

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Dr. Ada M. Fisher

INTERVIEWER: Hermann J. Trojanowski

DATE: February 18, 2010

HT: Today is Thursday, February 18, 2010, and I'm in Jackson Library with Dr. Ada M. Fisher, class of 1970, and we're here to conduct an oral history interview for UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] Institutional Memory Collection. Dr. Fisher, welcome. Thank you so much for coming all the way from Salisbury, [North Carolina] this morning.

AF: My pleasure.

HT: Let's start the interview by my asking you something about your background, about where you were born, when you were born, and that sort of thing.

AF: Well, I was born October 21, 1947 [in] Durham, North Carolina [at] the [White Rock Baptist Church] parsonage. My mother didn't have me in the hospital. I was born at home on the second floor in the main [upstairs] bedroom. And I was the sixth baby born at home, probably on the same mattress, but not in the same house. I told them I thought they should have thrown the mattress away. But they covered it with—it wasn't plastic, it was oil cloth like they used to make tablecloths in restaurants. They covered it with an oil cloth. And she had me at home. You know, I don't remember all this. I was told that.

I was the sixth child. There is a gap of sixteen years [between the oldest and the youngest]. My sister is sixteen years older than I am. My first brother is fifteen years older than I am. The second [brother] is fourteen years older than I am. The third one is nine years older than I am, and my last brother is a year and a half older than I am. I call us the accidents of menopause babies, because she was about thirty-nine or forty when I was born. What else do you want me to tell you?

HT: Well, what did your parents do?

AF: My father was a Baptist minister, [who] also taught theology at Shaw University from 1932 to—I think, he taught [until] 1965. And my mother, initially, when they got married was—they got married in Richmond, Virginia. My mother was a student at Virginia Union when she first laid eyes on him, and he pursued her like crazy because he wanted a wife. And she was—let's see. I think she finished Virginia Union at twenty where she taught Latin, Greek and French and was quite gifted with languages. And he was teaching something in theology at Virginia Union. [He also] taught English and German.

After she got married, all she did was be a preacher's wife. [He] was full-time pastor, because they had a church when they came to Durham. They had about 1,500 members. It expanded to [a high of] about 2,500 during his pastorate. [My mother] actually was crucial to everything he wanted to do. In their funeral programs it will tell all the stuff that both of them used to do. But they did some unique things. They started a church basketball league. And before the Chinese came up with traveling a ping pong league, the church had a traveling ping pong league in the forties. And out of the church league, the city was so impressed with it that they took it over. The city recreation league came out of [my father's leadership inspiration at] White Rock Baptist Church.

White Rock Baptist Church was a very unique church because many of the Who's Who in [black] Durham belonged to that church such as C. C. Spaulding; Dr. [James] Shephard who founded North Carolina College, [which is now North Carolina Central University]; W. J. [William Jesse] Kennedy and his family; Asa [T.] Spaulding, Sr. and his family. But the thing I guess we liked the most about the church was that there were a lot of factory workers and people like that. And my father was a friend of the powerful and the lowly.

[My father] had an interesting ministry, which had many dimensions. I'm writing a book right now about my mother and the role of a preacher's wife to talk about how she was crucial to what he had to do. For example, with the basketball team she used to make sure the uniforms were washed, and kept the statistics for the teams. And my [younger] brother [Christopher] later assumed [the role of statistician] that and got interested in sports, [which reflected as he was to become] a sports information director [and later athletic director]. So, out of that experience in the parsonage came many things.

HT: Absolutely amazing. Well, where did you go to high school?

AF: I went to the one and only best school in the state of North Carolina: Hillside High School, which is now one of the [only] two black high schools remaining. All the black schools were closed with integration. And Hillside is the only one—I think West Charlotte is the other one.

HT: Is that in Durham?

AF: It's in Durham. And all of my siblings finished Hillside. We all went to W. G. Pearson Elementary School, and we had the same first grade teacher, Mrs. M. Ora Sneed Lee, which is in the sibling memory books that I gave you about my siblings. And we all finished Hillside High School.

HT: And do you recall what your favorite subject was in high school?

AF: I didn't really like school. The only thing I ever liked about school was the first grade. I thought that Mrs. [M. Ora Sneed] Lee was just the neatest person in the world and gave us a great sense of paying attention to the needs of others and showing us—developing leadership skills. For example, if you could read and somebody in the class was slow, then your job was to go over there and work with the kid that was slow.

I find all this stuff about special education interesting, because we didn't have special ed. And, yet, all the kids graduated. All the kids did fine, and our goal was to look after one another. By having a diverse classroom, you could pair up kids with other kids who didn't quite get it with somebody who did, and you helped each other.

In high school I took a lot of classes, and I had some good teachers. And back then black students didn't have an excuse for not being successful because [good] black teachers didn't have a lot of [other career] options. They couldn't work at IBM [International Business Machines Corporation], et cetera. So, we always got the best and brightest teachers in our high schools. And then when integration came along, people had other options. So, we lost a lot of good teachers during that time.

But I remember when I came back to North Carolina [in 1996] to stay at the time; I got interested in the school board, particularly in Salisbury. I was blown away when they were talking about making a 2.0 a [graduation] standard. Telling that people had to have so much math, et cetera, because I had that when I was in high school. When I was in high school, I took biology I, advanced biology, physics, chemistry. I took algebra I. I took trigonometry, geometry, calculus, and advanced calculus. And when I got to UNCG, I was still behind.

So, I keep thinking, if I took all that then, and these kids [today] are not required to take but three years of math or four years of math, what kind of students are we really preparing to deal with the future? And we had a lot of interesting courses. But I think biology [of all these sciences] was probably my favorite, and that's why I majored in biology.

HT: So, why did you choose to attend UNCG?

AF: Oh, that was easy. It was the cheapest school I could find, and they, my parents had retired in [1965]. I was going to have to pay for this education myself. I applied to many black schools. And, I think, UNCG was the only white school that I applied to. I might have applied to Duke [University] or Carolina [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill], but I'm not sure. But when I came to UNCG, women couldn't go to Carolina and State [North Carolina State University] without first coming here. So, you had to do two years here.

I actually was looking at the black schools. And the problem they had was white schools required that the application be in by a certain time. I think I got accepted like in February of '66. And you had to let UNCG know by April whether you were coming. By that time I hadn't even heard from the black schools whether I had been accepted. So, it was to—was to my advantage to go ahead and accept. And, then, it was [that] matter of money.

At that time the state school was cheaper. And UNCG was actually cheaper than [North Carolina] Central [University], Howard [University] and some of the other schools that I looked at. And since I was having to pay for it, I'm a very practical person, [it was UNCG]. In coming here the Herbert Lehman [Education] Fund out of New York, which was part of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] Legal Defense Fund, was granting money to students to help integrate schools in the South. And so, I think I got \$400 or \$500 a semester in coming here. And it only cost like \$1,600 a year to come to school here. Then, I worked.

But as an aside, which people may not know, because my parents had moved, I got caught in the middle of something that I hadn't anticipated. When my parents moved to Richmond, the school wanted to make me an out-of-state student, which would have raised my tuition. Henry Frye, Sr., who was [then a lawyer who later became a] judge, took me on. I said, "It doesn't make sense. I was born in North Carolina. I've lived in North Carolina. I've never lived in Virginia. [I have a driver's license here.]" So we challenged the university system. When I look at what the rule is now, it was because of me and Henry Frye that the rule on what establishes one as an in-state or out-of-state student was established. You had to have—you had to vote in the state, have a driver's license in the state and had to have residence. Well, at the time I applied and was accepted, all of that was in place. By the time school started in September, my parents were gone. And they wanted to change the rules on me.

HT: Why did your parents decide to move to Richmond?

AF: My father retired, and they didn't own a house. When you leave the parsonage, you've got to give up the parsonage. And, then, he bought a house. What he got in retirement was not enough money to support the cost of running a house. He never had to pay a light bill, a heating bill, or anything like that [in the parsonage]. Then all of a sudden he got out there and found out he didn't have the money.

HT: There's no retirement plan either probably?

AF: Well, he did get—what he got was \$100 a month from the church. And then he got [\$109 from] Social Security. But it came to less than \$300 to \$400 a month. [But] the fortunate thing was at that time Social Security would pay people's children to go to school until they were twenty-three. So, my youngest brother and I were both in school. And we gave our checks to the parents. It was \$75 a piece. So, we gave them another \$150 which brought their income to what he had been making when he retired.

My father taught at Shaw [University] for thirty-three years, and he never got paid. [This was] because they needed someone with credentials to get the school certified. And he was the only black man with a PhD in religion or theology [from the University of Chicago]. So he lent his credentials to Shaw. And then he never made more than \$500 a month [from] the church in thirty-three years. He never asked for a raise. And they never offered to give him one.

So, that's why I'm all deaf on churches right now. And I tell the preachers, get a contract. Don't let them buy you a parsonage, et cetera. I can tell you what it was like growing up as a preacher's child. It wasn't very pleasant.

HT: Well, back to UNCG—well, when you were here, what was your favorite subject, do you recall?

AF: Actually, my favorite course—I can't say subject—my favorite course was terrestrial ecology taught by Hollis Rogers. That man was a trip. And it was Hollis Rogers that spurred my interest and [was the reason] I always wanted to come back to North Carolina. He took us all over the state, from the mountains to the coast, and showed us

the topography of the land and how beautiful this state was. I can't remember exactly where it was, but we were somewhere, and you could see the trees from the colonial times, the rows that they had planted. And I thought, "This is really a great state." And people really don't know a lot about it. And I want to do whatever I can to save this state."

HT: Well, you mentioned earlier that you worked while you were here.

AF: Yes.

HT: Did you work on campus?

AF: I worked on campus. I did everything imaginable. Occasionally, I picked up a little money on the side also. I was the receptionist in the dorms. I lived in Shaw Hall the first year I was here. And, then, I lived in Cone Hall when it first opened, which is a whole different story and a lot of fun. Then we had a chance to make Shaw Hall into the International House. And, so, I moved back to Shaw Hall [on the German Floor]. So I lived three years in Shaw Hall [total]. I liked the old buildings, the large rooms. It wasn't air conditioned. But it was a lot of fun.

I answered the phones [there]. And then, in the summer I don't really remember exactly what I did. But I went to summer school at Carolina and a couple of other places.

HT: Down at Chapel Hill?

AF: Yes. So, I didn't have that much time off, because I didn't have a place to go live. My parents [lived] in Virginia with my mother's [father]. I didn't like living there. So I tried to find something to do. I went to school all year 'round.

I actually finished the degree requirements in three and a half years and spent the other half year taking education courses and got a teaching certificate in secondary education. I think I liked the education courses. But I thought they were a bunch of junk most of the time. I liked Elizabeth Bowles, who was one of my favorite teachers. [This was my last semester during which I made the Dean's List. I think I had a 4.0.]

I had a couple of other teachers I loved—Dr. Anna F. Baecker, who taught German. And I loved Dr. [Anna Joyce] Reardon who taught physics. My advisor was Dr. [Ralph Michael] Morrison. I can't think of what his name is, but he had that purple splotch on his face.

As a rule I didn't like [most professors] in the biology department, and that's what I majored in. I thought they were racists and unfair. We had a lot of issues when I was here in school. In my class we had fifty-two black students and only seventeen of us graduated, or as [I] said, "Made it out alive." And there were a lot of things that were going on here that were just unfair, unjust, and a lot of it was racially motivated.

But a lot of it was [also] sexist. Women who came here were protected, and this was a woman's college still. But they had changed the name [in 1963]. In [1956] the first blacks [JoAnne Smart and Bettye Tillman] came. And I think you all always honor Yvonne. I can't think what her last name is, but there was another black student here

named Dorothy Amey from Durham, North Carolina. Dorothy was killed in a car accident. And so she did not get to finish UNCG. And—

HT: She was an early student?

AF: [I thought] she was the first student. She—not Yvonne, but she—think she came before Yvonne. [Not true, I’ve since learned.]

HT: The first students that I’m aware of where JoAnne Smart Drane, who is in Raleigh.

AF: Yeah, JoAnne.

HT: And Bettye Tillman, who died—

AF: [response removed by Ada Fisher later]

HT: I’ve never heard of her.

AF: Well, Dorothy Amey finished Hillside, very smart girl. She may have been here either the same time or the year before [or after]. And then, when the next class—let’s see, they finished in ’64, right?

HT: No, Bettye Tillman and JoAnne Smart Drane graduated in 1960. They came in 1956 and graduated in ’60.

AF: Well, find Dorothy Amey. She came from Durham.

HT: That’s A-M-U?

AF: A-M-E-Y. Dorothy Amey. And I remember she got—I think she got killed in a car accident. But she was one of the [early] students here. And as I said in my class, there were fifty-two.

Well, the first thing that struck me when I came here was the application blank. I remember [Tommie] Lou Smith, I believe it was, was the dean. And I told her, I said, “You know, your applications are racist.” And she said, “Why do you say that?” I said, “Though you say you don’t discriminate, you require a picture of students. Therefore, you can look at the picture and tell who’s black as a rule and who’s not.” In our class we had a couple of young ladies that you couldn’t tell whether they were black or not by looking at them. Marian White, Deborah Watts and there was another student, very fair-skinned. But they were very black.

The other thing that the school did, which was very racist, was all the blacks had to have black roommates. So they paired us together. And whoever the girl was who was supposed to be my roommate didn’t show. They wanted me to move in with another black girl. And we refused. So we had single rooms, and we just enjoyed it.

We refused to make it easy for them. So, I had a single room for—actually for a long time here—because they brought another young girl in to be my roommate named

[Mary] Best. I can't think of what her first name was. But she was quiet and stuck to herself, and I was in everything I could think of.

But that was the first hint that things were bad. Then we got into the classes, there were teachers that were just a pain in the ass. And I tell people all the time now, sometimes when I come here, I get real mad. Because they've named buildings after people that I know were racists. And I just get angry, because I know what they did to students when we were in class.

One of the things that [we] used to do, we kept a list of teachers who were fair and those who weren't. We circulated this among the students. And [we'd say], "Don't get this teacher, et cetera." Because we sort of figured out who wasn't going to give us a fair break.

Martha White, I believe her name was, a physical ed teacher. And that woman was as biased as anybody I had ever seen. I think they named something after her. Bruce Eberhart was the head of the department. He was biased. And they named a building [for him as well]. So I sit here, and I'm going, "Okay, whatever turns y'all on." But I know them from way back when. And they were not very fair people who helped us.

I think the thing that helped black students most was Chancellor [James S.] Ferguson. I got to know Chancellor Ferguson fairly well when I got involved with student government. And I was getting tired of the racism of these people. And finally, he just asked me at some point in time, I don't remember when, if I would be a part of the chancellor's cabinet. And that was the most amazing experience I had ever had.

[Chancellor Ferguson] was very open and honest and accepting of ideas from whomever and would flesh through them. So one day we had a talk. And I was talking about Mr. Casey. Mr. Casey taught Social Studies. Mr. Casey was a fool. And he did not like black folks in my opinion. A dog bit off his ear or something. That's what I remember about Mr. Casey.

And he would sit up there, and he would make all kinds of racist remarks in class about [how] black people weren't qualified because they weren't intellectually competent. Sounds almost like [William] Shockley stuff. I used to get tired of it. So I finally took a seat on the front row and brought my switchblade and cleaned my fingernails. And he quit making those remarks then [and didn't come to the last few classes]. [Mr. Casey] could take [my actions] for whatever he wanted to take it for.

HT: That was a brave thing to do.

AF: I didn't care. I mean after awhile you get to the point where you've had enough. And I got to the point very early where I had had enough. When I moved from Shaw Hall to Cone Hall, I can't remember what floor I moved on. But Cone Hall they ran out of money to paint it. So they gave the students paint and said you could paint your room, which was a lot of fun. And they had those concrete floors which were just dusty. You just couldn't get around the dust. So I went down to the corner grocery store, uh, oh, what's the street that runs beside Aycock?

HT: Tate Street.

AF: I went down to the Tate Street corner grocery store, and they had some bowling alley wax in there. I bought bowling alley wax and put it on the floor, and it cut all the dust and made the floor shine like a bowling alley. [Then], everybody in the dorm on my floor [started] buying bowling alley wax.

