PETERSBURG
VOICES OF CIVIL RIGHTS:
THE ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEW OF HERMANZE FAUNTLEROY

conducted by

JOANNE WILLIAMS

January 10, 2007

Petersburg, Virginia

HALASZ REPORTING & VIDEOCONFERENCE
P.O. Box 1644
Richmond, VA 23218-1644
(804) 708-0025
Transcribed by: George M. Halasz, RDR

(Interview of Hermanze Fauntleroy conducted by Joanne Williams)

BY MS. WILLIAMS:

Q It's going to be a long interview, so if you're hot, I'm sorry. We'll pass the perspiration off --

A I'm okay right now.

Q Just for slate purposes, your name, how old you are, and how long you've lived in Petersburg.

A Hermanze Edwin Fauntleroy, Jr. I am 74 years old. I've lived in -- I was born in Petersburg and I've lived here all of my life except for military service and being away for other reasons.

Q And how long did you serve in the military?

A I served about two and a half years on active duty, but my, including reserve time, my total time was 30 years.

Q Okay. I want to start out, tell me how it was growing up in Petersburg, in a southern -- in a small, southern city.

A Initially, I don't know that we were

cognisant of really what the situation really was except when we attempted to go into a location and were told that we couldn't come in. I think the most destructive situation as far as we were concerned really was in the educational area.

I attended and graduated from Peabody High School. And after a point we learned that Petersburg High School had what we believed to be some very critical and important subjects that we didn't have, physics, as an example. I didn't see any physics until I was enrolled in Virginia State College, at that time.

I recall -- I recall one other I think very important situation, that was that Petersburg High School had a distributive education program. Peabody had something, but it wasn't that, and the problem was that when students from Peabody attempted to get summer jobs, particularly in the retail area, they normally were told that the store personnel didn't have time to train them. And yet the Petersburg High School students were able to get jobs, to be employed without having even to be concerned about that. And we ultimately learned that the fact that they were exposed to the distributive education program and talked much about

retailing and how to handle customers and handling different types of equipment, cash registers, et cetera, allowed them to walk right into the job for that period of time and we couldn't do that. So there were those kinds of differences that began to impact us when we discovered that they really existed.

Q Okay. Hold a minute. Is his audio okay? Is he talking loud enough?

THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Uh-huh. Yep.

Q I want to go back before we move off the chain and explore the difference in education. You hit on the fact that you realized there was a difference when you tried to go into a location, maybe different businesses or whatever. Talk -- expand on that a bit. When -- do you remember as a child when you realized there was a difference on how black and whites were treated and lived in Petersburg?

A I think it happened mostly when we attempted to enter restaurants, the theaters. One situation specifically was restroom facilities and that was a real, significantly disheartening situation because the doors were labeled, and you had colored entrances and you had white entrances.

You had colored ladies and white ladies. And that in itself really was degrading.

The water fountain which was sitting just outside the restroom area, there were two of them, one was labeled "colored," one was labeled "white." And we weren't supposed to drink from the white water fountain, even though I found out the water was the same.

Those types of situations where we attempted to use facilities that were segregated to the extent that in some situations we really weren't even permitted to come in, if you attempted to go in, and you would be stopped at the door.

As an example I remember going to Canton Restaurant on Sycamore Street, another young man and I, and we went in and we sat down, but we were immediately approached and told that they could not serve us. And of course we had some brief discussion in terms of why. And the answer basically was that we were black and they didn't serve blacks. And we were asked to leave.

Q What did you feel like at that moment? Do you remember your feelings?

A Again, I think it was a very, very degrading type of situation in terms of seeing other

people sitting there eating, and we were being told that we couldn't eat the same food. And to some degree it was difficult to understand why, but the fact that we were told we couldn't do it was very significant in terms of how it caused us to feel like nothing, really.

Q That's exactly where I was going. What, if you keep hearing that you are not as good as someone else, what does that do to someone mentally?

A I think it really begins to cause you to think, or at least began to, in quotes, wonder you, know what's the difference? We are all human beings. And at the same time, we were being told that we weren't -- we weren't the same, and we could not do what other people were doing.

