood that and worked to try to reduce or dispel that apprehension.

One particular situation: the kids came real early in the morning. And the parents had the concern as to what would happen to the youngsters upon arriving at school and being released from a school bus in a totally unknown, new and different neighborhood. So that's one of the hurdles we had to get over--to let them know there was a plan for receiving the youngsters upon the arrival at the school in the morning. The students were going to be appropriately supervised until it was time for them to go down the hall to their classrooms everyday, not just some days out of the week but everyday. And we got a lot of backup support from parent volunteers who agreed to come in and help provide the kinds of activities that we made available to students while they were waiting for the 8:15 or 8:30 school bell to ring to begin their instructional day.

I have a lot of fond memories of my working with those parents who came to Hampton School out of the Irving Park community. One that I'd like to share is the fact that we put forth a very genuine effort to try to get parents meshing together, black and white parents. We were successful with it, if I do say it myself. The only contacts those black mothers in that school neighborhood had ever had with the white mothers and the white fathers, if you please, would've been as domestics in their home.

KC: That's true.

JF: And one of the things that I repeat over and over is the fact that we had worked diligently to bring them together, to the extent that when I left Hampton School after having been the principal of the school for eleven years, those white and black parents were on a first name basis. One of the other good parts about it, we had a number of grade mother clubs and organizations going. They had reached a point where they were rotating the meetings, they would meet in a white home in Irving Park one month and it was not unusual for them to meet right in the middle of Morningside Homes public housing project another month. They had that kind of an understanding, they had that kind of a relationship. I remember so vividly the very first time they met inside Morningside Homes. Frances Foster, she won't mind my using her name on this tape, but they were so proud that she had mothers like Maya McCallister, Virginia McCray, these are mothers out at Irving Park coming to her home even though it was just a small apartment,

[coughs] excuse me, but she was very proud of it.

We had some interesting stories, we won't get into all that other stuff. My point is sure there would be kinds of skepticism, I guess you would call it, upon bringing these groups of people together who had not worked together previously, at the beginning. Having to plan and work in a manner to let them know that the mission of each of us here at the school was to support the parents, whether you be black or white, is that of providing a good education for children. We can best get that done with all of us working together and providing that assurance and things move beautiful for us.

KC: It sounds as though there was a lot of fear of the unknown involved.

JF: Yeah, this is quite true. As I said, I can see some mothers right now, I was aware of that, whose children of course had not had a black teacher previously.

I said to many of them, I said, "I was aware that many of you volunteered to come the school in order that you could help relieve yourself of some of the anxiety. After[wards], you actually learned that your children were being cared for, their learning needs were being provided for and that the black and white youngsters were getting along harmoniously in the classroom. Even though it was Julius Fulmore who was principal of the school who knew your child on a first name basis."

It's frequently said to me that was one of the amazing things about you that we remember [is you] going through the school and ticking off names of children. I got involved just like teachers did in providing the assurance that students knew that even though he is principal of the school I have in him a friend--if they have a problem he's willing to help, try to take care of that problem. They knew that my office was open and they'd frequently come, two and three. They'd say "we have a problem" and we'd see actually they didn't have a problem, they just wanted to get inside the principal's office to see if he's human.

I said, "Yeah, if you come and Miss Hobbs says it's all right for you to come see me or the door is open, you come on in and let me know what it is that I can help you with."

So once they realized that there are other caring school people over there that we can trust with the learning needs of our children on a day-to-day basis, and we saw that apprehension or anxiety began to lessen tremendously, greatly.

KC: Speaking as a parent of a seven-year-old second grader, I can tell you this is exactly what parents were likely experiencing about any new situation.

JF: Like I said, I know the anxiety was there, I would have had the same kinds of concern. Many of the black parents did. The first day of school, or after the schools were integrated, we still laugh about it because of the anxiety. Automobiles of white parents

and many of the white kids came from Irving Park on the bus, many of the parents came and brought them because they were afraid--just checking it out.

And I said, "Just leave them to us, we're going to take care of them. Stay as long as you will, but we need the opportunity to try to get them acclimated in the class setting in the school."

But the humorous part of it, there were black mothers who never brought their kids to school on the first day of school, they just sent them over there by an older brother or sister. They had the driveways and everything cluttered with automobiles, because they came. And you look, wherever they could find a place to park their car--they were coming down across the campus. The custodian, who has a tremendous sense of humor and I were out there trying--I sent him out there and asked him if he would see if he could try to bring some kind of order to this confusion with these automobiles out the front there.