Oh, we had some interesting experiences. [Also early on, a dumpster was painted with a sign “Nigger Go Home.”] So, we had the best floor up there, because we didn’t have all the dust from the concrete that everybody else had.

It was there that Alyce Davis and Sybil Ray and Janice Brewer decided that they didn’t like my hair because it was curly. And they were going to straighten my hair. So they got a “Curl-free” kit and straightened my hair. I had long hair, but it was really straight and long then. And we got to talking amongst us about all the professors and all the racism, etc., that existed. Out of the discontent grew the desire to do something collectively, which ultimately led to the Neo-Black Society.

HT: We were wondering how that got started.

AF: Well, it got started pretty much, you know...one of the things you asked—I have all the papers at home. I have every document that [we] used to put it together. And it got started—I’m trying to think whether it officially was recognized after [Martin Luther] King, [Jr.] got killed or not.

But you asked [on your sheet of questions] about King and whatever. But really, the man that most of us identified with was Malcolm X. And I don’t remember what year he got killed, whether it was ’64 or whatever. But Malcolm X [was the man.] Most people had posters of Malcolm X in the dorm rooms.

We envisioned ourselves, I guess, as somewhat radical. And we were just tired of it. People didn’t treat us fairly. This was a hard place for black students. [And to think I’m going to donate all my papers to the school for their archives. This includes those from UNCG, poems, books, and political campaigns.]

When I came in ’66, I told you what our numbers were. But part of the problem was black folks didn’t like each other. And that’s part of the story that is never told honestly [and still isn’t]. There is a divide among black people based on color just as it [is with] hair texture—just as there have been whites to blacks.

I remember when I walked into the cafeteria the first day I thought, “Wow,” you could—I could see it. Nobody else might have noticed it. But I could tell that all the black kids who looked a certain way were on one side, and all the black kids who were not in that vernacular were isolated. So I decided I would speak to all of them. I didn’t care. It didn’t mean anything to me.

And, then, when—before you had King getting killed, we had issues with the cafeteria. You asked a question about the food. The food was excellent. I gained more dang weight that first year. I ate my fool head off here, because it was free, and [there] was lots of it. [Besides I paid for it, so I was going to eat it.]

UNCG has some things that I thought were unique and helpful. One of the things they used to have was tea. You’d have tea on Tuesdays with the chancellor. It was really nice, because you could go into the tea and sometimes you might have something to talk about with the chancellor. But they had petit fours and all kinds of little finger sandwiches. They had great [sweet] tea.

My second year, I think it was, they let you have refrigerators in the rooms. So, I used to carry my hat and fill them up with sandwiches and bring it back to fill up my refrigerator. And that was another opportunity when I first observed Chancellor Ferguson. I thought [to myself], “I really like this guy.”

We used to have compulsory Sunday—it wasn’t mass, but we had to go in Aycock Auditorium every Sunday. And you had to wear stockings and hats and gloves. And I said, “This crap’s got to go.” And that’s when I got in [Student Government Association] and said, “We’re going to change the dress code,” and that’s when I got—that was one of my first goals in student government was to get rid of that stupid dress code.

HT: So, you were an officer in student government?

AF: I ended up being an officer my junior year. I was *speaker pro tem*. Kids from [North Carolina] A&T [State University] were coming over to get hits on the meal tickets and realized that the food we had was better than the food they had. And they were supposed to be a state school. And so, they wanted to protest that.

The other thing that people wanted to protest was how we treated the maids here. And we treated these women abysmally. One of the things I learned [was that many] white folks are [just plain, pure] nasty. And that’s a generic statement, but it was true. You know, for years you had black and whites [with] separate bathrooms. When I got here I wished they had, because the girls in that dorm were nasty. They would leave sanitary napkins in the middle of the floor. And I’m going, “This stuff is uncalled for.” They wouldn’t clean the tub out after they’d taken a bath. And those poor maids had to put up with all of that stuff—just beyond what you would ask somebody to put up with. But [the maids] were always nice about it. [The maids] weren’t paid [much] money. So [we] wanted to have a protest. And the black students got together and said, “We want to protest.”

I never forget one of the first things you learn when you want to protest something is before you go take on an issue, you’d better ask the people involved with the issue [if you’re on the same page].

HT: Do you want to—

AF: No, I’m fine.

HT: Okay.

AF: I’m fine. And so, Thelma [McCoy]—I can’t remember what her [last] name was— but Thelma in the dorm said, “Listen, don’t y’all come in here starting no mess and mess up what we got. It might not be good [to you], but it’s better than what anybody else got. And leave us alone.” And I thought, “bingo.” That was a great learning lesson for the students in their vim, vigor and whatever to go out there and start a revolution—that before you start a revolution, you better make sure you understand what the people in the revolution [want]. What [we] wanted them to do was they wanted them to call them Mrs. McCoy or Mrs. that. And Thelma said, “I don’t give a damn what they call me as long as

they pay me.” And she said, “Give me more money and equal pay, and they can call me anything they want.” And I thought, “Wow, that’s great. That’s a good lesson for people to learn.”

Then after that I think Martin Luther King, [Jr.] got killed, and all over America people were trying to burn and tear down and pillage. The students were just upset. And the black students said, “We’re going to protest, and we’re going to burn down” something in Forney Hall or wherever they kept the transcripts.

I said, “If you touch that building, I’ll beat your butt. I worked too hard [for these grades. Don’t] y’all to go over there and mess up my transcript. [If you don’t like it here], you can go somewhere else, but don’t mess with my records, because I plan to get out of here. I don’t want to have to repeat a course. I don’t want anybody telling me [just to protest].” So, we had a big discussion in terms of what we should do.

There was some people who wanted to burn stuff down. And the kids from A&T, [along with] Nelson Johnson and Howard Fuller were adding fuel to the fire. And I said, “Hell, they don’t live here. They don’t go to school here. Why are y’all listening to these people?” So, I said, “Why don’t we arrange to go sit and talk with Chancellor Ferguson? Let’s go now.” And, so they all jumped up, and they went over to Chancellor Ferguson’s house and banged on the door.

I remember his wife, first wife, came to the door. She had on a [beautiful] white silk nightgown, very lovely lady. And he was walking along the rafter upstairs. He had on a pair of boxer shorts, [and] a T-shirt. He said, “Will you give me a minute to get [a robe on] to come down?” So he put his robe on, and he came down the steps. We must have had about thirty of us sitting in his living room. And that was a second instance where I learned something about him.

You know, [Dr. Ferguson] was able to diffuse the situation by sitting down and calmly talking. He said, “Okay, what is it you want? Do you want the day off from classes tomorrow? You can take it. No big deal.” And they were all prepared to kick somebody’s ass. And just knew that he wasn’t going to do anything to appease whatever it was. And his thing was, all of us feel this pain. Don’t take it upon yourself to feel like it’s just about you. This was a tragedy. It affects all of us.

I think part of the reason he took it [appropriately] was he was a historian. And he was able to stand back and take a historical perspective of what was happening. And [as we prepared to leave] there, in his graciousness he said, “Look, let’s set up a series of meetings. And you come to me and tell me what your issues are. And let’s discuss them.” And that was the first time, I think, collectively people felt that they had been heard.

Well as a result of that, people also knew they’d better get their self together and have an agenda. And that is partly what led also to the Neo-Black Society.

At that time Betty Cheek was the first president of the Neo-Black Society. Her sister, Yvonne Cheek, was in the graduate School of Music. She was here. The other people who were behind [the group] were Alyce Davis, I think it’s A-L-Y-C-E, you had Janice Brewer, Sybil Ray—

HT: What’s that last name?

AF: Sybil Ray, R-A-Y. Sybil S-Y-B-I-L, Marie Darr. Myrtle Goore. And I’ve got a list of who else was there. I’ve got a whole [history]—and, so, in order to [select] the name [for

the organization, it] got to be really interesting. We tried to figure out what to call ourselves. And Neo-Black [Society] came about because we didn't want to be African-American this, that, or the other. We wanted to be typified as a group of new black thinkers. And so, Neo, means new, Black Society. And that's the name that stuck. The next challenge with the Neo-Black Society [was] to get the organization recognized on campus so that you had all the rights and privileges of any other organization, which included funding, office space, meeting rooms and that kind of stuff. The people in the student union didn't want the black students to get any of that. So I said, "Let's do it differently. Let's work it from the student legislature."

I wrote the charter. And all of the things that came about, I wrote it and figured out how to—let's put it like this, I wrote the final draft that I presented [to the black students] because I understood the political ramifications of what they were trying to do. [I knew SGA. I had a coalition of votes in SGA I could count on including Lindsay Lamson and Erskine Walthers]. The [black students] wanted it to be an all-black society. I said, "You can't do that with state money. If you're going to take state money, you don't want to set it up so that it may ultimately [be challenged. It may] end up being all black, but you don't want it set up so it's a discriminatory society."

One of the things that whites don't understand, even to this day, who talk about historical black universities and whether they have a role, is that in the history of black existence black folks have always had institutions. And they weren't segregated. They were separated. And there's a big difference in thinking in those kinds of things.

What we wanted is to be able to sit among ourselves and talk without being inhibited or whatever. And we felt that having white students in the organization would counter that. But the people in the student government said that if you did that, then you couldn't be part of the campus. And we knew that was bullshit, because they had all these white organizations that didn't have black folks in them. So, we felt that that was non-valid [or bogus claim].

We had a lot of people from the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] on campus then. And—

HT: For what purpose?

AF: Oh, people [were] spying on protestors all over the campus. It wasn't just here. It was UNCG. It was A&T, et cetera. They would come to meetings and take pictures of folks. And it wasn't just paranoia. They were here.

And, so, the way we wrote the charter it required that you had to do a certain amount of service, and you had to attend meetings. Now, we knew white students weren't going to do that. Hell, we had trouble getting black students to do that too. But anyway, we had enough of us involved. Because some of the kids were involved in tutoring and stuff like that; they had a history of service. And that's how it got passed.

HT: Was this in the spring semester of 1968 when all this got started, the Neo-Black Society?

AF: I don't know. I'd have to go back and look at the records for accuracy. But as I said, I have all the stuff in my boxes at home. It's just a matter of trying to unpack some of the stuff and figure out where it was. And I have all the SGA notes and all that stuff because

I knew that [we] were [making history]. [This information was historical.] One of the things that the students wanted to do is have black courses like African-American history, et cetera, on campus. And they wanted a separate department. And I said, “No, we’re not going to have a separate department.” I was the—I was the—I don’t know what I was. I gave black folks hell, and I gave white folks hell. So, I guess I don’t know what I was.

HT: You were an equal-opportunity—

AF: Yeah, equal-opportunity hellion. And so, my thought was [do] a survey of 110 colleges and universities that had African-American history departments. I have all those papers too. And I left a copy up there, and I don’t know what happen to them over the years. Because I gave a copy—the Neo-Black Society and its files had copies of all the papers. And I think I have the originals.

But the survey was really interesting. When you look at the history of the black history departments, many of them didn’t [survive] past five years. And the reason they didn’t live past five years was that they were always elective[s]. Nobody was going to elect to go to an African-American history department, if it wasn’t vital to their degree. [Folks didn’t have that much time to waste.] So I told the students, “if you’re going to do it, you have to make the courses an essential substitution or elective to getting a degree.”

I said if you have an African-American history [course], for example, you want to keep it in the history department. Because the students can, then, use it as an elective in history. Whereas, if you have it in the African-American Department, you don’t have to do anything with that African-American Department to get out of here. And, so, then they wanted a course in black economics. I said, “Hell, I don’t. We know we[’re] po’. What we need to figure out is how to get rich like white folks. So why would you want a course in black economics?” So they didn’t like me for saying that, but that’s how I felt. Still feel that way.

Then they had—the other one they wanted was music. And I was a big pusher of the music. I had gone to a conference that talked about musical forms in the United States. And of the great musical forms in this country, all of them came from black society [except one]. Rock n roll, gospel [jazz and country]. The only thing that didn’t come from [us was classical music]. There were two other things. The only thing that [many think] didn’t come from black society was country music. [But] it has its roots in some of it. [Remember the banjo came from Africa.] Classical music [doesn’t register us before the 1800s]. Other than that, if you go through the history, most of the music [in this nation] comes from Africa and African-American experience.

[recorder turned off for break]

AF: Okay, where was I?

HT: You were talking about the various types of music.

AF: Oh, and I went to—and I can’t remember where I was. But I was struck.

And I cannot think of what the man's name that played the cello—Crutchfield. He came, and we brought—three [other] people. The African-American history course started first. And Dr. [Richard] Bardolph wanted to teach it. He thought he was the world expert on black folks. And we said, “This ain't going to work.” And so, they brought—I mean [Bardolph] was a nice man, but the black part of it was they wanted black faculty. And we didn't have any black faculty anywhere [other than in labs]. We had a lady down in the science lab. But she didn't have the same level of recognition that some of them would have.

And, so, they brought a guy in history. I cannot think of what his name was. But I [co-]wrote the first course that they taught. I wrote the outline for it.

My father was a historian, [as was] my mother. So I knew what I was doing. And I said, “These are the things we want to cover.” The [other] students had input. And they didn't really have too much different to add. We wanted—and that was the first course. I can't think who the first teacher was, but I'm sure I have it in the papers that I have. And then we wanted something with music. And then we wanted—there was one other discipline—oh, social studies, social work or something like that.

[They] then brought in Dr. Joseph Himes. I [had known] Dr. Himes well. He used to live right across from Hillside High School where I went to high school. His wife, Estelle Himes, taught French at [North Carolina Central [University]]. And he taught history [there as well]. In many ways I thought that [bringing them to UNCG] was a tragedy because the other thing you saw when you have black faculty come to white schools, you deprive black schools of faculty. You don't want to limit people's opportunities, but Dr. Himes was such a presence at Central that he left a void at Central when he came here. He added immensely. His wife, Estelle, was a very nice lady. I knew her well. And I don't know whether she taught French here or not. But she was very good at what she did. But these were all friends of my family for a long time.

And Dr. [Elaine] Burgess taught social something here. I think she taught social studies. And she wrote a book about black folks. And in her book and Dr. Bardolph's book they talked about my father [and his historical meaning to African-American life and history. Bardolph talked] about black bourgeoisie. My father definitely wasn't black bourgeoisie. He was [a] very prominent black man, but he never held himself separate. In the black community bourgeois, those people who don't have anything to do with the common, ordinary people. And that definitely wasn't my father. [In] Dr. Bardolph's book, I think, he talked about my father because when [many black] people talk today, they talk in terms of their fifth, sixth generation descendants of slaves. My grandfather was a slave. So my father was a son of a slave. And I am the granddaughter of a slave. So that's a tremendous difference.

That pretty much [summed up] the coursework with what the Neo-Black Society was trying to do. It was good for the black students, because when you come to a white institution, unless you are the exception, you don't get—and there's this concept of black exceptionality, where people say, “You're not like every other black person.” I get so damn tired of hearing it, I don't know what to do. “Well, you're different.” “I'm no different than anybody else. I just happen to be born into a family that allowed me some opportunities that other people might not have had.”

When you have your own organizations, you get to be president of an organization. You get to be secretary. You get to be treasurer. And you learn some skills that you might not get otherwise.

When I was here, I was trying to think if we had any other blacks in student government but me initially. And I don't think we did. So getting elected in these organizations [was a coup. People claw their way for this], people are really born for, and [knew it looked] good on a resume. We [don't] have most black people understanding resume [enhancement] and joining stuff for the resume. [It is one way we fail to understand networking and some of the unwritten rules of the game. (Another book I've written.)]

[recording stopped, then started again]

AF: And so it was a little bit different in terms of what you got to see. I got to play in an arena that many of the students did not get to play. Some of it was the force of my personality. But a lot of it had to do with my friendships. I got the people that I really, genuinely liked. And I think they liked me. They made an important difference in my life.

When I came here I wanted to be a doctor. I always knew from a little kid that I was going to be a doctor. And I just didn't know how I was going to get there and how I was going to pay for it.