We never could really understand I think when we were growing up, you know, why that situation existed. And as a result of that, again, I think it caused us to feel degraded, it caused us to feel little. Now, why is this? Why are we being treated like this? And again, you see what's going on. And yet you are being told, no, you can't serve -- you can't be served here.

Q Do you remember either one of your parents -- that you would have family discussions

about this, about the situation of how you were being treated?

A Yes. I think the situation at home, though, was such that when we talked about it, we were sort of encouraged not to push it. And it was indicated I think in the course of the conversation that it would be better if we went to school and done -- and did what we knew we could do without raising questions that might cause some problem in terms of the owners or people in charge might consider that we were being arrogant.

Q What did your parents do for a living?

A My father taught at Virginia State College for 47 years. My mother also taught but she didn't teach for any great length of time. I think maybe after I was born she decided to stay home, but she still substituted and she was obviously eligible to be a teacher. But my father continuously taught.

Q What did he teach?

A He was in the industrial education area, and at that time of course that included a number of other subjects that were related to some degree to the business area, and how to work with people, so with that in mind he had to really -- and other teachers in that area had to be sure that the

students were exposed as much as possible to what should be the business life once you left college even though when you got out there you found out it was a little bit different.

Q What -- do you think your parents feared retribution?

A Retribution in the sense that I think they were more concerned about me and other parents concerned about their children and not wanting us to do something that would get us involved in -- and at that time if we pushed to get something done, going into a restaurant and just refusing to move might cause us to be arrested. And this was even before the open civil rights era, but I think for the most part that's what they were concerned about, that we would get into trouble.

Q Let's move -- where did you go to elementary school?

A Giles B. Cook, which is really directly behind the old Peabody High School building, and that was my first school. In fact, it is still standing.

Q And did you go from elementary straight to high school?

A No. Well, we went into what was called

the junior high school situation. But it really wasn't. We attended, when we left Giles B. Cook Elementary, we attended what was the Five H or Five High class, and then we went to the sixth grade. We went to the seventh grade. And then from the seventh grade we went directly into high school for four years, which in fact meant that we only received four years or a total of 11 years in terms of our public education. And we learned, of course, that Petersburg High School had a 12th grade, and that just again caused us to just try to determine, you know, why? What is it that makes us so different that we can't have the same situation and be exposed to the same educational program, if you will? Bolling Junior High School on Filmore Street was in fact a junior high school. And we didn't have that interim period between the elementary school program and the actual senior high school program, so we missed that part of the schooling, if you will.

Q In going to school, did you ever have -- were there any white teachers, principals, workers, children? Was it totally segregated?

A Totally segregated. We didn't have any contact educationally with students other than the

black students that were in the same schools that we attended. I thought it was very interesting, and we became good friends in terms of after school -- not too far from where I lived there was an outdoor basketball court, and we met some persons -- well, I call him Fox Ramsey and his brothers and others, and we played basketball together, and we talked about the basketball games at Petersburg High School and the basketball games at Peabody.

The next morning, of course, you know, they went to Petersburg High School and we went back to Peabody, but in that interim period after school until the next day, there was no difference among us, and we just -- we were good friends, and we're still good friends today.

Q So actually, I want you to expound on that a bit. Was that really your main contact? Did you have in family life, or church life or just everyday life did you have any other contacts or friends on a regular basis with any white people?

A No, we didn't at that time. It was strictly a separate environment other than, you know, what we created after school, but in terms of contact with white persons -- we didn't have any white teachers, and of course all of our

administrators were black, so we just weren't exposed to the other part of Petersburg, if you will.

Q When you were playing basketball, there was no difference. Did you ever -- do you ever recall any conversations that you may have had on the basketball court about there being a difference?

A Sometimes we did. You know we -- in talking about basketball games and the difference between what we were doing and what the students at Petersburg High School were doing athletically, even to the extent that in some situations Peabody received the used basketball uniforms from Petersburg High School, and of course our colors were black and gold, and they were, you know, crimson, et cetera. But when they got through with those jerseys, as an example, they would send them over to Peabody. And we just used them for practice purposes, but we never could get a separate set for practice. We had to use the hand-me-downs.