He knew a lot of the black mothers and he teased them. He said, "Now you never came to school the first day to bring your child, why do you want to be tying up the traffic today," in a humorous manner. But it actually happened that there was a great deal of apprehension on the part of the blacks.

KC: A lot of anxiety from everyone.

JF: Yeah, absolutely, a totally new situation. After we got the kids into the school, and they saw that we were sincere about what happened to these kids from the time they arrived until we got them back on the bus or headed them up the front walkway for those in the school community who walk to and from school, I'd say their apprehension, their anxiety began to lessen then. It ended up to being what I'd think a good learning situation, positive attitudes on the part of the parents, just tremendous overwhelming support by the parents for the school, the procurement of additional learning resources for students. The cohesiveness within the faculty grew during that time--because even at the faculty level, teachers who came from Irving Park and had not had the experience of working alongside a black teacher and a team partner, totally new, we knew we had to work at that as well. I like to think that we pulled it all together before I left that school.

KC: And when you left the school you became--

JF: An assistant superintendent for elementary education. Ask me how many different hats I've worn since I came here.

KC: Once you get to the big office--

JF: Yeah, you're subject to, you know, have your assignments. But I must say that I've

enjoyed my years in the Greensboro Public Schools. My first love, and I've said it to the superintendents with whom I've worked, is back out there in that school where I had day-to-day contact with teachers and students. If in fact the board of education, if my services may be used best here in the central office, then we go with that. My contract says work with Greensboro Public Schools and I'm going to do it.

KC: Good for you.

JF: Right.

KC: Do you have any sense of where the public school system ought to go from here, in terms of, obviously integration has been achieved?

JF: Sure.

KC: Okay, where to go from here? Is it the best of all possible worlds now?

JF: I think not. We are still, as a school system --have needs in the whole realm of interpersonal relationships. With all of the hustle and bustle about school merging now, and about the magnet school concept and all, I, you know, sometimes say to myself that perhaps that's sort of being a little shadowed with all of the other things that we are attempting to do as a school system. But I would hasten to say that I, from my vantage point, still see that as a need from, you know, total district perspective as something that we need. And we talked about it on occasion, in some of the superintendent's executive council meeting.

And we've done some things along that line. We had a team of people, when I was in yet another role in the system, who came and worked with principals, selected staff people from across the district in enhancing, enriching, if you please, learning better interpersonal relationship skills. The whole idea was to have a team of people coming from the various schools who in turn would return to their school building and try to implement some of the things they had learned from the seminar that we attended. That hasn't been pursued in the last three to four years now and it's something that I again think we really need to get back to more often.

KC: Well, maybe once the system merges and with everything else, and all the problems there--

JF: That's true. This is true. And there could be a need then. You know that we will experience people, if we are ever merged, coming from the three school districts. And although we are right here in the same county, they won't know one another. They will

not have worked together and we're going to have to plan for some activities or the system will have to plan for some activities to deal with those areas with the kind of merged system, without a doubt.

KC: Tell me what I've forgotten to ask. Have I left anything out that should be asking you?

JF: I don't know, other than the fact that I personally feel very fortunate to have worked in the Greensboro Public Schools through the years of school desegregation. I've seen a genuine concern within the top administration and the board of education to try to get people involved that would have a sensitivity to make an integration work for all of those in the district. The commitment from the board of education early on I think is what helped to set the stage for it in the Greensboro Public Schools.

It's the law of the land and we have an obligation to see that the law is implemented and therefore these are some of the things that, the strategies that we'll be used in this district to see that we work toward making it become a reality in as easy a manner as can be experienced. The whole area of employment--I always say to the people that I talk to, integration hasn't made that much of a difference with regards to minority employees in the system. What I mean by that is in some school systems across the state, the top black Negro administrators are rotated out of those roles with the coming of school integration. Greensboro has actually gained in number of black administrators since the coming of school integration. At this point and time, I said something I've been sharing with the folks, we have thirty-eight schools--and of those, there are thirty-eight principals in the district, sixteen of them are black administrators. So that's pretty close--well, that's more than a third of them.

KC: That's close to a half of them.

JF: It is, so I don't know if very many school systems in North Carolina can stick to that kind of a record, to tell you the truth. So I, thus another reason why I said to myself I've been blessed to have been in this school system during the years of school desegregation. I'm glad I had the privilege to be a part of it.

KC: Great.

JF: I didn't mean to keep you that long but we got off on Robeson County and Davie County.

[End of Interview]