UNCG had a pre-med committee. And that pre-med committee had to write letters of recommendation for you, or at least that's what they thought. And there was a lady, [Dr. Hilda Harper with her] white hair. She taught biology. And she—and I'll never forget. She asked me what I wanted to do. And I said, "I want to be a doctor." She said, "I'm not going to approve you to be a doctor. And you've got to come through the committee to get a letter of recommendation." And so I knew then from my freshman year that my path to getting what I wanted couldn't be the same because she's already laid out for me that she was not going to allow me to do this. [I also learned not to broadcast what you plan to do to prevent detractors from having the upper hand.]

I was very fortunate to have some professors who looked beyond some things and said, "Okay, we're going to do something different." But that lady was a pain in my ass the whole [time I was here for. Dr. Harper] taught vertebrate morphogenesis. And she was a pain in my ass the whole time.

When I got ready to go to med school, I applied to schools [side stepping the pre-med committee]. I asked four people to write letters of recommendation. And those were the four most important letters that were ever written in terms of my being able to get into med school.

One of the letters came from Dr. [Anna Joyce] Reardon, who taught physics. The other one came from Elizabeth Bowles, who had been my education advisor. The third one came from Hollis Rogers. And the fourth one came from Dr. [Anne F.] Baecker. And let me tell you why they were important.

I didn't know that Dr. Reardon was probably the first woman with a PhD in physics [in the South]. So everybody in the country knew her. When she wrote a letter of recommendation, people paid attention to it because of who she was. I got a C in physics.

Might have gotten a B and a C. But I wasn't an outstanding student, [just] a hard working, [dedicated one]. [I'll] never forget one of the things we did in her class and Dr. Harper's was something that we did in med school. We took the muscles of a frog, and they had those old black drums. You were looking for the action potential of the muscles. Well, that's one of the first things we did in med school. I just laughed. I said, "Boy, this is Doctor Reardon all over again."

The second letter came from Dr. Bowles. Dr. Bowles used to get upset with me for cussing all the time. And I said, "If you had been through what I've been through, hell, you'd have to cuss." And she—I think I tended to say "crap." And I said, "Well, it's better than shit." So she says she just decided, "Okay, I'll take the crap, then." And she reminded me of that every time I saw her.

The third person was Hollis Rogers. And as I told you, he taught the terrestrial ecology course, which was probably one of the two best courses I've had. Remind me to tell you about the second best one. And Dr. Rogers had written the BSCS [Biological Sciences Curriculum Study] Green book in Biology, which was used all over the country. So again, I had another professor write a letter of recommendation who had connections all over the country. And people were impressed.

And the fourth letter I got was from Dr. Anne Baecker, [my German professor]. I just liked Dr. Baecker.

My family are linguistic experts. [It was] all I could do to speak English. And I used to stutter a little bit so that I have no skills or faculty for foreign languages at all. And when I came here, UNCG had a requirement that you had to have three years of a foreign language or you had to take three years [before] you came here. Well, I had three years of French. But I took them in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades, and I didn't have a language in the twelfth grade. And, again, they wanted to read me the riot act and say I had to take three years of foreign language.

Well, I knew if I had to take three years of foreign language, I would never get out of here, because I can't do foreign languages. And I knew I couldn't do French. I couldn't get the plusa perfect, the plusa [par perfect] and all that crap straight. That just wasn't my thing.

So I decided I was going to take German because somebody told me that German is something that you need in med school. Biggest lie ever told. But I took it the first year.

Dr. Baecker taught it the first year. I got a B. No, I got a C and a D. And one of the things that she realized right off the bat was that I had one of the highest scores ever made on a [German] standardized test. I could read German. I could interpret it. But I could not speak it.

The second year I took German under her, and I think I got a D. And then the second semester she wasn't teaching it. And I had to take it under this crazy guy [this blonde with black rimmed glasses who looked like a stereotype for Nazis]. And, anyway, it was my junior year. And this German professor [found out] I was going to run for president of the SGA, and I was [likely] going to win. I was very well known [as well as a relatively] popular student. And this guy told me if I ran for president—I would have been the first black president of SGA. He said, "If you run, you're going to win. And we're not going to have any niggers up there as president of SGA. And if you run and if you win, you will flunk my course."

I said, “Damn. Whoa.” And so I went in and I talked to Dr. Baecker. And I told her what happened. And I said, “You know, I’m going to drop this course, because I’m not going to deal with this guy.” She said, “Well, I’m teaching it next year, your senior year. You sign up for it.” And so I took it my senior year under her. I [ended up with] a C and three Ds [in German], and that’s all I had to have to pass the course. I got the hell out of here with that.

I [had] to have the lowest averages that’ve ever been achieved to get into med school. But I also happen to have the best letters of recommendation that probably were ever written. I’m very verbal. So, I asked for an interview [for] I knew I could talk my way into it.

[After] I went to UNCG—I went from here to the [University of] Wisconsin at Madison. I remember one of the people on their admissions committee asked me, “Where did I get these people who wrote the letters of recommendation?” They said the committee was so impressed [and my essay was great]. I never saw the letters of recommendation. Never asked [to see] them. And they said, “You were so impressive.”

They asked me why should I be admitted to med school. And I said, “Because if you don’t admit me, you’ll miss the best doctor out there. Nobody else will serve people like I will. They’ll talk the crap, but I will get there and work for people and serve people.”

HT: What made you choose to apply to the University of Wisconsin?

AF: Well, there was several things. It was as far away from home as I could get.

HT: And very cold.

AF: I didn’t realize how cold it was. And they were looking for black students. And I wanted to be a doctor. So they got their black student, and I got my doctorate. [We] made a trade off. And—

HT: Did you apply for a scholarship and get it?

AF: No, they told me if I came there—with my grades—I graduated with a 2.2 or maybe a 2.3 from UNCG. And I had a 2.0 in my major. So—and I don’t hesitate to tell kids that, because they think that because they don’t have the grades they can’t do it. If you believe it, stick with it. You keep fighting for it until you find somebody that will take you. Wisconsin was a different kind of school. Had I not gone to UNCG, I would not have been able to go to Wisconsin. Wisconsin was a school [which] gave short answer and essay tests. And that’s what I’m good at, talking. And UNCG is a school—was a school—it probably isn’t now, but when I came through there were a lot of short answer and essay. I can talk, and I can write. And so that allowed me to do some things that I would not have been able to do otherwise.

Wisconsin’s [med school] was very racist [as well]. I mean, you know, being a—I was the first black woman there. Being a pioneer ain’t easy. And we were—I don’t think today’s young people could have done or withstood what we did. Because, number one, these kids won’t put up with it. For you to have bombings and whatever I had left and

right. If they had to put up with some of the stuff that we had to put up with. But, you know, Wisconsin was great [in retrospect]. And the interesting thing was the patients in Wisconsin came from a lot of the rural areas where they spoke German. So, German came in very handy, because I could often understand what people were saying from the hinterlands is what I used to call that.

HT: What was the University of Wisconsin, Madison?

AF: Madison, the radical campus.

HT: Even in those days it was a very big school.

AF: It was—well, when I went, there were 36,000 students. And in the med school we had a class size was about 100, and the second year I was there they upped it to 114. So it was always a big school. They had more students than many small cities in North Carolina have. So, it was a huge school.

People used to say, “Do you know so and so and so? They go to the University of Wisconsin.” I’m going, “Do you know how many students are in the University of Wisconsin?” The thing about Wisconsin was if you were in medicine, most of your buildings were right there together. So you didn’t really have contact with the rest of the campus. And when I was here, the beauty of UNCG was it was small. It was intimate. You get to know a lot of people here. Now there were too many students for my taste.

When I came here in ’67, I believe they allowed the first males in. And they—many of the men were gay. And still are probably. But the men and black students had a common enemy: white women. Because we weren’t treated well by—they didn’t treat the men well, and they didn’t treat the black students well. So, we got along well.

HT: The ratio, I think, is about 30 percent male on campus now and 70 percent women thereabout.

AF: And, you know, it’s interesting to me that the biggest jump in minorities on campus was with Ferguson. The percentage hasn’t changed that much. He did a lot to make it so that it was a comfortable campus. In one of the *USA Today*’s they did an article, and it says that UNCG had the best graduation rate for black women. It was 84 percent. But black men it was like 27 percent. They used to eat them up alive around here.

HT: What do you think caused that?

AF: Well, there’s still a lot of the Woman’s College tradition. The prim and proper [female]—I go to places as a Republican all over the state. And I’ll meet women and I say, “You went to UNCG.” And they say, “How do you know?” I say, “Because you have that UNCG look. There’s not a hair out of place. You got your pearls and whatever.” And women prior to 1960, they [are] always impeccably groomed, and I admired that. That just [ain’t] me. But I admired it.

I mean, you know, I see them all the time. And they just laugh. I say, "I went to UNCG. I was [in] the rebellious group that came through there." But I can always tell UNCG women. They were very classy, very classy.

HT: I have a quick question for you. It's a little bit off of topic. Ever heard something called the black stocking girls on campus?

AF: No.

HT: We've heard that expression. I think it must have been in the late fifties and early sixties, and they usually were the artsy group that lived in Guilford or New Guilford.

AF: Well, when I was here, most of the women, they were gay in the physical ed department. And so, they all had that very mannish look with the short hair cuts, very stereotypical designation of gay women. They called them butch, dikes or whatever. And they were in their own world; they didn't care. And then they had—but they were very [smart]—physical ed was no joke here. It was one of the hardest majors, because of the science requirements and things that they had there. [Faculty] in that department [were weird]. And, you know, I let them do their thing, and I didn't pay them any mind. I just went ahead and did my thing. That was a big divide.

Then you had a bunch of—the other person who—the other thing that used to get on my nerves at UNCG were the honors classes. Because we didn't get many blacks into the honors program. And when I looked at the curriculum they had, they didn't work as hard as we did. They had these fun soirees and poetic discussions and discourse. And we were busting our butts up in the library.

Fred Chappell was banging every girl he could on campus. And when I saw all the stuff that goes on. I remember all these kids coming back. They used to be at his house until eleven, twelve o'clock at night coming in late to the dorm, out drinking and whatever. And black students didn't have that luxury. We didn't get the same kind of inclusion in some of the things that were going on to the same degree.

Now Betty Cheek was an art major, and Yvonne Cheek was a music education major. There was another young lady who sang. I can't think of what her name is. And she was in her own world, too. Wilsonia Cherry [in my class] was a trip. Wilsonia Cherry probably was one of the most intellectual, gifted young women here. She majored in romantic English literature or Chaucer or some esoteric thing to the nth degree. And she just did her thing. Now, Wilsonia Cherry was included in a lot of stuff. But stuff didn't stick to Wilsonia like it did to some other folk. She made a niche, and she went at it. And the rest of the world could pass her by, and she didn't care. And so she adapted quite well.

A lot of kids did not adapt well. Miriam White was one of the most gorgeous young women. In my junior year she ran for the beauty queen for the class. She didn't get it because the black students didn't vote for her. And again, it goes back to that color thing even among black folks. They just thought that she thought she was white. Deborah Watts, who came here with me from Hillside High School, [was very fair skinned]. There were four of us [from my high school class]: Deborah Watts, Kathy Jordan, Noma Bennett, N-O-M-A, and myself, who came from Hillside. I introduced [Deborah] to my

English teaching assistant, who was Robert Hill, a white boy from the mountains of Walnut Cove, [North Carolina]. They fell in love and got married. And Deborah was pregnant and dropped out of school. I stayed on Deborah's case for years. And she eventually came back to school and got her degree, then got her master's degree from Bryn Mawr [College], I think. And Bob taught here, and I think he got a PhD from somewhere.

But that was the talk of the town in Durham, North Carolina, when she married a white boy. And I told them, "He's a good guy." He was my English assistant, and he did a good job. He was a nice guy. And he made her a good husband.

But, then, there was—the guys that we had here. The first SGA president, if you haven't brought him in to talk to him, you need to. That's Lindsay Lamson.

HT: I've heard the name, but I think you mentioned—?

AF: What?

HT: —you mentioned a lot of these names to Betty [Carter].

AF: Well, Lindsay Lamson was the first male UNCG president. He was the president in 1970-71. And I was in love with Lindsay Lamson, [which] was quite interesting, because I had never dealt with white folks on the intimate level much less an intellectual level until I got here. And he and I are still good friends to this day.

I almost married him. He wanted to marry me. But there was something about Lindsay that drove me crazy. And my concerns proved true over time. He's just as gay as he can be. I told him, I said, "Lindsay, as much as I love you if I ever found you with a man I would make a eunuch out of you. I don't play that crap. And so we need to just be friends. And let's let it stay at that."

But he was a very gifted and talented man. I said, "Why would you want to marry me? You could be"—that guy could have been governor of North Carolina. And I told him, "You can't be governor of North Carolina with a black wife. [There] ain't [sic] no ifs, ands and buts about it. I think that your gifts and talents are such that it's more important that you pursue them rather than to pursue me." But he's a good guy [and I miss his friendship dearly]. There's no doubt about it.

HT: Where does he live now?

AF: He lives in two places. He has a real estate business in Denver, Colorado. as well as in San Francisco, [California]. And he's got plenty money. [If] he ain't giving you no money, you ought to go find him and ask him for it. He's got plenty of it.

HT: I'll let the development officer worry about that. Oh, gosh.

AF: Well, I'm surprised in all of its doing that they have never asked him, because he's an important part of the history of the school. I was his campaign manager and got him elected [SGA president]. When he found out that I wasn't running for SGA president [in my junior year], he started a write-in campaign. He said I only lost by three votes. And I

said, "Thank God. If you had done that I would have never gotten out of this school." But, you know, we were dear friends and still are.

He's a great guy, and he was one of the loves of my life. He still is a good friend. And he's somebody you ought to interview. Lindsay's experiences as one of the early males was different. Lindsay was a town student and didn't live on campus. And so you had a different group of students; many of the town students were married or in from the surrounding areas. The men who lived on campus lived in Phillips Dorm.

One of my good friends, I haven't seen him in a long time, would love to see him, was Raphael Rivera, who was from Puerto Rico. He was one of the early [male] students, too. He would be an interesting guy [to speak with] because he has to be probably one of the first Spanish-speaking students to come to the university. But he was a nice young man.

HT: Do you know—does he live in California?

AF: You know, I saw something in the alumni thing that says he lived in High Point, [North Carolina].

HT: Okay.

AF: But I thought I remembered that his daddy owned a couple of the Ron Rico plantations—rum plantations—down in Puerto Rico. But he was a great guy. I liked Raphael. All the women were hot to trot on Ralph. They were after him. He had more women chasing him than Carter's got liver pills.

HT: Oh, let me see. Well, I know you were voted an Outstanding Senior during your senior year. I saw that in the yearbook.

AF: Yeah.

HT: Can you tell me about that experience?

AF: There's nothing to tell. That's what I [was] voted, so I took a picture [among the trees. I was a biology major and loved nature]. The senior year was probably one of my most fun years. I had pretty much wrapped up all of my requirements, and that was when I finally knew I was going to graduate. The first three years it was in doubt. But the senior year I had most of the stuff in place that I needed to do. And I was just having fun.

[I] finished my basic degree requirements in three and a half years. So the second semester, I did education. It's the only time I ever made Dean's List. I got a 4.0 in Education. [I was an excellent] teacher [and still am]. I volunteered to teach, and all the kids like my style. It's more of an [Aristotelian] and Socratic method where I like to ask people questions and get them to think and use the information that they have at hand to come to some understanding of what's being asked. [I'm good at teaching critical thinking.] One of the first things I began to understand here is how you think about things in terms of testing, [synthesizing academic information], etcetera. And that is the thing

that kills black students and other minority students. [Many] really don't understand the whole process. Now, if you understand the process, then education is not difficult.

When I got to Wisconsin I had a lot of trouble in med school because I didn't understand the process [at that level]. It took me almost two years to figure out the process of testing and how people ask questions and what they're trying to ask. I remember the first year at med school, I flunked just about everything they offered. And one of my friends [who taught microbiology, Dr.] June Osborne, who was one of the developers of Interferon, said, "You can't be that stupid. I've had you [in my class], and I've talked to you. I [know] that you understand the subject matter. So, what is the difficulty?"