Q In reflecting back how do you think that this type of exposure -- what was it doing to your self esteem? How was it changing your character?

A I think after a point, particularly when we became high school students, and teenagers, that

we began to realize more at that time, you know, hey, there's something wrong here, there really is a difference between the people or among the people. Obviously, you could see that there was a difference in the educational systems, and I guess we became more frustrated. We just couldn't understand. You know, we have situations where we could not be a part of it as blacks, and it really did I think affect how you began to feel about yourself and just trying to determine, you know, why is it.

And I don't think that changed until some of us went to college, some of the students went away to college, but even then graduates from Peabody High School, if they did leave Petersburg to go to college, it was to a predominantly or what we now call historically black institution. Union as an example, which was right down the road, so to speak, or Norfolk State as it was coming up, so the higher education system to a great degree in terms of time didn't change either until other situations began to change.

So it -- I think it really did affect us in terms of character, self esteem. And it began to make you feel to some degree that, you know, maybe we really aren't the same, but the difference

is we didn't know really, but you know, there's something here that says we are not as good as the white students who go to Petersburg High School, and that really I think bothered us significantly.

Q Reflecting back on it now, and you touched on this a few minutes ago, how do you see -- were black children being educated to go into certain careers that white people did not want to go into? Were you -- was there a method that you were being educated that you would go into a job that would not be on the level of a white person?

A Yes. I would answer that question by saying, yes. Again, at the high school level, as far as Peabody High School was concerned, we really didn't have a true vocational area. We had some outdoor buildings that we went to for a little carpentry or minimum automotive kinds of experiences, some what we refer to as mechanical drawing or drafting, but it was very minimum. And we learned, of course, by talking to some of the friends that we had after school, et cetera, that they were being prepared if they wanted to to go into the business world. We didn't have those experiences.

So a number of students who did not

attend college but graduated from high school found that the best job that they could get at that time probably was with Brown & Williamson. But if you went to a retail business, if you didn't want to sweep the floor, there wasn't anything else for you to do. You couldn't become a sales person. So there was a significant difference.

Q Were you treated differently at Brown & Williamson?

A Well, to the best of my knowledge, I would have to say yes. I never worked at Brown & Williamson, but I knew a number of the persons who did, and I know that there was in fact a black union and a white union. I think to some degree they did work together as far as union activities were concerned, but the unions were not integrated, either. So the work environment, I would say just to a great degree was different, and I'm --

Q I'm sorry.

A No. I'm not sure when -- when the pay scales began to change, but for quite a while the pay was different, too.

Q When you went to school, to college, what was being taught on the university level to encourage you to have -- to go into a career that

would be a higher-paying job?

A Well, I think when my wife and I enrolled in Virginia State College at that time, we did become exposed to some areas that we had not been exposed to, as far as high school was concerned. I went into physics initially, although I changed. I just didn't have the background for that particular program.

But Virginia State did have what I would say was a very significantly thorough business department or business school at that time and a number of the students entered the business side of that. Virginia State did have -- had a more extensive vocational and industrial education program. There were other subject areas that were there for people who wanted to do something other than teach.

The basic direction, however, was the area of teaching. But we had students who when graduating from Virginia State went to law school, went to medical school. And I think they were well prepared for that in terms of having been exposed to it at Virginia State.

I think one of the situations that we really benefitted from was that even high school and

at the college level we had teachers who cared, I mean really, really cared. And they did everything that they could to try to ensure that we got the most out of whatever it was that we seemed to have been interested in, and the subject areas that we were interested in. And I think that in itself caused a number of students to want to move into some other area than teaching, although a number of them, including myself at that point, did go into -- into teaching. But I think the teachers cared --

Q Tape. We have to stop a minute, change tapes.

A Okay.

(Change of tape.)

BY MS. WILLIAMS:

Q I'm going to start over, over there. She entertained me so much, I forgot -- I lost my train of thought there. But we were going to pick up about mentors from childhood through college, why they were your mentors, what they encouraged you to do and if they changed along the way.