They looked at it and found that when I did multiple-choice tests, I flunked. But if you asked me an essay or a written test, I did quite well. And it's like if you ask me a question about the grass is green, why is it green? My response would be, "Are you talking about the color green? Is it the chlorophyll?" I read too much into the possibilities. I'm always [thinking subconsciously,] "This is a trick question. They're trying to trick me." In [so] doing, I misread what [was] being asked in the question. [Dr. June Osborne] suggested that the medical school give me [an oral] exam. And I aced them.

[In thinking back on it], one of the values of that is had I not come to UNCG I might not have finished [medical] school, because we had a lot of short answer and essay tests [here]. If I had been in a school where it was all multiple-choice tests, I would have had a hell of a problem. I always worried that when it came time to doing the [medical] board exams, I was going to get screwed because the board exams are pretty much multiple choice.

I did get through the board exams for New York. I [first] got [a medical] license in New York. Then I got a license in six other states by reciprocity. But, you know, as I said, I hated UNCG when I was here. But looking back on it, it was good training for what came after, as was being born in a parsonage. I hated being a preacher's kid. But you learn a lot, and you see a lot that lends itself to other experiences if you're flexible and adaptable.

HT: Well, if we go back to the Neo-Black Society—

AF: Right.

HT: Can you tell me a little bit more about Betty and Yvonne Cheek and how they fit in, all the Neo-Black Society?

AF: Betty and Yvonne Cheek were sisters. And Betty Cheek was—I think she [was] an art major. She is a curator at the North Carolina Art Museum in Raleigh. And she's been there for—I don't know, for years. Betty has been there a long time. [Yvonne was the older, but didn't get her undergraduate degree here.]

And they just wanted to kick butt. [As awful as] everybody was—everybody [black] who came to UNCG was angry with how they were treated at UNCG.

[It was an angry time. Blacks were still being persecuted. Our education didn't shelter us, but made us more aware of our mistreatment and made our anger often turn to

outrage. I tried never to let folks see me sweat.] And that may account for why the students in the early years don't participate in alumni affairs, et cetera, because we remember it as being so unfair.

And I think that Betsy Culbertson is the—she was the secretary of the Department of Interior. She finished after Betty. But [I think] Betty was better qualified than she was [though probably not as politically connected]. Now, I don't know if Betty applied for that job and didn't get it or what. But all through our lives those people who were in the early protests [or stood against wrong] realized they didn't reap any benefits from having been pioneer trailblazers [against injustice]. Some of the kids after us got the benefits.

Many of the kids who were early protestors got prison records. And because they had prison records, they couldn't get the jobs they fought for—for everybody else. Yvonne, as I told you, majored in music. And she married a guy named Johnson. He was a student at A&T—good looking dude, ooh, Lord, everybody was hot on him. But she got him first. And they were married for awhile. They are divorced. And I just got a card from her. She lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. And she was at the Hubert Humphrey Institute. And as you can see by knowing where all these people were, we were friends. And we kept in touch.

Myrtle Goore finished med school. She was a doctor in Alabama last time I heard. Marie Darr is right here in Greensboro. And Marie and I were roommates on the German floor of Shaw Hall for awhile. Noma Bennett, who came here with me from Hillside High School—she stayed two years, and she couldn't deal with it, so she left. [Noma] went to Hampton [University], finished Hampton and got a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh, I think in speech pathology. And she is now the dean of allied health [sciences] for Florida International University. [She just accepted the same position at the University of Tennessee at Memphis.]

HT: Did you ever think about leaving during your four years here?

AF: Yes, wanted to leave all the time, but because my grades were so bad I wasn't going anywhere. [And I couldn't transfer without losing my credits. I couldn't afford another school.] And [so] I called my mother and my father; they weren't going to support me going anywhere else. You know, money was an issue because I was paying for this. I realized if I had pulled out and gone elsewhere, I need[ed] the money that they were getting from me [for Social Security]. They needed the money to live on.

The reason I stayed [and endured] was because of Chancellor Ferguson. He told me in one of our conversations that if I could prove that people were racist that he would have them removed or would not grant them tenure. And he told me the criteria by which you judge faculty. He also taught me how to play the game. And that was probably the most useful lesson I got from him.

[Dr. Ferguson] said, "If you want to fight injustice, you have to do it smartly." And so he gave me some hints and guidelines that were very helpful, like documenting your case. [We had an instructor], Mr. Casey, the guy that I took the switchblade to class [sitting there cleaning my nails], I documented him left and right and sideways. And I don't think he came back after that year. There were several other faculty members [whose case I was on]. I'm sure that may be in the pile of papers I will donate. I just documented incidences of how—not through their direct actions, but [with a racial

impact]. For example, if you gave a test and that followed in med school, too. What we found is that some people graded on the curve. If all the black students were in the top of the curve, everybody passed the test. But if the black students were in the bottom of the curve, they drew the line [above] the black students. You saw things like that. And you know what that is.

Of course, they say, “Well, they didn’t pass.” But that’s just not what it is. If everybody passes when we are in the top of the curve, and only [blacks] not pass when we’re in the bottom of the curve, that’s an example of how racism impinges [in obviously subtle ways]. And in the community of Durham, and even Salisbury, I was talking to somebody about UNCG. They said, “Girl, you had to be tough, because everybody who was black knew that UNCG was tough on black folks. A lot of kids didn’t even bother to apply because they knew its reputation of being so tough on black folks. But as I said, Chancellor Ferguson helped me work through a lot of things.

When Lindsay got to be president of student government, they gave that boy hell. And I had to come back one time [for] a meeting with him and Ferguson and some other people about some of the [campus “BS”].

Lindsay was a nice guy. He didn’t know how to kick ass, and you had to kick ass, [which] I’m good at it. He [had a] sweet disposition [and was a non-confrontational] kind of person.

You had to sit down and lay out some of the strategies. And I’m good at strategically figuring out what the question is that you need to ask to get to the heart of the issue. Many people, you know, they used to tell us in class there is no such thing as a dumb question. No, but there is a wrong question. And many people ask the wrong question. You’ve got to figure out how to ask the [right] question that is the heart and the crux of the issue. Most folks don’t know how to do that, because they don’t have the ability to see the broader picture. [My parents came at this in a different way and also had taught us to think for ourselves. She’d say if every fool jumped off a bridge, will you jump too?]

I think that’s what Dr. Ferguson helped with. Having had that historical perspective, he could stand back and say, “If you look at history, X, Y, Z happens, and this is why.” And he’s right. I mean, you know, now I’m surprised at how much of the book that I’m working on—I went back in history and looked at some of the presidents. In fifty years Richard Nixon will go down as one of the greatest presidents the United States has ever had. As crazy as he was, he did all the right things. Doesn’t matter why he did them. He opened the doors to China. He did a lot of other things that people are now going, “Whoa, this man had some insight into what was going on.”

And Betty and Yvonne Cheek were two of the power players. I mean Betty was willing to put herself out there as the president of the Neo-Black Society. It wasn’t really the president. It was the chairman. We didn’t have a president.

HT: Was she the first chair?

AF: [We used chairs and had four of them to take the pressure and focus off of one person. We didn’t want a HNIC [Head Negro In Charge]. Betty was the first chair. And the reason we did that, I wanted to get away from the concept of presidency and insisted that we have chairmen, and then we have each person [in charge of a major concern like]

curriculum, students, [welfare]—the focus that we had was to retain people and make sure they got a degree. It wasn't the choir [and] all that stuff. We didn't even have a choir [or band] when I was here. We were trying to figure out how to help students negotiate this system [and get the hell out without losing themselves].

HT: Where did you meet?

AF: We had, you know, we had privileges. So, we meet somewhere in Elliott [Hall].

HT: In Elliott?

AF: [The student union] building. We had meeting rooms throughout. We posted the meetings, and we had some office space. Most of us kept the records in a file [in our room]. And I guess I kept most of the records for the two years I was here. And then, when I left, I left them [in the bottom drawer] in a file.

And then Linda Kelly was the next president. Linda Kelly is in Connecticut. She used to be the general counsel for a life insurance company [there]. I don't know what Linda Kelly is doing now. But she's still in Connecticut. And her parents lived in Salisbury. I saw her in Salisbury.

Linda Kelly thought I was an "Uncle Tom." And I guess the worst thing that happened to me is when I graduated, she sent me anonymously—but I knew from the post office—this [news article] with half my face colored black and the other half of it was white. [That hurt but I've never said this until now.]

One of the things I guess that having grown up in the parsonage taught is whether you want something to have a sustaining impact—I designed the Neo-Black Society to have a sustaining impact, not just to be there for the kids [of my cohort group], but to be a way for kids to come here and succeed [into the future]. Based on my experience looking at what kept us from succeeding, for those who went home [or were having problems], [we tried] to build [solutions] in to the Neo-Black Society.

The fact that [the Neo-Black Society is] still here suggests that we had the right idea. It wasn't a popular thing [then] because people wanted to go kick somebody's ass and do something. And I'm not—I ain't [sic] got time for that. You know? All I want[ed] to do is get my degree and get the hell out of here. My brother told me all the time, "My daddy never lost a fight," but he picked his fights very carefully. So, what I was trying to teach kids is, pick your fights carefully. There are some things that though you may get incensed about them, they ain't [sic] worth it. I guess the same thing goes for [some aspects of] Civil Rights [efforts].

Martin Luther King was never my hero. My heroes were Malcolm X and Whitney Young. Whitney Young used to say, "What good is it to sit in the cafeteria when you don't have the money to buy the food?" And that's where we are now. People have all these rights, but they don't have the money to enjoy it. Economic security is the most important thing that you can do.

I tell people all the time there used to be a sign going into the Elliott University Center that says, "If you educate a woman, you educate a family." People don't understand that. [Particularly traditional] families are disintegrating. Miss [Harriet] Elliott understood that the basis of the society has always been the family. The family is coming

under attack right now. Girls don't want to get married. Boys don't want to get married. Gay folks want to be married. But the traditional sense of family is being lost. And that is [an attack on] the underpinnings of society.

HT: Do you recall a big moment or several big moments why you remember the Neo-Black Society?

AF: In terms of?

HT: Well—

AF: Well, there are lots of things. I mean I talked about the maid issue where people wanted to protest them calling maids by their first names, and the maids—told you what the maids said. The cafeteria mess was a big moment. I have a jilted view of the Civil Rights struggle [from being here]. There was the Communist thing where people got killed in Greensboro.

HT: That was 1979, yes.

AF: No, there was some other mess before then that happened on campus, because I know Nelson Johnson—

HT: Is that the ARA strike, maybe?

AF: I don't know. But I remember some stuff getting started then. And my biggest disgust with it is that the men in the Civil Rights protest, black men, seemed to believe that the only place for women was prone. And that [we] were supposed to succumb to their whatevers. And I just thought, "This is a bunch of crap. They just want a piece of tail and forget it." In terms of UNCG, [we were] so advantaged compared to any other school in this state. And they really were, because women who finished [here had] a surprising number of them marrying the guys who [were] at State and Carolina who would be in the state legislature. Women really did have the power and advantage.

I think [Richard L.] "Skip" Moore was probably the first to recognize that when he was the director of development. When we started the first annual giving, I was on the alumni board then. And they said, "Women won't give any money because it's just a bunch of housewives and women." And so Skip set about doing surveys and stuff. And they told him that the school could only raise \$20 million. And in the first capital fundraiser, they raised \$55 million in a little bit under [three] years. They extended [the drive five years in which they raised] \$65 million. Over 90 percent of the money came from women from [what was termed] pin money. And he understood the power that these women had because they were in control of their families and really the family money. I guess that was—that was one of the views of women that changed.

The men in the Civil Rights group back then did not have that group [of women helping. The dilettantes enjoyed "the movement."]

I'm sure if I look through the notes I'll have other thoughts about it. But right now [I've] got [a book] and all that stuff intervening, [which] sort of blocks out some of

that stuff. I'm a good compartmentalizer. I had to think coming out here, and that's why I was late. I missed a turn because I was thinking about something and wasn't paying attention to the streets.

I do also know that they used to have "mixers." And the mixers were designed, because we had "no men" on campus. They would import the guys from Carolina and State over here to be escorts, [dates, husband material] for women. And so one of the other things that hit you as a black woman is that there were no black men being imported over here. And I guess they figured we all had access to A&T. What we found, unfortunately, is that "Tiger Woods" wasn't alone. The black men came over here, and the white women took them before we even got a chance to look at them. That was a little bit disheartening. But such is life.

You did not come if you were black to a white school looking for a husband because you weren't going to get them. That was a rare commodity. You either had to bring him before you got here, or you had to have a bus or [transportation] to go to A&T. I had neither a bus nor a car.

I made [just] enough money to come out of UNCG in debt to the tune of \$400 because I just worked all the time. I didn't have anywhere to go. I [wasn't] what you call a beauty queen. I wasn't ugly, but I didn't seem to attract men's fancy way back then. And probably not now either. [I wasn't sexually engaged while here because I didn't want a pregnancy. But, thankfully, there have been interesting men in my life.] I'm sixty-two. So I ain't [sic] too fancy [and may be past being] attractive.

HT: Well, did you have any—what was the relationship between Bennett College and UNCG back in those days?

AF: They really didn't have a relationship that was perceptible. I mean I saw downstairs that y'all had some [acknowledgement] of Bennett College in the Civil Rights thing. UNCG was the women's school. And we were the premier school. And they used to always tell us we were the Vassar [College] of the South. And even Duke [University] when they had the women's campus could not hold a candle to this institution. Bennett could not hold a candle to this institution. [To some we were seen as thoroughbred competition.]

HT: It was quite small even in those days.

AF: It was small, but I mean the women who went there, I don't even remember anybody who went to Bennett when I was here. I'm sure they were there, and I know many people who have gone to Bennett because I've talked to them and got lots of friends that I met who I later found out they went to Bennett, but they are all older than I am.

If you are going to school—integration caused a hardship on many of the historically-black schools because it pulled a pool of students that would have normally gone to these schools. And for some of us, it was to the detriment [of the school as us]. For others of us, it was to our advantage.

It's, you know, Bennett was not pivotal to my time in Greensboro, nor was A&T. The only reason that I had a lot of interaction with A&T was that my sister and her husband came back to the United States from China in 1963. He was their professor of military science at A&T, and I was the chief babysitter. And so I got to go to a couple of

things with them at A&T. But when I went there, it was like I was—when I told somebody I went to UNCG, they didn't really respect me. And they didn't respect us. And I—

HT: Did they feel that you should have gone to A&T or Bennett perhaps?

AF: Yeah [sarcastically]! And then I remember that [their] guys would come over the first thing they would ask was a punch on your meal ticket because the food was good. ARA Slater was better than that junk y'all got over there now. The food was excellent when we came here. And I can remember, I think it was my second year, they did an experiment in the cafeteria where the students in home economics prepared the food as part of their learning process. [That] food was marvelous.

The kids who majored in home economics manned—I think there were four cafeterias there. And the students manned one of them, and they were always full. The food was excellent. The variety was good. Nobody could really complain about the food. It was probably better than most people had at home. It was—that was one of the draws.

The other thing you would ask me was about the courses. I'm still trying to think—Sarah Sands was my microbiology [lab] teacher. She was probably one of the most talented people here. And her course was a pivotal course in med school. Because the stuff that she did on cultures and all that—that was stuff we used in med school [and I did get micro in med school]. Walter Puterbaugh, who was my chemistry professor, tried his damnest [sic] to get me to understand organic chemistry. It didn't work. And it didn't work much in med school either. I struggled with chemistry. [I still don't know why I had to learn the Krebs Cycle.]

HT: Oh, gosh.

AF: But Walter Puterbaugh was one of the best teachers I had. I cannot think of the man who taught economics, but he was the little short guy with blond hair. [Was it a Mr. Carter in economics?] And, then, Dr. Warren Ashby taught philosophy.

HT: Ashby.