A As we were growing up and in athletic programs, I think I would say that the mentors that we had really were the coaches because we had more contact with them. Now, there were some teachers,

of course, who knew us, knew our families, and they would always either say something or do something if they thought we needed a little guidance, and they would talk to us.

And at the college level, I think there may have been several persons who I think sort of took the students under their wing, if you will, and provided some guidance and additional study or explanation in terms of the program that they were in, and what that might do for them, how they could benefit from a biology major, as an example. I knew a couple of persons who were in that particular major and ultimately went to medical school. And I think they were pushed a little bit by their professors because they saw something in them that might cause them to be able to move into that area and do well.

One of the -- one of the mentors I think that I had happened to have been my scout master. He also happened to have lived right across the street from me. We also attended the same church. But I was in the scouting program really for a number of years, and he took us under his wing, if you will, and I think did everything that he could do to cause us to benefit from the program,

and was talking to us from time to time in reference to how we could benefit from that.

I don't know that at that point in time we were looking at those persons as mentors. But that's really what they were.

Q Moving up from elementary to high school to college, your parents were saying, don't make waves. What was building up, when did it start building up that you knew things needed to change, it shouldn't stay status quo?

A Although my parents were telling me and other friends that I had particularly in that neighborhood that we needed to be very careful about what we did and not get into trouble that would cause us to have contact with the police and create some problems, I learned a little bit later, I was still in school, in the public school side of it, that my father really during that same period of time was the President of the Petersburg branch of the NAACP. And obviously -- obviously, they were doing some things where they were really trying to cause life to be better, if you will.

And my mother also was involved from that perspective from time to time. So I think when I learned, you know, really what he was doing, and

as I grew up, and really began to see what it was that he was concerned about, I think it caused me to decide that I wanted to do something about it, too. So I think that that was when I really began to look at situations like the civil rights struggle. Hadn't really started at that point, but there were some things going on. And from that I think it grew to the extent that, you know, Gerry and I both became deeply involved in the local issue as far as civil rights were concerned at that point in time.

And there was one situation in particular that I will never forget and then -- I was a youngster, but really rubbed me the wrong way. My grandmother had several sons who moved to Philadelphia from Petersburg, again, looking for work. And as a result of the move and they living in Philadelphia, my grandmother and my mother of course used to go to see them periodically, and they would take me because I had some cousins up there, same age group, and we would ride the train.

Coming back from Philadelphia, every time when we got to Washington, D.C. all of the black folks were told they had to move up near the front where the engine was. And of course my grandmother was of some age at that time, you know,

and we had to get off the train, walk down the platform and get on another car. And I really couldn't understand that. I really couldn't. Because she began to, you know, age and it was difficult for her to come off the train and walk to try to get to the other coach, because you had to come outside and do it. You know, they wouldn't take you through the train. And I never forgot that. Even to today, I can see her with my mother coming off and walking down that platform and then getting on another coach as far as the train was concerned. And that stayed with me. It really did. It caused me to, well, I would say become somewhat angry.

Q Did you question it then?

A Not in terms of the train situation because I was -- basically I guess maybe 13 to 15 years old, and I would try to maybe help my grandmother move, but I didn't know at that point who to complain to. So no, you know, I didn't say anything. But it stuck with me to the point that it became one of those situations I think that caused me to begin to move in the direction of wanting to do something, wanting to make some change as I grew older.

Q Was that sort of symbolic of maybe the dividing line to say you are going back to the south?

A Yes, it did -- it really was. Now, everything was all right from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C., but the whole situation changed, and at that point it was the dividing line, and you were supposed to abide by that. I don't recall a problem, but I suppose, and I did see a couple of police officers from time to time, I suppose if you refused to move they would have helped you to move. But it specifically was a dividing line. Yeah.

Q Moving and building up to where you became part of making a difference, when you were in college, you became a teacher, what were your thoughts? I mean, explain what life was like for you. Obviously, you were going -- you got married, had children. Were your plans or your thoughts, I'm going to live the life just like my parents, you know, raise children, go to work every day, come home, that type of thing?

A To some degree I would say yes, but when I went into the classroom, and I was able to interact with my students, I was in the industrial education, vocational area and most if not all of my classes

really were male, and I could see the need to talk to those young men about what was going on around them, and what may be needed to be done or the mind set and the attitude that hopefully they would develop as they grew up to want to change, cause some changes to take place.

Q Give me -- where were you teaching and the year?

A I taught at -- well, I started teaching in Sussex County, but I left really in the middle of the year. I will just inject this. I left because every morning after we got to school in Waverly, the superintendent would drive up in front of the school and blow his horn and our principal would have to go out to his car and get whatever it was he had for him. He never, never set foot in that building.

Q He was white?

A Yeah. And that was something else that I never forgot. And then sort of a strange set of circumstances took place because Elmo Rainey who ultimately became the superintendent in Petersburg was teaching in the same area that I taught in, and when he moved into the visiting teacher's position, he knew what my background was, and he told me about what was getting ready to happen, and I applied for

that position, and fortunately I would say I was able to get it.

I taught at Peabody for 11 years. At that same time I was really getting involved, and had begun to get involved to a great degree in the political side of Petersburg, and I had noticed that a number of black males in Petersburg had made an effort to get elected to city council, and I thought that that might be something that I wanted to do as a follow through on what we were trying to do in reference to the other civil rights activities. And I did.

And of course this -- particularly the black community, they really came together. We had one black on the -- Joseph Owens, who had already been elected, so two years later, we felt that there was a need for some additional support there. So I was elected to the city council. And of course you have to be sworn in. I was still teaching. And I didn't, you know, even think about doing anything other than being sworn in because the people had elected me, and there were some rumbling going on that if I did get sworn in I was going to lose my job.

But we decided -- we had two

daughters at that time, too, we decided, and I talked to my family, that if that was what I felt I wanted to do and needed to do, do it. So I did get sworn in. The next morning I went to my classroom to continue what I had been doing, and one of the assistant principals came to my room and told me that he had been asked to come to my room and tell me to leave.

And we talked for a few minutes and I said, well, you know, my students haven't got here yet. I at least need to talk to them and tell them I'm going.

He said, superintendent say you can't do that. You are not to have any contact with your students today.

So I accepted that, and I went around and talked to some of the other teachers, and I told them what was happening, but I did leave after a point in time. And my salary, of course, was stopped. I never did get an opportunity to meet with my students anymore other than when I would see them outside of that setting. But the fact that I became elected and decided to be sworn in as a full fledged council member according to the superintendent, the attorney general at that point

in time who was Button, told them that they couldn't pay me and allow me to continue to teach, so --

Q What year was that?

A That was in 1966.

Q Okay. The schools were still separate then?

A Oh, yes.

Q Segregation?

A Yes.

Q But, so the superintendent in Petersburg which I guess was still Meade?

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q He was over the black schools as well as over the black schools?

A Oh, yes. There was only one superintendent, if you will and, yes, he was in charge of the entire system.

Q The day you walked out of there and you didn't have a job, did you start second guessing what you had done?

A No, I really didn't, because I had prepared myself I guess for that after hearing all these stories, people trying to get messages to me, what have you about what's going to happen to me. And Gerry and I had had a really in-depth discussion

about what I wanted to do, and what would happen what. Well, we knew, we knew to some degree what might happen. And what are we going to do about this? You know, we had two daughters. And she was teaching, of course.

And we decided that, again, if that's what I wanted to do she would support it, and so I made the decision that if anything did happen I would leave.

Q To go back to that, did they try to disguise it, it wasn't a racial thing, it was because you were a school teacher and that was the conflict?

A There was never any discussion about a racial issue. The only discussion was that the attorney general's decision was that in the State of Virginia at that time school systems could not pay teachers, teaching in a public school and allow them to continue to teach, so that's, that's the word, or those were the instructions. Of course they were passed to me on that morning.

Q Was that in fact the truth or was it a racial issue?

A Well, I always felt that it was a racial issue. Right. I couldn't understand, even though

they claim it was part of the law at that time, but I couldn't understand, you know, again, why do I have to leave? You know, I mean, I haven't created any problem. I'm doing my job. There wasn't anything that had come up that would cause me to be disciplined, if you will. And got along with my students very well.