AF: Warren Ashby, I thought his course was very good. [James] Jim Allen was in charge of the campus ministry, and he was a nice guy. He didn't teach anything. He was always—he was one of those kind, ingratiating white folks that could at times get on my nerves. You know, they had so much compassion. Sometimes you just had to tell people, "Look, wake up. Stand on your own two feet and do [what you need to do! Deal with life]." And he wouldn't do that. He used to get on my nerves. He was patronizing [and always making excuses for people who wouldn't take responsibility for their lives]. But he was a nice guy, and I always liked him. [Thomas] Tom Martin was one of the first white males. Tom [seems to have] made a career out of being [one] the first white males here at UNCG.

HT: He was a student?

AF: He was a student when I was here. And I think his wife was a student also. But as a rule the men were not really outstanding that you remember other than being gay. That was all we remember [many] of them for. As a rule, unless somebody was in student government, I didn't know who they were.

When I was here, we didn't have sororities. It was interesting—my niece, [Lisa,] came here, and she was one of the founders of the Deltas [Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.] on campus, which was the first black female sorority. And so that was another reason that the Neo-Black Society was a group that gained traction—we didn't have many outlet of things that we could join.

You had your own departmental clubs, and you had the *Carolinian* and I worked on the *Carolinian* staff. [I was their first entertainment editor as well as sports editor.] That was always a bone of contention with somebody about something. And, then, you had the *Coraddi*. [It was] very cliquish. Only certain people were allowed to write for the *Coraddi*. But there weren't many outlets to express your talents along different [venues]. We didn't have women's basketball [like now]. When I started, it was the five-five court kind of thing—but it was the half-court game. And it expanded.

They had swimming. I remember taking swimming. And I thought I wasn't going to pass [to graduate] because [of] the foreign language and the physical education requirement. And to this day I can't swim. The only reason I passed swimming is because I could do the length of the pool holding my breath. I still can't get my head in water and swim. I took body mechanics, tennis, and I don't remember what the other one was. But [I was looking for something easy. Physical education was hard on people].

HT: Let me ask you a couple of questions about some of the administrators. Do you recall anything about Vice Chancellor Mereb Mossman?

AF: Oh, Lord, I loved Mereb Mossman. [She] was truly fascinating. She was one of those liberal white folks who was into social work, social studies and all that kind of stuff. Dr. Mossman was crippled.

I remember the day that she parked her car up there in front of the Foust Building and didn't have it in gear. It rolled over her leg and broke it. And that's why she had the cane and walked with a limp. She was always—she was one of the people that really treated black folks very fairly. I respected her and what she had to say.

You didn't deal with her unless you took a course under her. But I think— I don't think she was vice chancellor when I was here. I think she became vice chancellor after I left.

HT: It might have been.

AF: She was a dean maybe.

HT: Her title changed over the years.

AF: Yeah.

HT: She started back in the thirties teaching sociology.

AF: Right.

HT: Then she became an administrator later on. And her title—

AF: Right. But she was a class act. I remember she always drove a white New Yorker. And she was always “ragged to the nines.” She always—I mean she could have been a typical UNCG grad. She [was] always impeccably groomed. She was always very nice, very forward thinking in terms of the kinds of things [that work for people]. The thing I hadn’t said anything about—one of the best things about UNCG—was its lyceum series. And we would have [great presentations]—though I hated going to Aycock [Auditorium] on Sundays. Some of the stuff they had when I look at it today compared to what goes on was just unbelievable. Eric Sevareid came. Charles Kuralt. I remember seeing the Bolshoi Ballet in Aycock Auditorium. I remember seeing Alvin Ailey Dancers in Aycock. There were just all kinds of cultural things that they weren’t getting anywhere [else]. A&T, nowhere else. And then in the entertainment, Dionne Warwick came. I did an interview with her. Stevie Wonder came. I did an interview with him which was in the paper. The Impressions were here [as were the 5th Dimension]. I mean, so they mixed it up so black folks got more than their share of thrills out of it. Because there were a lot of things that were relevant to us in there. And then, they would have various poets and authors come through. So the lyceum series was second to none. And those were the things that I really did enjoy about UNCG. But Mereb Mossman was a class act and a good friend. She and I were good friends.

HT: Did you keep up with her after you graduated?

AF: Yes. I used to come see her. I went to see Dr. Rogers. I actually went to see all of my favorites. Whenever I would come to town, I’d make sure that I would stop [in]. [Dr. Mossman] lived on Sunset Drive or some[where] down there, down there off of Friendly. And Dr. Rogers lived on Radiance Drive. [I saw Dr. Elizabeth Bowles also.] So, I remember—they weren’t that far apart.

[Dr. Mossman] always made time to sit and talk. And we’d talk. And I’d run some things by her and get her perspective because I appreciated her view. I may not agree with it, but I listened to their perspective because it helped me decide on some things.

[I saw Dr. Baecker after many years at the Greater Greensboro Republican Women’s Luncheon. I hugged her with joy, for without her I would not have graduated.]

HT: What about Katherine Taylor, do you have any recollection of her?

AF: Katherine Taylor, she was, I guess the word to describe her was enigmatic. She was moody. She was what we used to peg a “chicken shit liberal.” You never knew which way she was going to come down. She tried to make you think that she was all for this. But she didn’t always do things [to back it up]. She reminded me a lot of Katherine Hepburn in the sense that she always wore pants.

Then she came up with this stupid garden. It’s a rock garden. She paid all that money for [it when we needed other things]. That’s when the students really turned

against her. They liked her before, but she had her select folks. [Miss Taylor] got them good jobs over there at the Elliott Center, and they had good money. But there weren't any black students included in this [that I recall]. So people would pick and choose to help people. She never did anything *per se* against anybody [black]. But she never did anything [that I remember] for us [either]. And she—you know maybe somebody had a good experience, but I didn't. She was irrelevant to me. But I knew that she had a lot to say.

Now when we were trying to get the Neo-Black Society office space, that's when she and I knocked heads a couple of times. But logic always prevails. And I'd say, "Well, you did this for X, Y, Z. If they can have space, why can't we?" And, again, Ferguson taught me. Document and know what you're talking about. And she could not argue with the logic and the information. Because I knew who got what, where, when. And so we got what we needed in terms of space.

I think she liked Betty Cheek. Betty Cheek may be able to give you a better report than I did. You will find that with [many] white folks in general they like certain ones of us, but they don't like all of us. So, they—well, I know the one thing that always gets me is when you're talking with people, they'll say, "Some of my best friends are black." I'm going, "Hell, I never say some of my best friends are white." I mean why is it that people have to clarify when it comes to us? That tells me you ain't got no good friends [of color]. But that was sort of how I felt with Miss Taylor.

I thought Miss Taylor did a good job in Elliott Hall. But she did stuff that my generation also was losing interest in. You know, [I've] got a picture in one of the books of my brother and me at a dance at Elliott Hall. Well, kids about that time weren't interested in formal dances. And yet she insisted that we continue to do that. When we had the three—when we had the Impressions and the rest of it—the place was jam packed. Couldn't get a seat. And that's what kids were interested in. So the things of our generation, we did not have as many of those cultural things.

Same thing with art. I used to like Weatherspoon [Art] Gallery, but I didn't find art that was interesting. I acquired in my training a Salvador Dali picture. And [I'll] never forget I offered it to Dr. Gilbert Carpenter, and he didn't want it because [in my opinion] he didn't believe that somebody black could own a Salvador Dali. And I still have the picture. And I brought it when—

HT: It must be worth a fortune.

AF: It's worth a little money. [I've] got about \$100,000 worth of art in my house.

HT: How did you acquire a Salvador Dali?

AF: One of my—one of the doctors who taught me in residency had a collection of impressionists' lithographs and paintings. He had this Salvador Dali that's called *Adam and Eve*. It's from a collection of six, I think it was of great lovers that Dali did. *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Adam and Eve*, and a couple of other people. He wanted to get rid of his collection. So he sold me the lithograph for \$250 as his interest turned to cloisonné, pottery, and stuff like that. And he sold me that one.

Since then I have quite—I have an eclectic taste in art. And so I have some French impressionists and others that I acquired. You know, again, I got all this stuff. And they didn't want it. And so—again that has to do with why we don't participate as much in UNCG. When we wanted to do stuff, UNCG wasn't interested. And Dr. [Chancellor Patricia] Sullivan said, "Well, I'll take it." I said, "No, you can't have it. When [I] wanted to give it to the school, it didn't want it. So, I'm going to give it to North Carolina Central since y'all wouldn't take it when I offered it to you."

HT: That's Dr. Patricia Sullivan, I guess?

AF: Yeah, Pat Sullivan.

HT: How about Barbara Parrish, who was the alumni secretary?

AF: She was a pain in the ass. Barbara Parrish was interested in—there's a movie I'm trying to think that Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy made. And in it Katherine Hepburn plays the librarian who knows where everything is and doesn't want to automate. And that's what I think about when I think about Barbara Parrish. [Miss Parrish] liked to keep the alumni thing close [to her chest] and small so she could control every aspect of it. But when the numbers got above 5,000 [alumni], it became difficult to do.

I was on the Alumni Association Board three times. Every time they got in trouble, they'd call me to be on it because they wanted to fire somebody or get rid of somebody [or change something]. The first time I was on the board I can't remember [what the gig was]. [Another] time they were trying to get rid of Chancellor [William] Moran. And so they asked me to be on the board. Maybe that was the third time. But I've done three shifts. I suggested to them that the way they were approaching it would neither bring black alumni in nor would it reach younger alumni. They had to do some things differently. And it wouldn't be to the advantage of the school in capturing some of the older alumni.

I don't think I've missed but one reunion of my class, and that was when one of my sons graduated. What I saw is that it's big stuff for these people to come back for alumni reunions. And I was always amazed at the fifty year [class] reunions [there] would have more than [other classes]. I guess [they're] so glad to be alive at fifty years. But they were in good shape. And if you look at some of the younger class of five and ten years out, and you see people who [have had] strokes, were on canes, and you'd go, "Heck, what was it that those people back in the thirties and forties were made out of that my generation is missing?"

[For Miss Parrish] the big thing was the Alumni House. She had the Virginia Dare Room and all that stuff. And I think when the [the editor for the *Alumni News* from my class—tall, skinny and]. Brenda Cooper came on [board, some forward progress was begun].

HT: Yes.

AF: [Mrs. Cooper] sort of opened it up a little bit better. [She's probably one of the few who could tolerate Miss Parrish's peculiarities.] Miss Parrish had her favorites. And she

played favorites [without shame]. She and I got along because I can get along with the devil if he walked in here. But I just don't think—before I got on the Alumni Board and stuff—I don't think they were receptive to a lot of stuff. And I'd just go out [and say what I felt. I also gave money]. I had more fun going out. And I [probably] pissed off more alumni than Carter's got liver pills.

The alumnae that I ended up liking a whole lot was the lady down on the coast, [a Mrs. Silas Vaughn], and Sam Ervin's daughter-in-law, Betty—Betty Ervin. [We] got to be friends as a result of that. I suggested, and they now do it, the One-in-a-Million Club, the Lifetime Membership, and there was something else I suggested that they do. It's a little brochure, recruitment brochure. And those are things that I [did] on the Alumni Board. Ask Brenda Cooper. she knows more about what I [did then I do]—I was always coming in there with ideas. And I was always coming in there with things [that shocked] them.

I remember one of—when AIDS [awareness] first came out, I brought some condoms in there that I had seen down at student health. I thought it was a great idea to pass out condoms. Well, you would have thought I had brought a nuclear bomb in there. Those ladies just about had a cow. And I was just enjoying every [second of it]. I mean, you know, I just thought [their hypocrisy] was funny.

HT: Were you on the board by any chance when there was a big controversy, I think it was probably the nineties, between Bill Moran, who was the chancellor at the time—

AF: Yes.

HT: —and the Alumni Board—

AF: Yes, about the—

HT: —about the monies and that sort of thing?

AF: About using the [Alumni] House, and I told [Moran], I said, “You keep screwing with these ladies, and you ain't going to be here long.” I told Chancellor Moran, “One thing you don't realize [is that] these women are married to the state legislators. And they will get you one way or the other.” And sure enough [he was toast soon afterward].

Then when they brought Pat Sullivan in here, I sat down and I told her, “There are several ways you can go. You can piss people off [without trying, so] there are some things you don't need to share, and you need to keep to yourself.” I watched her be successful [though the deal with the Chancellor's House ticked off a lot of folks]. [On balance,] I liked to think part of the reason she was successful is because of some of the stuff I told her. Now she was headstrong. She was going to do it her way too. And so she ticked off a few folks too.

Any time you're trying to do something, you're going to offend somebody. On balance you have to look at what people do on a [tally sheet].

Moran was a hard nut to crack because you couldn't tell him anything. He knew it all. And one of the things that I tell folks, “Southerners are different than Northerners and

Midwesterners.” It’s a whole difference in approach. That was [also] one of the things I saw in Wisconsin. And the East to Northeast is something else.

You know, they used to talk about, “Well, how can you stand those racist people in the South?” They were more racist than anything I ever got down here in the South. It’s just that here folks didn’t cover it up. There they tried to cover it up and hide it. Here if they don’t like you, they don’t like you, and you know it straight up front. In the North, hell, they will cover it up and make you think that you’re liked, and then you don’t get a chance for promotions and opportunity. So, I always liked the South, because it’s much more direct, and you know where you stand. You don’t know where you stand in the Northeast.

I didn’t like my time in Rochester, New York, and the Northeast. Wisconsin, I didn’t care for when I was there, but as I look back on it, it was a wonderful experience. And part of it is, [as] I tell people all the time (and I tell young people that’s what I was trying to tell that guy in the cafeteria.) You have to go to the best educational experience you can afford. And I think that too many kids don’t want to leave home, so they go to community college, or they stay right at home or they don’t want to expand their world. As a result, we don’t have the talent pool that can talk broadly as statesmen and diplomats because they ain’t [sic] been nowhere. They’ve [only] been around the block where they live. They don’t understand the world doesn’t work like that everywhere.

For me, the broader the experience, the better I was. UNCG prepared me well for all the other racism I’ve had to deal with. But it also prepared me well for academic insights in terms of other things. When I went to Wisconsin, I tell people all the time, we had at least twelve, and I think [maybe] there were seventeen Nobel Prize winners [or other high-award winners] on campus. You’re not going to get that in every school that you go to.

One of my favorite professors was Howard Temin, who came up with the research that defined RNA, DNA, and RNA polymerase. I have some letters at home that he and I wrote. Because I had a theory about something, I wrote him. I said, “Dr. Temin, I want to ask you about this.” He said, “You’re exactly right. Many people don’t think like that.” And it was at UNCG, I like to think, that some of that insight came from Dr. Reardon and Dr. Morrison, who was my advisor, about asking questions that got to the essence of why things worked the way they do and not just to get an answer for a test. So that held me in good stead.

HT: I want to ask you a couple of things about the 1960s, which were such a turbulent time, of course. What do you recall about the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.?

AF: I remember a lot about it, but for me the most tragic assassination was the assassination of Malcolm X. As I said, I liked Malcolm. He taught more stuff [of use for blacks so] I liked him. I think Martin Luther King has been given more than his [fair] share of recognition. Had it not been for Malcolm X, King would not have been as good and great as he is [perceived]. They were perfect foils in a match [for the souls of black folks]. I remember the Black Panthers and all that [happened] in that era. And it was the militants versus the pacifists. It was that tension that allowed things to happen. It was almost as if it was good cop and bad cop.

Martin Luther King was the good cop to a certain degree, and Malcolm X and the Panthers were the bad cops. You needed both of them to bring you to where [we] are [today]. And there were people who were important to the movement who didn't get the recognition that they deserved because the media concentrated on those two. One of the most interesting [aspects], just like y'all have all this stuff about the Greensboro Sit-ins, that was not the first sit in. [It was at the Royal Ice Cream Co. in the 1950s on Roxboro Street, Durham, North Carolina. At the corner of David Street and Roxboro the state has placed a marker noting such.] And yet people are made to believe that [the Greensboro Sit-ins] were the first one. And it wasn't. There [were] others.

HT: That was somewhere in the Midwest, wasn't it?

AF: I can't [say. It would] take my [oldest] brother to tell you who it was, and its historical perspective. So people are blowing this stuff up when there were other people who were doing it [all over], and their contributions are in the background. [King was] in the foreground.