So -- and in view of the fact that we really were in into the civil rights era in Petersburg at that time, Gerry and I had been involved, so I really did, I think, begin to think that -- you know, we know you've been involved in this and here's an opportunity to get you out of here. So yes, I did think about it. I really did.

And I think we agreed that they saw a way to fire me, if you will. Because I never resigned. They just told me to get out of the building.

Q Let's pause and fill in the gaps just a little bit. What year did you graduate from college?

A 1954.

Q What year did you get married?

A 1953.

Q And we have got the gap from the fifties

to the sixties when this took place. Tell me what -- you did bring up the rememberance in Waverly but tell me what was going on in your life that was building to want to change how life had been for blacks?

A I think maybe the most gratifying situation in those conditions for me was that the next day after I was released from my job, a number of people, black people, began to collect, solicit money to supplant my salary, and they did that for, well, a couple of months, but only for that period of time because fortunately I was able to walk into a job at Virginia State, and I became the Director for the Alumni Affairs Office that happened to have been open at that time, and the president hired me to do that.

There was another teacher at Peabody that knew that that situation existed, and he talked to the president about it, so I was hired. So I only had about a couple of months really when I didn't have a fixed salary. I guess what that did to me, though, was to cause me to become more fixed in my position that this is wrong, you know. We've got to do something to change this. And I think in view of the fact that my wife was right there, and

working in that civil rights era, we had explained to my daughters what was going on -- they were very young, they -- well, 12 and 11 I guess maybe about that time. So as best as they could I think they -- they understood what we were trying to tell them was happening.

So I began, and Gerry, too, I began to put more into trying to help to make the situation better. And I think that school situation I think caused me to realize more that something had to be done, because I really still believed that even though it wasn't said, that that opportunity was there so that the school system could move me because I had been visible in the civil rights era.

Q But still going back before we move on, from the time you graduated until the time that you were fired, how were you becoming involved politically in the civil rights movement? When did you become a member, your father was head of the NAACP, when did you pick up and become a member?

A Of the NAACP? I don't remember exactly, but through our churches at that point in time, they of course had membership drives, and as I recall, I think Gerry and I both -- we joined I think when we were still in college. I think I remember that that

happened because of membership drives that were going on, and we just, you know, again felt that that was something that we wanted to do.

Q Now, during that probably about a ten-year period, that's when you went in the Army. Was that -- was there an effect there?

A Well, the military at that point, even though President Truman had issued an order that desegregation would take place as far as the military was concerned, it was still there, you know and, there were --

Q Were you separated?

A No. No. Not at that point. Not in 1954. The desegregation had just begun to take place, and they were forced to bring the black and the white military personnel together. But how you were being treated in terms of the racial situation was still there.

Q Expound on that a little bit. How was it -- did you -- you lived in the same quarters, but tell me what was alike and what was different.

THE VIDEOGRAPHER: About one and a half minutes.

Q Okay, let me change that -- let's change the tape then before you start on that.

(Change of tape)

BY MS. WILLIAMS:

Q Yeah, let's pick up with when you went in the Army, how you went in as an officer, I want you to tell me this on camera, and when you went in how it was the same, that you were treated the same but how you were also treated differently, meaning, okay, you've got -- the Army was past the point of that I guess you didn't have separate water fountains, you didn't eat separately, you all lived together, so pick up from that point how you went into the military.

A Well, I was commissioned in 1953. And then I still had a year to go, so I stayed and completed my education work, and graduated, and then of course I had been ordered to go on active duty. Even though the situation was beginning to change and to a great degree had changed, depending on where you were, one of the problems that we had, I think, as black officers was that when you were rated, and that had to take place periodically in receiving an efficiency report, you could tell, depending on who your rater was, you could tell that some of that feeling, if you will, on the part of that person was still there, and that it was being

injected into your rating. The situation, of course, was one that you could sit and talk to your rater, but for the most part, it wasn't much you could do to cause it to be changed.

Then in some cases, of course, you really did have a person who was very objective and did what he was supposed to do in terms of using the proper procedures to determine whether or not you were doing your job or not. So there was some of that. In fact, when I was in Korea, my immediate supervisor, the person who had to rate me, told me one day that -- he said, you know, Hermanze, say, you are going to have to do more than anybody else here. I was the only black officer in that whole section. And you've got to remember that you need to do that, you know.

Ultimately, he really tried to -- when he had to rate me he really, really tried to create some problems for me. And in fact, I had to go to the IG or the Inspector General to make an effort to get that resolved, because I knew that this wasn't because of my performance one way or the other, so I did that, I did report that.

And I guess about two and a half months after I did that I was shipped out again.

And fortunately, when I -- it was about time for me to come home. I had about three or four months left and they still moved me from where I was, you know, and it was because of that deficiency report.

But fortunately, I was sent to a unit where the situation was better. The commanding officer was a completely different person, really, and I don't think it just happened. I think it was a part of him, and he had, you know, come out of a situation in his civilian life where apparently he was involved in situations where people were different and, you know, and he was following that line, if you will. So for that period of time, of course, the whole situation was considerably better, you know.

Q Let me ask you, what was it like living predominantly -- that you had very little contact with whites, because you were told you couldn't eat with whites, you couldn't drink the water, and then you went into the military and you all were one, you ate together, I guess you slept together in the same barracks, what was going through your head then?

A I guess, you know, you were trying to determine what the difference -- what is the difference here, you know. Even though you know --

you knew at that time that the President of the United States had said, that's it, you know, this whole segregation bit has got to stop, and the armed forces will from this day forward be integrated, so when something did happen like the situation I just described you knew that there was something else there that was causing that to happen. And in view of that, you still had to be on your toes, so to speak, to be sure that you did whatever it was that your assignment was, and that you would be able to back up the situation if you needed to like I was describing what I had had to do.

But ultimately, I think I began to see that people began to accept the President's order and began to do what they were supposed to do because, you know, it got to the point where if they didn't then they were going to be in trouble, so the situation began to change.

You would still have some of it, but you know, you could tell that it was changing.

Q Could you feel resentment? You were an officer of white soldiers under -- that you had command over?

A Very little. Very little. The assignments that I had were such that -- well, I was

able to work with the people that I was responsible for. And fortunately, I didn't have any serious problems in terms of them doing whatever it was that I had indicated to them needed to be done, so -- there were -- I can recall a couple of soldiers who didn't like me being their commander, and I could tell, you know, from time to time that they were trying to fight whatever it was that they were supposed to be doing and maybe doing a little something here and there that would affect me.

But the situations that I had really for the most part, the enlisted persons began to accept it, really, accept the change, and it worked itself out.

Q When you went overseas, did you -- were you aware that they lived differently as far as there was no discrimination?

A The location where I was overseas?

Q Well, I know that -- yeah. When went -- you went to Korea?

A Yeah.

Q Did you go to any European countries?

A No, huh-uh.

Q Was it different being out of this country?

A Yeah, it was different. I did spend a very short period of time in Japan, but for the most part, in Korea where I was for about 16 months, I didn't see any difference among the people, you know. They were all together doing whatever they needed to do together. So in terms of discrimination among the people of that country, I didn't see it.

Q When you came back here after being oversees and being exposed to a wider world in the Army, did it hit home to you even more that things weren't right here, and I guess the separate but equal just wasn't -- it wasn't right, because you came back and there were still no coloreds allowed and King.

A Oh, yeah. Yeah. And really, when I came -- when I came back, you know, the separate water fountains were still in existence in restaurants and theaters. I mean, all of that was still in place when I came back from Korea.

Q So tell me how you felt from -- you were in an Army, that you were all treated the same, everyone was meshed together, hypothetically that's what it was supposed to be, and then you step out of the Army back here into the same situation where

you'd grown up that discrimination was so blatant.

A I think maybe that was a part of what caused me to begin at least to think about the fact that, you know, this isn't right. You know, I've seen a different situation. This is what I left. Now I'm back in the same way. I began to think about -- you want to do something about this, you know.

You come up on two water fountains, well, you know, why do I have to do this? You know, been in the military and everything, then I come back into a situation like this. So I think that helped me in terms of developing the need to want to help change it.

Q When you came back you and Gerry were married, I guess --

A Yes.