Martin Luther King was a guy I never respected. And I did not respect him because there used to be a thing called [Black] Classic Comic Books. The Classic Comic Books told the story of people like Toussaint L'Ouverture, Martin Luther King, Frederick Douglas [and others] in comic book form. And I still have [them]. But I remember the one I read on the Rosa Parks story. In the Rosa Parks story, it was fascinating. Rosa Parks was not appreciated for what she did. They talk about she was the first woman to get on a bus. But they [didn't tell how it came about. The committee] went to Martin Luther King and said, "We would like you to lead the bus boycott." And he said, "No." And so no man would step forward to lead that boycott, so she did. [Rosa Parks] was the NAACP secretary. [King also had affairs during the Civil Rights Movement. As a preacher, I had trouble with his personal behavior. When they open his FBI files in twenty or more years, we may be embarrassed by his peculiarities, which wouldn't have made him deserving of some of the honors, which may have been given prematurely.]

HT: Oh, I did not know that.

AF: Yeah, most people didn't. And I never forget [these things]. I'm going to try to find that comic book. I'll give you that comic book too. And I sat there, and I'm going, "Why is it that a woman always has to lead?" [And her due credit is lost.] And, so, I lost respect for him on that.

When I was a kid, Martin Luther King came to my daddy's church to preach. And when I was a kid I remember Malcolm X going through my driveway. In the movie Spike Lee has on Malcolm X, there's a scene where he's running from the FBI, scared they are going to assassinate him. Well I remember that time because Floyd McKissick and Malcolm X were trying to get from one building on Linwood Avenue over to the Majid, which was on Roxboro Street. They cut through our driveway, because everybody knew the parsonage was a safe haven. The police were not going to bother you if you came through our yard. My daddy had a fairly decent reputation, and people weren't just [going to violate the parsonage without overwhelming data. The community outrage would be

great, so he wasn't interfered with.] I remember [thinking], "Who is this red-headed guy going through the yard?" And, so, they said, "That's Malcolm X and Floyd McKissick."

HT: That was the 1950s [or 1960s]?

AF: I don't remember when it was, but I remember seeing a scene in Spike Lee's movie, and I thought, "Oh, yeah, I remember when that happen." And, as I told you, my guy was Whitney Young. I thought Whitney was right on the money when he said, "It doesn't do you any good to be able to go to restaurants, if you don't have the money." And what we need to be talking about is jobs and economics, which is right where we are today, talking about the same thing.

Then, I resented the fact that people are so—[doing everything for the memory of King, while forgetting the sacrifice of so many others.] I think that for me if I was going to have named a holiday, I would have preferred a holiday be named after Frederick Douglas. I thought that he was a much greater man in terms of his impact [in helping] abolish slavery than King was in the civil rights things. I'm not a pacifist. So, that whole thing of pacifism always bothered me.

I tell people all the time when they ask me to come to civil rights thing. I say, "You know I never marched in any civil rights protests, because my daddy knew that the first man to spit on me, I was going to kick his ass. And so he wouldn't let me go out there because I've got a violent streak in me that is not to be believed. And so people will laugh, but if you knew my daddy, you knew [he was] exactly right. He'd tell me, "Don't go out there, because you're going to get ticked off, and you're going to go at somebody." There is just some stuff I [won't] tolerate.

I do remember that probably the person who has the most emotional attachment to that [period] would be Marie Darr. She got all caught up in it when we were in school. I just didn't. Kathy Jordan [Pierce] is another person. She lives in Durham. Her name is Katherine Jordan Pierce, P-I-E-R-C-E. She lives in Durham now.

[recorder turned off and back on]

AF: Kathy Jordan Pierce, she was one of the original Neo-Black Society [members]. And if you go in my yearbook, they are all featured in there in the year book of 1967 or '68. The officers are all in there.

HT: Let me ask you, where there any males in the Neo-Black Society?

AF: Yes, we had a guy named Bobby Roberts. He was one of the first black males on the Spartan Basketball team. He was a member. Larry—what was—Larry McAdoo was here [and probably one of the first black male graduates]. McAdoo didn't bother nobody. He didn't hang with us when he was here, and he is very famous. He's somebody you should interview also.

HT: Is that Larry McAdoo?

AF: Larry McAdoo.

HT: Betty [Carter] mentioned that you had mentioned him.

AF: Larry was—he was probably one of the early—he could have been the first black male. And he is a banker.

HT: He was the first black male undergraduate?

AF: Right, and he was a bank president in New York or somewhere. I haven't seen Larry since college. Good looking man. I tried to talk to him. He [didn't pay] me no mind. But he's a good looking dude. But there just weren't that many of them here. [Charles Edinger was in the Neo-Black Society.]

HT: I think you said earlier there were only about fifty-some odd black students on campus about that time?

AF: Well, in my class there were fifty-two.

HT: Oh, just your class?

AF: In my class there were fifty-two. But only seventeen of them got out of here, and I can't tell you at what juncture they dropped out. So we didn't see that many early on. If you saw a black man in the cafeteria, he was going to be bum rushed by all the women. It was a man's paradise, if he was straight. If he wasn't straight, still his paradise [was] here.

HT: Well, you mentioned a little bit earlier about Richard Nixon. Give me some more thoughts about him.

AF: Well, Richard Nixon in history will go down to be quite an interesting guy. It was Richard Nixon—

HT: In spite of Watergate?

AF: Yes, in spite of Watergate. If you take Watergate out and look at his accomplishments on balance, Richard Nixon opened the gates to China. He was the first president to put an Environmental Protection Agency in under [William] Ruckelshaus. And, you know, when Republicans are given a bad press about not being green, this was a man [who in essence] said, "Hey, we need to conserve the environment." He also was the guy who put the Title IX Program in there to allow women to have equal access to sports with men. People have criticized this whole concept of affirmative action. But it was Arthur Fletcher, who was black [and the] assistant secretary of labor under Nixon, who brought forth the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, which is really what the Affirmative Act was. If you read that act, it was not about quotas or anything [like that]. What it says is when companies and people have shown a past history of discrimination and you have two people who are equal in stature, if that group has been discriminated against, then

they get first choice for the position. And that is not preference or whatever. [Nixon also signed Pell Grants into being. Despite his German Jew Kissinger's objections to helping Israel, Nixon, who was perceived as being anti-Semitic from the tapes, this president gave Golda Meier what was needed to save the Jewish State. For these acts, he made amends for whatever demons and paranoia hatched.] It just says right is right, and wrong is wrong. So, I thought that Nixon was very forward thinking in that.

Now, when Nixon was with [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower, it was Eisenhower who appointed Earl Warren to the Supreme Court, and Earl Warren was the governor of California. And it was the Supreme Court of '54 who struck down *Brown v. Topeka, Kansas*. So, when people give my party a lot of hell, I'm going, again, they don't know history. To look a—in North Carolina there was a thing called Wilmington Riots, [which were] riots in response to the fact that all these blacks got elected on the Republican ticket down in Wilmington, and the whites down there said, "No, this won't stand." And so they rioted to remove blacks.

The Dixiecrats and the Democrats, who were racists, crossed over into the party and used the Republican Party for cow fodder, and it just gripes me. Poll taxes and Jim Crow laws came under the Democratic Party. The Republicans struck down these things. And yet, for some reason we have allowed the Republicans to be labeled as racists.

Hell, we've got racists in the Republican Party, but they've got plenty of them in the Democrats too. So that I guess it goes back to Ferguson and a lot of other people. You've got to understand history before you jump—if you understand history, you don't leap and make the same assumptions that you do in not—

[President Barack] Obama is blaming [President George W.] Bush for the [present] depression. But if you go back, [I'm not] sure that we ever got out of the depression with Roosevelt. We have still been trying to work ourselves out of some of the economic devastation of the '30s. And what we are seeing now is the same thing.

This time we are faced with the loss of a manufacturing base. And that's going to be far more devastating than anything that occurred in the '30s.

I think that that is something that we really need to look carefully at as we plot where we go from here. One of my big concerns as a nation is we're putting a lot of emphasis on education. And I'm going—I don't disagree with the emphasis on education. [But] we're educating people for jobs, which don't exist. You [don't] know, and none of us knows, what the jobs are of the future. And, again, it goes back to UNCG.

One of the values of UNCG is when you came out of here, you had a solid, good liberal arts education. You could take it anywhere and use it as a jumping off point. I was at Amoco [American Oil Company] I used to sit and read these manuals. It was evident that whoever wrote this stuff had never had an English course. The grammar was terrible. There was no subject-verb agreement. And you'd sit there and go, "Dag gone, where did they go to school?"

At UNCG, though, I hated the foreign language requirement and a couple of other things, I realized as I got older it was that quality of a rounded education that allows you to adapt to any change that you see out here. And when you don't have those fundamental groundings, you miss it.

When I talk to kids—I tutor four days a week from nine o'clock to two o'clock—people who dropped out of school, we deal with reading, et cetera. The biggest problem for all [of] these kids is reading and English. [If] you can't do math because the math on

the GED test is word problems, if you can't read, you don't understand how to approach the word problems.

I tell the kid, put the book down. Forget the book. Let's talk. I want to know what you know. And I try to get them to draw analogies from what they know and use that in solving problems. I had a boy read a passage. He was stumbling over [everything]. I said, "What does the word mean?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "Write it down." So every word you come across you don't know, write it down." Well, at the end of the page we had forty to fifty words from one paragraph that he didn't understand. We looked up the words.

Say, for example, you had a word like error. I said, "Okay, what does that mean?" He [said], "Well, it means to make an error." I said, "You cannot use a word to define a word." And sure enough I get the new dictionaries [where] they're [now] using words to help define the word that they're trying to look up. We learned in [grade school,] high school, and college that you can't use the same word. And I'm going, "Ugh, this education that we're sending these kids out to get, they still are not prepared."

I listened to Obama speak. And sometimes—now George Bush was terrible, I swear he had dyslexia and nobody picked it up. But Obama for a man that's supposed to be educated, lapses into Ebonics occasionally. And I'm going, "I don't want that in my president—I'd like my president to be a little bit above the fray." Though, [people] like Michelle Obama, I don't like [the stuff] she wears. I [would] like the president's wife to be a little bit more elegant like the women at UNCG. And that's one of the things that [I'd love]. The women here could be first lady anywhere prior to 1950, because they knew how to dress—what was appropriate, and how to act.

[This definition of you as a person]—that was one of the things I really liked about this school. There is no place where people go [to] get this [today]. And we don't require participation in things like teas. I mean if she had been to a tea, [Michelle Obama would] know damn well you don't put your hand on the Queen. But you would have picked that up here. I'm going, "Where in the hell did these people go to school?"

There are some things you should know that we got out of here that no longer are taught. And there's no place for people to learn it. So when they get into [unfamiliar places, they can't cope]. I was telling your librarian—when I was in Russia I went to a dance. And it was good. One of the classes I took [here] was dance. And they like to polka. Well, polka is not in the black experience unless your name is "Steve Urkel." I had to do a polka with this guy [who was head of the Naydeem Gazprom, the largest oil company in Russia]. And I knew how to do [the polka], because that was one of the things I learned in elementary school and at UNCG in the dance class. So these kind [of things], you know, as I said, I hated it, but when I got out, and the more distance I get from this school, the more I learned [the value of] the things you learn in a good liberal arts education are things that you can take anywhere and translate them into meaningful [experiences]. And I think that's some of the stuff that kids [can] learn.

I [went] somewhere to a Young Republican Club [at Wake Forest University], and I was at a debate the other day that they were sponsoring. Finally, I just said, "Time." Because this man was up there for fifteen minutes. And I told the guy who was leading. "Son, you can't let people take over. You have to put time limits on your speakers." And that's something we did here. I mean we'd have forums, debates, et cetera, and you learn

how to conduct business. They don't get that everywhere. And that was one of the values of UNCG also. Sorry, [I] digressed.

HT: That's all right. Well, back to your life after you left UNCG. I know you went to medical school in Wisconsin, and you must have gone to New York for your residency?

AF: I did my residency at The University of Rochester, Highland Hospital in Family Medicine. And it was probably one of the first family medicine programs in the country.

HT: So, you went from one cold climate to another?

AF: Yes, it wasn't intentional.

HT: Was that on purpose? [said simultaneous with above]

AF: No, I went to—you remember I told you that people need to go to the best education they could afford.

HT: Yes.

AF: At that time, the University of Rochester Family Medicine Program was [the] number one program in the country. And when I went to [the University of] Wisconsin [at Madison], Wisconsin was one of the top ten medical schools in the country.

So my thing is if I'm going to be prepared, I need [the] preparation with the best people there are out there. And I'm very blessed. I have had the chance to do that. And then when I came back, I worked for the Public Health Service for two years. And then I went to Johns Hopkins [University] And in public health the top three schools are Hopkins, Harvard [University], and Stanford [University]. Columbia [University] is good [also]. And I got accepted into Harvard. My son says, "You ought to tell people you turned Harvard down." I turned Harvard down.

HT: Why?

AF: What?

HT: Why did you turn Harvard down?

AF: For two reasons. One, my mother was dying and to be in Boston [with her] in North Carolina was a long way away. The second reason, the Harvard program was a bit over a year. It was heavily laden with biostatistics and statistics. [Those were] not my forte. Hopkins you could get a degree in nine months. And so I went to Hopkins.

I almost dropped out of Hopkins because my mother got [sicker] in December [of 1980, which was Christmas] break. So I was not going back. As a matter of fact, I was going back to school to tell them I wouldn't be back for the second semester. And she died in that interim.

That's why I went to Hopkins. One of the things I learned about good programs and good schools—[they let me teach coursework based on my experiences.] I volunteered to be on the faculty here, but they wouldn't accept me. And I've got better credentials than anybody on the faculty here. And—

HT: In the nursing school?

AF: No, no, the School of Public Health.

HT: Oh, public health.

AF: I mean, and it goes back to this whole thing that what they're looking at, and what the reality is for people's lives are two different things. People want to make public health, et cetera, an academic exercise. But it's more than an academic exercise.

I will put my credentials against anybody's. When I was in Hopkins I ended up teaching [in] three courses, because I have more practical experience than the people who had the academic training. And so I talked about rural health development and all that, because I had helped put together a health center down in Greenevers, North Carolina. I could talk about environmental concerns, because I was on [their] economic development panel. We put a water system in and a sewer system [was proposed, but I couldn't convince them to spend the extra money]. And so one of the things I'm proudest of in my life is that most of my stuff has been oriented to helping make people's lives better. And forget all the rigmarole of academics. I think sometimes we hide behind academia to avoid doing what we need to do.

There's a book out called *Super Freakanomics*. And the *Freakanomics* book was interesting. But I heard a guy on *Tavis Smiley Show* last night talking about they don't make policy, they just look at data. And he was talking about patriotic prostitutes. His rationale was quite interesting. The data does not say the same thing that people said. Like he was talking about abortion. Of course, you know, my party is opposed to abortion. I won't commit one way or the other. I just tell people that we shouldn't be paying for [elective] abortions as a government. If people want them, they're legal, let them pay for it. Why should I have to use my tax dollars to pay for somebody else's choices?

But what he said, and I never looked at it that way, is not about destroying babies. [His study found] people were better off because they terminated unwanted children. And he said that people can get over [not having] children. And children can get over genetic disparities and handicaps. But children don't ever get over being unwanted. And I thought, "Wow, that's an issue that very few people have considered."

Being the mother of two adopted children, he's right. I mean, you know, as good as I am, and I was a good mother, and still am, my son, my youngest son, just met his natural mother on his birthday this year. And he said, "Mom, Mom, I met my real mother." [So] I was going, "And what does that make me?" And he said, "No, you know what I meant." I said, yeah, I understand what he said.

HT: Birth mother.

AF: Yes. And as he was talking [and visiting, he saw a side of his possible life]. She has tried to get more and more in his life. But he calls me and he says, “Thank you for adopting me.” Because it’s not what he thought [on the other side]. For a long time he has lived with the pain of [the thought of] why did they reject me, or why did they give me away? People don’t talk about that.

I mean this thing with these kids in Haiti bothers me. These people are taking people’s children away, and the children are not being given up. There is some question about paperwork. Well, I sat on a panel in [Illinois] about that. And what you find out is this stuff ain’t [sic] what people think it is. These kids have some long-term issues involved in [being given up for adoption]. We use data in ways to get us [away] from [the reality of dealing] with the issue.

Public health is the same way. I’m a big believer that we need to put the money into the public health departments and change the whole paradigm of healthcare in this country. Last night somebody on television said that—there was a guy talking about *Super Freakonomics*. He said, “The way the insurance system works, if you have insurance you can get more healthcare [than] you need. But if you don’t have any insurance, you can’t get [anything].” I thought about that, and he’s right. You get everything you want and then some. So, we suffer from excess rather than just neglect. And how do you balance that out?

The Democrats want everybody to have access, but they don’t want to pay for it. And then you’ve got these people over here that [have] too much access, and they’re getting stuff they don’t need. You know, and we don’t—they’re not going to have a conversation about that. That would be the biggest bunch of mess you’ve ever seen. Because they’re not—they’re making a decision, and there are no doctors at the table. There are no nurses at the table. And they all have health insurance beyond anything you would ever believe. I’m sorry, digression again.

HT: Well, how did you end up in Salisbury?

AF: I came to Salisbury because I have two boys, and we lived in Chicago [where] my oldest son [became] interested in gangs. I’m sure he [probably] belonged to one. I think he was interested in the Blackstone Rangers and the Gangster Disciples. He has a Star of David tattooed on his left deltoid. So I think that’s a Gangster Disciples. I thought if he’s going to have any chance, I’ve got to get him out of Chicago.

HT: When was this, the seventies?

AF: We came—no, no. We came here in 1996. At that time Amoco was also undergoing transitions where they were preparing themselves to be acquired by BP [British Petroleum]. I sensed that. So, I took a buyout in 1995.

I wanted [my children] to get to know my family. And I was—at that time [in Chicago] my blood pressure was going up. I was having headaches. I was stressed to the max. And there was an ad for—and [mind you] I liked what I did. I was an occupational health doctor. I loved that job. And there was an ad for an opening at the VA [Veterans Administration] in Salisbury. So, I told my brother, “Pookey, you know, if they [offer me the job], I’m coming [home and moving to Salisbury],” because when I came home, I

could feel my blood pressure lowering. So we came here. I remember [in] moving here I had hurt myself [before I came]. My thigh muscles detached from my knee cap. And my nephew came from [Missouri to] drive me down. My son was in the car. He says, "You know the air smells different." He was talking about the pine trees. We ended up in this house, a huge house, reminds me of the [parsonage] that I grew up in with eleven rooms. He was riding his bike one day [my eldest] left it in the yard. He said, "Mom, I've got to go out there and get my bike." [Realizing had we been] in Chicago the bike would have been gone. In Salisbury the bike was still there. Today in Salisbury the bike would be gone. But when we moved here, [the city] was still reasonably small and reasonably safe.

I enjoyed the job at the VA. They wanted to change the job, and I had a chance to go out on disability. So, I took it. And I have spent ten years in retirement. Now, I'm ready to go back to work. I'm bored. And I need something to do, [besides] Obama is taxing the hell out of whatever I had coming in. So, I've got to get some money coming in. But that was part of why we came back.

HT: And what are your children doing these days?

AF: As little as possible. My oldest son is a "thug wannabe." I love him to death. He is part—very much part of his generation. At one time he was into gangster rap and the whole nine yards. He had six scholarships, which brings me to another point of disagreement with UNCG. He wanted to come to UNCG. He applied to UNCG. He had a 2.78 average in high school. He made 850 on the SAT. And they rejected him from UNCG. I raised holy hell.

They said, "Well, based on a projected score for his freshman year, we don't think he should be admitted." I said, "How in the hell are you going to accept somebody based on a projected score? You take them based on what the scores are. His scores assessed that he would fit in UNCG." That really did change his life. Because then he lost his enthusiasm for college.

He [also] had this young lady that he thought he was in love with. He was "chasing tails" was all it was. And so she went to the [Texas Tech] University in Lubbock, Texas. But she lived in El Paso, [Texas]. He was head over tails to get to El Paso. And I told him, I said, "Son, you really don't want to be in El Paso." So, he said, "Yeah, [I've] got to go to Texas." He went there chasing her.

His brain wasn't functioning, because Texas is a huge state. Lubbock and El Paso are 600 miles apart. And so he got there, and they were together about one week. And then she went off to Lubbock. And all of a sudden he's left in El Paso. Next thing I know, I hadn't heard from him. And I had to go the FBI to try to find him. He'd dropped out of school, [disappeared and no one could tell me where he was]. He [ultimately] ended up coming back home.

Hormones hit [again], and we started at each other. We had been at each other since he was about fourteen. He felt because I was a doctor that I owed him the world. And I felt I had already given him the world. And I was cutting the money off. He just couldn't get it together. And he still hasn't gotten it together. He had six scholarships to college, gifted athlete. At seventeen years old he ran the 440 in nineteen seconds [or] something [like that]. The world's record is seventeen seconds. The boy was fast.

But I think the heartbreak of not getting in here—and he eventually [was accepted at] UNCG; but after, you know, he knew that I leaned on people hard. He said, “I don’t want to go. If they didn’t want me when I wanted to go, I don’t want to go.”

I don’t know if they still have that policy, but that’s a [bad] policy [and wrong]. You accept your students based on what they have done, not what you think they’re going to do. And so he was in barber school, he did three or four months out of a nine-month program, and, then he was put in jail because he had outstanding parking tickets and DWIs [driving while intoxicated] and all that.

I tell people all the time, this is quite a creative generation. Because he has all these tickets and don’t own a car. And I ain’t [sic] figured that one out yet. He even got a parking ticket. I don’t know how you get a parking ticket if you don’t own a car, but he did.

HT: I thought parking tickets were given to the car.

AF: That is exactly right, but he sure had a parking ticket. I told you, he’s creative. And so he is right now waiting to hear from a drug test, because they told him he could come back [to barber school], but he had to pass a drug test.

He is also father of a child born out of wedlock, which galls me to no end. But, again, this is a different generation. In my generation my daddy would have killed me. I wouldn’t have gotten pregnant for all the tea in China. Because I knew that he would kill me. I would be down in Beechwood Cemetery dead. But this generation—so [I have a grandchild]. I made him get a DNA test. And the DNA test was positive.

[My] youngest son—both of my kids have learning challenges. They have sensory perceptual disorders which make learning quite interesting. It’s been a challenge for me to look at kids who don’t get it like I got it. How do you cope with them? And so I told both of my children, you know, when I adopted [you], I put \$100,000 [each] aside for [your] education. And I told them, I didn’t think I’d have to spend it all trying to get them through high school.

The oldest boy went to military school and did quite well. Loved it to death. And he exceeded all expectations in military school. The youngest boy, he’s just a free spirit. He’s a Native American. And he is just as free as most of them are depicted as being. I like to tell people all the time, Charles never met a homework assignment that he thought was worthy of him. So he didn’t do homework. And it was a struggle. I mean I had him in a special school in South Carolina [called] Trident Academy for kids who learn differently. That was an [intriguing] experience. It just showed me; again, if you’ve got money you can do all kinds of things for your kid. But for the parent who doesn’t have the money to spend on those things and [have] children who had the problems that I have with [mine], I think it cost me \$175,000 to get Charles through high school. What do we do for these parents?

Charles ended up coming back home. [Then] I put him out at seventeen. He got on my last nerve. And I said, “Honey, if you just move, I’ll pay for the apartment. I’ll pay the whole bill, because you are driving me crazy.” So, when he got to be, I think he got to be seventeen; I [paid for his] apartment and put him in it. It was really great for him. But there were certain stipulations, like he couldn’t have girls over there and some other things. And, of course, you know that lasted about two seconds. Finally, he got through

the alternative school. And then he drifted for—he's twenty-three. He'll be twenty-four—he's twenty-four now. He drifted from the time he was eighteen—nineteen years old—[until] the time he was twenty-three.

He has been a bus boy. And I told him I have matching uniforms in the closet from O'Charley's [restaurant], Outback, every fast food joint in town. I've got the uniforms sitting up there in my closet. [Finally] it hit him one day that you don't make any money doing those things. So when he got his next apartment, because I stopped paying the bills when he got about eighteen, he realized he couldn't pay the heat, the light, and the rest of it. He lived for two years with no water [and] no heat. He had seventeen dogs. And he used to smell like dogs. They gather[ed] together, and he'd sleep with the dogs. He would smell like a dog coming down the street.

And I guess I learned a lot from that, because I watched him. He was too proud to ask for help. When it would get cold, he'd say, "Mom, it's cold." I said, "You can come home. You can't bring them dogs, but you can come home and take a bath and get dressed and all that." And, so, he would do that. He would live like that for two years.

And that was a great lesson in how the homeless have to exist, because he was quite innovative. I said, "What do you do if you got to go to the bathroom?" He said, "Well, Wendy's is one block away, and I just go up there." I said, "What do you do if you need a shower?" He said, "Well, the Y—not the Y, the civic center was like six blocks away, and he would go down there and use the gym and get a shower. And I was on his case for, hmm, four years to join the Coast Guard.

[My sons] didn't want to go to a war. I said, "Well, if you go to Coast Guard, you don't have to go to war." And, finally, he got – I don't think he hit rock bottom, but he had a friend of his come to stay with him, and they were going to do this, that, and the other. I told his friend to go home to his mama, and let Charles alone. Because Charles was not going to do anything. And the two of them together [were] going to do even less. The boy didn't even have shoes when he came up here. So I ended up buying him shoes and going through the whole nine yards.

[I] took Charles down to the recruiter in Charlotte, [North Carolina]. And they have this little pretest. Charles had a lot of problems getting through school because he does not do math. But he reads at the college level. And he understands at the college level. He also has problems with English grammar. He writes beautifully. He'll write you a three-page story. It's a gorgeous story, but it's all one paragraph. He doesn't know periods, commas, syntax, and any of that stuff. So, he went and they gave him a pre-test. He didn't do well on it, and they gave him this test to take home and study. He really wanted to do this. And he took it home. He studied it, and he aced it.

So he joined the Coast Guard in March 2008. It's the best thing that has happened to him, because it allows him to—kids who have learning disorders, people really don't know what they're talking about with them. And that's what gets me about all of this special education stuff. They'll tell you, for example, you need to give them more time to take the test. Well, that's exactly what the problem is with these kids. You need to give them less time, and they're restricted. Because it's expansive [time that hangs them up]. They'll take forever. You know, you want to narrow the boundaries down. I learned a lot with Shevin and Charles about kids who don't learn traditionally and some of the things that we can do to make them successful. So, to make a long story short, he is now a Seaman Third Class in the United States Coast Guard.

HT: Doing well?

AF: I don't know if he's doing well, but he's there. He called me one night, and was talking. I said, "Charles, what are you doing?" He said, "I'm driving the ship." And I said, "Then what the devil are you doing on the telephone? You need to drive the ship?" And I said, "And by the way, how can you drive the ship when you don't have a driver's license?" He said, "There aren't any cars out here. And this is a ship."

You have to know Charles. Charles is a charmer and funny as they come. He ought to be a comedian. He's just absolutely funny. He is a wonderful kid. Everybody loves Charles. He has a wonderful personality. My oldest son has a hard edge to him. He's also a wonderful, very talented young man. He is a very gifted artist. And I have a couple of pieces in my living room that he's done. People have offered me \$1,000 for them. And I say, "Shevin, why don't you draw." He says, "You don't make no money drawing." I said, "Hell, you don't make no money homeless either. I mean, you know, if you've got a talent, you ought to use it to draw." So he's got the two pieces that I have, [which] are fantastic work[s]. He drew them when he was in jail, but still fantastic work.

HT: Tell me about your political life.

AF: What do you want to know about it?

HT: Well, I understand you've run for office a couple of times.

AF: I've run for the [United States] Senate, and I've run for Congress twice. I ran for the North Carolina House [of Representatives].

HT: Are you going to do it again?

AF: No, I couldn't get your stuff together and run for office. It will take me about two years to clean the papers out, and I have some stuff—I gave you the first collection of [memory] books. And the next one will be the class jacket, and some of the big posters. I have a picture of me and President Bush. And I have a picture of me that is on the cover of the *New Physician* magazine. And, you know, my kids get on me all the time. They say, "Mama, why don't you hang this stuff up?" And I said, "I don't need to see myself."

I've got a huge box of awards. I don't want [any] of that stuff. I mean if y'all want it, y'all can have it. But it doesn't—none of that stuff means anything to me. The things that mean the most to me are my children. And to do a little something to improve the lives of people.

I am a Republican. I have been Republican in disposition all my life. My father is a Republican. His father was a Republican. And most blacks have been Republicans until Roosevelt came with the New Deal, which I consider a raw deal. And so blacks have bought into the "BS" that the Republican Party does not represent their best interests, which is not true. Had it not been for the Republican Party, none of the stuff that we see today would have been done.

[North Carolina Democrats named their annual fund raising in Wilmington, North Carolina, after Charles Aycock who for over forty years was a white supremacist who

had created the environment that led to the murders of over a dozen black Republican businessmen in 1898. This is the same man that Aycock Auditorium is named for. Since that year, North Carolina became a Democrat-run state and never looked back, the heart not falling far from the sheet. North Carolina Democrat leaders had said Aycock was an educator. This history— it is understood why blacks are less than enthused by some things here.]

Black folks don't seem to remember that the Republican Party was formed as an anti-slavery party. And it was the Republican Party, I believe, in 1876 that introduced the first Civil Rights Bill in Congress, [which] the Democrats fought them the whole way. And most of the things that have occurred, such as the integration of the army was with Dwight Eisenhower. So the things that have led for progress have been done by Republicans. Or even the thing on NAFEO [National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education,] the Pell Grants and stuff, that was Richard Nixon. And people forget that. And so they misplace credit and give credit to people who have benefitted downstream from a lot of things. Like one of the biggest controversies, which no one has really talked about, and probably be good for some place like UNCG to talk about, is the impact of equal employment opportunities and equal employment opportunities for women, which came on the backs of progress for blacks.

The largest minority who benefitted from equal employment legislation has not been blacks, but it has been women, white women. And nobody talks about that.

[The] Republican Party has eight principles of the party. And none of the prior principles are anything that most people could disagree with. Unfortunately, the Republican Party has allowed itself to be pigeonholed into things that it is not. And the position it has taken has made them sound like they're anti-progress. And that is also not true. As I told you with Richard Nixon, and the EPA and a couple of other things. But the Republican Party has understood that it is the will of the people that should rule.

Ronald Reagan, whom I didn't necessarily care for, said something very profound. He said when he looked at the constitution of other nations and looked at our Constitution, the thing that stands out most about our Constitution is [our's] starts, "We, the people." And in every other country, it's "We, the government." That is an important [distinction].

What the Tea Parties and [uprisings] are doing is sending a message to both Democrats and Republicans that you cannot, as the federal government or government, take unto yourselves these powers which take away from states [or the people. That is in the Constitution].

One of the things that Obama and people will talk about at length is this whole need for education. But if you read the United States Constitution, education is not covered in there at all. Under the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution it says, "All rights not specifically stated go to the states." If you read the North Carolina constitution it says, education is a right under the constitution of North Carolina. So, it is North Carolina's responsibility to guarantee that education is provided.

The political shenanigans have been such that Congress has realized [education is] a good voting ploy. It has taken unto itself all the rights that really are states' rights. And it has also taken the money.

What they need to do, in my opinion, is to allow the states to handle education and give them that money from the Department of Education to do it. Quit passing

unfunded mandates of what states and people need to do without passing the money down. What happens in North Carolina is taxes are generated by sales and property. People who are older live on a fixed income. If you keep raising their taxes, they will no longer be able to stay in their houses.

When Obama tells people, “We are going to tax the rich,” there [aren’t but] so many people making \$250,000. If you believe that they are the only ones that are going to pay taxes, [I’ve] got a Brooklyn Bridge and a London Bridge in my backyard I’ll be glad to sell you.

Politics, as I told you at lunch, is a blood sport. And [good] people are not willing to get into politics. We end up losing good people like Evan Bayh. I liked Evan Bayh. I thought he was a fairly decent person. But they don’t want to stay because it’s a game about who will subscribe to what big money interest.

I would invite y’all to help me finish my book called *Common Sense Conservative Prescriptions* to look at some solutions to problems which capture the best of democracy and capitalism without putting an undue burden on taxpayers—or put the power back where it belongs, in the hands of the people.

What we like to do now, I get a little concerned when I talk to people, “Well, the government ought to do this, and the government ought to do that.” And I’m going, “Well, when do you do something?” And that, again, is a lesson I learned at home. But that’s something I also saw at UNCG. We were taught to be responsible for ourselves. And we were taught to be good citizens and [stewards] of the state. And to participate in the government whether it was SGA [Student Government Association] or elsewhere.

I learned more about how government ought to work and how it can work in SGA. I mean I helped revised the student handbook. I got rid of rules I didn’t like. And it was a lot of fun trying to figure out how to outsmart the system. So, in that respect, it was good preparation.

I have never ventured far from Republican principles. I don’t have litmus test like everybody else might. There are a lot of things that we do that are anti what our principles are. The one thing that Republicans seem to understand that Obama, and everybody else is now beginning to understand, you can’t tax businesses to death. When you tax them, [they’ve] got two choices. They lay off people, or they move the business overseas. And that’s exactly what we’ve seen. You cannot incentivize them by doing what Winston-Salem, [North Carolina] did and many places are doing, which is to pay somebody like Dell [Computer] to bring a plant here. Then they’ll leave, and you don’t have a plant.

Those jobs in Winston-Salem, if they had endured, were going to cost \$84,000 just to make the job. And the people aren’t going to make that kind of money at any job. Fortunately for them, Dell paid the money back. But there are many places where the way you incentivize is you say to Dell, “We want you here. You come here and you produce the jobs, then we will give you the tax breaks.” But you don’t give them the tax breaks before they make the job. So, that we have it ass backwards.

It’s the same way with education. I think that the whole education system that we’re using in terms of student loans ought to be scrapped. You ought to say with the Pell Grant—in order to get a Pell Grant you got to have a 2.5. You’ve got to be in the top half of your class, and you have to have an SAT score, say, of 1200 or 1000 nowadays, and an ACT of seventeen. Otherwise, you don’t give them grants.

Now, if they want to go to school, let them borrow the money. Then, what you tell them is, if you have to borrow the money, and you graduate with a B average, we'll forgive your loan. So, you put the incentive on the individual to perform. Now, that's the Republican way.

The Democrat way is to say, "Well, you are a poor child. And your mama and daddy didn't have the means. So, we're going to pay for you to go to school." And, so, what they do is they come to school, and they have beer parties. They drink all night, and they're really not serious about their education.

If you are serious about it, then you make the investment in your education by thinking. I mean I'll tell you going to school working was very hard. And putting up with all the stuff that went on here. I did all right. I didn't raise no hell academically. I raised hell otherwise. But not academically. Would it have been better? I don't know. But nobody was giving me money except the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] to go to school as a black person to integrate the school. I knew I could do it, and I believed that if people had been fairer I might have done better. But they weren't, and that's the way it is. So, I had to deal with what was here.

People think that it's the government's job to make the world fair. Well, it's not. It's the government's job to say, "You have an equal opportunity shot at it." But it's your job to take that opportunity and run [in whatever direction] you think it needs to go. My sister-in-law, [Yvonne], was so funny the other day. She said, "You know what? I'm sick of you. The more I listen to you, the more I agree with you. And that's frightening." [laughing]

And I said, "Well, if you read what we say, you will realize we are right. If you look at what we have done, yeah, you've got some trepidations. But I have some trepidations." And part of the reason I ran for the National Committee Woman was that I looked at my party in this state, and I'm going, "This is craziness. You all don't know what you're doing."

To become a National Committee Woman you have to be nominated, and you have to be seconded. And then people have to vote on you. I knew enough about the politics of the party that I couldn't ask people in advance because those who didn't want me to have it would have colluded to bring voters in [against me]. So, the powers-that-be had chosen a candidate to be the National Committee Woman, very nice lady. I think her name was [Mary Frances] Forrester. I got into the state convention, and I thought, "We, [as a party], will never win anything the way we're going now."

I was really upset because the party had chosen to run an ad tying Obama to Reverend [Jeremiah] Wright, who was a fool. But I thought they were foolish to run that ad. I wanted to focus on being positive. I'm positive that Obama is not the way to go. And here is what I think we ought to do.

So I got up and I gave my own nomination speech [five minutes], and I gave my own [acceptance] speech [five minutes]. There was nothing that said you couldn't do it. And I got over two-thirds of the votes against somebody that they had put up [to win]. And got a standing ovation, [no two]. Basically, what I said is that there have been ten principles that I have run on since I got in [races because we need to stop undermining] the United States. One of them is we need to make English the national language. Everybody ought to be speaking the same thing, or you can't be one nation under God.

And when you go to Mexico, Mexico ain't making no accommodation for English. But this country is making an accommodation for everybody. So now nobody understands each other. If you spoke one language, we would have some common ground.

The second thing that I said was that [what] we need [is] jobs. It's true today as it was ten years ago when I started talking about it. The jobs would be based on economic prosperity and growth and those kinds of things.

The third thing I said is healthcare needed to be affordable and it needed to be accessible. And it's neither. If you look at what's happening now, health insurance is about not making it affordable. It's about who pays the bill. And it definitely isn't accessible. If you've been sick, you try to call the doctor and see how quick you can get in there. So having insurance is no guarantee of access. If you go to my web site, I talk about how you provide access by using the health departments for many things that we're not using them for.

The fourth thing I talked about is that we need to improve our national defense enhancements. And when I ran for office the first time I think it was on September 4 of 2001. And I said, "This nation is not prepared for an attack on its person." On September 11, 2001, they bombed the twin towers. I will tell you again this nation is not prepared for an attack on its person. And the one thing that Obama is most weak on is national defense and foreign policy. And if they don't do something about the nuclear bombs and nuclear weapons in Iran, the whole world will be unsafe. I don't think he's got the balls to go in there and blow those plants up. And that's what you're going to have to do. [Anyone] who thinks that we shouldn't do that better be prepared to live in holy terror. Them fools will come in here with hand bombs in suitcases, et cetera, and do us in.

Fifth thing that I said was that we ought to make eighteen the legal age for adulthood. People didn't understand that. But you ask young men to go give their lives for this country, and you treat them as children. They can't drink. If somebody was shooting at me, hell, I'd need a drink. And you let these guys put their lives on the line, and you deny them all the rights and privileges of being an adult.

But it also is a bigger issue for me, because if you look at the criminal justice system, we now say to children who are fourteen who commit crimes, you look like an adult, so we're going to treat you as an adult. Either they are children, or they're not. And every state varies on how they treat these kids under eighteen. So you need to be consistent. Another reason that they don't want that has to do with education.

If they are at eighteen [they are] adults, why should their parents be liable for their education? They are grown. And federal financial aid is dependent upon parents providing information. My son told me under the FERPA [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act] that I couldn't have access to his grades. And I said, "Hell, [then] I ain't paying for it." Because the FERPA law allows students to withhold grades. And that's how Virginia Tech got into this mess. You can't tell parents what's going on. Either they are grown, or they're not grown. If they're grown, then they need to use their information to calculate student aid. If their parents [are responsible for] children, then the parents ought to have the right to the information. You can't have it both ways. And those are things that I have been focused on that have been out there for a long time.

And I said, until you attack these, the other one is illegal immigration. I think I'll throw up if I hear somebody else talk about we need to let all these people in this country. No, we don't. In Charlotte, North Carolina, there are seven cases right now of atypical

tuberculosis in immigrants who came here illegally. What people don't understand, the school of public health is not telling folk, is that in North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and Tennessee TB is endemic. About 30 percent or more of the population has a positive skin test. If you bring in an atypical tuberculosis, you have the possibility of activating all these cases of TB with something we can't treat. So you have a health interest and [a] national security [need] to keep people out.

The other thing is if you look at the number of illegal immigrants in this country, it directly correlates with the number of people who are unemployed. So, when you bring them in to take these jobs, and people say, "Well, they're not taking jobs that Americans can do." And I say, "That's bull. Either you work, or you don't get benefits."

Right now, [I've] got a son who's got a child, and I hate to use his case, but that girl gets \$2,000 a month in benefits that if you were a disabled American who worked hard all your life, you couldn't get. She gets subsidized housing. She has a two-bedroom apartment that's worth \$750. She pays \$75 for [it]. She gets \$200-300 worth of food stamps. She gets free health insurance from Medicaid. She gets WIC [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children]. If you worked hard all of your life, you don't get those benefits. So why should we pay these benefits when the only thing [these] people have done is have a baby?

At some point in time we have to look at these issues and [stop] saying, "Well, there is nothing you can do." There is plenty you can do about that. And we have to be willing to make the hard decisions. That's what the book is about. It talks about compassionate conservatism, ways to deal with this that are [practical, not harsh, that put it out there and says, "Let's look at those kinds of things."

We have to say we have to have campaign reform in this country. The Supreme Court's decision was dead wrong, which recognized the ability of unions and corporations to give money as a free speech issue. And I think it was Justice [John P. Stevens] who was the only one who raised the most cogent issue in my mind when he said [something like], if you have a corporation like British Petroleum who has a lobby, they are based in England. You are allowing them to come to tell us what to do.

A fair portion of this United States' debt is owned by Japan, United Kingdom, the Arabian countries. So if you allow them to influence your elections, they [aren't necessarily concerned] about what's in the best interest of the people of America. And what that court decision does is gives them more power than you have, because they have enough money to pay for these ads. And you don't. Nobody [seemed to pick] that up. It is wrong and immoral what we're doing with campaigns.

So [now] you can understand why I ain't all that popular in my own party when I talk about this stuff. Because people are not—again I go back to Ferguson, Chancellor Ferguson. [You've] got to look at the long view, not what's convenient to you right now. But what does it do to undermine the nation? And I think the Republican Party has been right on a lot of those issues. It's not right on campaign reform. And I'll be the first to tell them that.

The Republican Party wants to make an issue of abortion. I don't have a litmus test. But I do know that when you look at the number of abortions, why should I pay for them? If that's what you want to do, then you pay for it. And what we have now gotten the government into is funding things which are fundamentally opposed to a lot of people's views.

I thought the faith-based initiative was a wrong move. Why should you take my tax dollars and use it for some other religion that I might not agree with? That is fundamentally unconstitutional against the separation of church and state. And so there are issues like that which I must be a gadfly [in the ointment].

It goes to Chancellor Ferguson and my sitting with him and talking to him about the historical impact of decisions we make and how it affects the whole United States. Ferguson's big thing was the Civil War and that period of time in [history]. Abraham Lincoln was very interesting in that he said that if he had to choose between freeing slaves and saving the nation, he'd save the nation. He was very clear that he was not all that much [interested] in terms of favoring getting rid of slavery. And then most people don't understand that slavery only applied to several states. Then I thought, God is interesting. I like God.

Down in [New Orleans, Hurricane] Katrina—they had a disaster, and part of the reason they had the disaster was that Ninth Ward was never intended to be a place where you build houses. It was supposed to be the breakfront for the Mississippi River. They let these people build all these houses down there, and then they got flooded. From the oil industry's part, one of the things that we learned in the oil industry is if you take something out of the ground, you've got to put something back in there. And they haven't put anything back in there; therefore, the ground kept sinking. And nobody has ever talked about that part of it. But I knew that much from working with the oil industry.

But [there's] an even more interesting story as it relates to Haiti. Because the biggest revolutionary of the Haitian impact was a guy called Toussaint L'Ouverture. And Toussaint L'Ouverture led the Haitian rebellion against slavery. And he was so good [as a war general] that he stopped the French [from entering the country's rear door] in the French and Indian War from coming along the southern border [to attack the United States]. See, I did learn something in history here. The French were stuck with a piece of land called Louisiana [which they couldn't access]. They sold it to America in the Louisiana Purchase because of this man in Haiti named Toussaint L'Ouverture. This brother was so bad that they banned him [in the United States] because they did not want him coming to America leading the slave rebellion among the [United States] slaves. And to this day we have stopped Haitians from immigrating into this country because of our fear of the rebellion of Toussaint L'Ouverture's [ancestry of free men]. So if you look at it in a historical perspective, you begin to see the tie-ins of Haiti [to] what happened in Katrina, and what happens in terms of our foreign policy. I just think it's funny. But that's just me.

And I think that, again, I enjoyed talking to [Dr.] Ferguson about trying to make it all make some sort of sense.

HT: He must have been a wonderful man.

AF: He was absolutely marvelous to talk to.

HT: You need to write a book about him.

AF: Well, I may. I mean, you know, and you would sit in faculty meetings, and you could tell—when [Chancellor Otis] Singletary was here, he was okay. But the faculty didn't

have the reverence and respect for Singletary that they had for Ferguson. And they knew that they could be heard [with Dr. Ferguson]. They knew that [Ferguson's] deliberations would be thoughtful. He had the ability to please most people. He didn't try to tell you what you needed to hear. But even when he disagreed with you, he was polite. And I say about him all the time, he was the epitome of Southern gentility. I understood what people meant by that [when I thought of him]. He was a very mannerable [sic] person.

But there was nothing like [Dr. Ferguson] as far as I was concerned. I had to fight the school to get that building named after him over there, because they were all naming buildings after themselves and others. But for me he was the greatest chancellor probably in the history of the school. He was the one that brought minorities in here in such a way that while other schools had their riots and stuff, we never did. And I think that a lot of it reflected who he was and his approach to people, but also his historical perspective on what went [down]. He was just a great guy. I liked him a lot.

HT: Well, Dr. Fisher, I don't have any more questions. Do you have anything else you want to add?

AF: I'm tired. I couldn't think of one if I wanted to.

HT: Okay. Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate it. It's a wonderful story you told.

AF: Yeah. Well, I'm sure I have [more] stories [and reflections]. And as you go through [my] papers you may find—and even go through the books you may find more. My mother was a wonderful storyteller and would tell us great stories. When I went through her trunks, I realized she was a historian *par excellence*. Because all those pictures came from her trunks. Excuse me, no, they didn't. All the pictures before 1950 came from her trunk. Many of them that were taken by non-photographers were my pictures. What she taught us was a great sense of history and to record things and to write it down.

She lived in Richmond, Virginia. And she and my father had been married about thirty-five [or] thirty-six years when they moved back to Richmond. [They] moved in a section of Richmond called the Jackson Ward, and in moving into Jackson Ward she worked with the Historic Society of Virginia to get the Jackson Ward proclaimed a historic district.

In the Maggie Walker House and some other places there, they were trying to recall what went on. And I'm trying to remember whether it was the Maggie Walker House or the Governor's Mansion—she described for people the red velvet wallpaper that was in the mansion when she was a kid. They said there was no real red velvet wallpaper. Nobody could [find records to support that recollection]. She says, "I know it was there." So, when they went to paint the building, they took down the lights. And under the lights was red velvet wallpaper just like she remembered there. She had a tremendous [memory], and her name is in the Department of Interior Registrar for having contributed a historic thing on all the houses.

In the book that I'm writing about [my mother] as a preacher's wife, [it] talks about Virginia Taylor, who was my grandfather's mother, a nurse to the Confederate army. And how [my mother] and her grandmother used to go around doing things. So, she had—when people were talking about the Confederate flag in South Carolina and the

rest of it, I had to step back and take a historical view, because that was important to her. And I have a cousin in one of the [picture] books named Charlotte Jackson. She is Robert E. Lee's great granddaughter. And people assume Robert E. Lee didn't have any kids.

But these people were doing whatever with whomever way back when. And my mother would tell us about all these family connections. And as you've seen with Thomas Jefferson and his black family, there was a whole lot of that going on way back then. People like to have a revisionist view just as we have about Fred Chappell and people here. And for those of us who were not on the receiving end of their largess, we also know the other side that went on.

HT: Okay. Well, again, thanks so much.

AF: All right.

[End of Interview]