Q -- at that point. Did you have a child by then?

A Yeah. We had -- we had two -- the two daughters -- two -- when I came back from Korea -- no. When I came back from Korea, it was just Ronnie.

(Discussion held off the record.)

A Yeah, okay. So we had two very small

daughters at that point in time.

Q This goes into -- I'm going to ask you a personal question. You may not want to answer it. But when you come back, what type of conversations did you and Gerry have, when you come back and this really stands out to you that this is wrong, I mean what type of conversations did you have between the two of you? Did you have those kind of conversations that you sit down and talk, we need to try to make a difference?

A I think to some degree we did. May not have been a daily conversation, but at a point I began to teach in that situation I was telling you about with the superintendent who came up and blew his horn and the principal ran out to the car, and we would always talk about those kinds of situations, and why would, you know, this black principal believe that he had to, regardless of whether he had to go out because the superintendent blew his horn and, you know -- so all of that I think we -- well, we talked about it, you know, at home.

We were car pooling, because we were going -- traveling that 25 miles every day, and we would have discussions in the car about that

situation with the superintendent, and why it had to be and, you know, and something ought to be done about it.

Q Were you angry?

A I really was angry when I -- I was angry from the first time that I saw it happen, but I got angrier when I saw it continue to happen. You know, I said, well, you know, first time, maybe there was some special reason why he went out there, but then I discovered that every morning, you know, he'd blow his horn. He's going out to the car. And so that wasn't a specific situation. I want you to come out here when you hear this horn.

It obviously was because the superintendent, in my opinion at least, was white, the principal was black, so I'm not going to get out of my car and come into your school. You are going to come out here to my car. You know. And I think -- all of that I think was beginning to build up in me, and Gerry of course witnessed a lot of it, and we did begin to talk, I think, more about the situation and trying to decide, you know, should we really try to do something about this. Should we really become involved in trying to make some changes? You know.

We've got two daughters who are growing up. They started school. Of course, they had to go to a segregated school system. And I think all of those pieces, you know, when you sit down and talk about them and they begin to fit together, then you begin to think and begin to try to decide what can be done, you know, what should we do.

So ultimately you reach a point where you decide something has to be done, and you try to become a part of whatever other people, like the NAACP as an example, which was active at that time, what they are trying to do, and we ought to be a part of what they are trying to do.

Q Were you angry at all white people, then, or could you, just like Gerry and I were kidding -- well, we don't kid. You know, women think men don't listen and, you know, it's a blanket thing. But I think that probably when we do think about it a little bit, well, we know it's not all men are like that, so we'll just blanket the situation. Did you blanket all whites, or did you focus on it was the ones in power, it was a certain agenda there so that they would stay in power?

A I think your last comment really is what

it was in terms of how I looked at it. I can recall that at that time Petersburg General Hospital, Southside Regional, did not have any black members on the board, and I made an effort to try to find out why, you know, and was invited to one of their meetings, and I attended for a short period of time, and I, you know, said what I thought ought to be.

So not too long after that they had a vacancy and they asked the mayor to appoint the individual. And of course, you know, there were other situations still in effect. City council was all white at that point. And we had real difficulty getting them to make decisions that were city-wide decisions. You know, they would take care of the little pieces they wanted to take care of and you could go to council meeting and you could talk all night and they sit there and listen, you know, but they wouldn't do anything. So the people in power did what they wanted to do. And I'm sure it was because they didn't believe that you could do anything about it.

Q We're moving now to parallel before you were -- before you were elected to council and fired from your position. Parallel how -- that what you saw with the civil rights movement nationwide and

what was happening here in Petersburg, which would have been late fifties starting into the early sixties?

A I really think that Petersburg was one of the main forces, if you will, in terms of the start and what began to happen as far as the civil rights struggle was concerned. Martin Luther King, of course, came about as a result of Rosa Parks and the bus situation with her. But we had Wyatt T. Walker here as a pastor at Gillfield Baptist Church, and he was an individual who wanted to cause something to happen and to make some changes. And of course ultimately he and another smaller group attempted to use the library and that, of course, set off some things.

And he was able to organize the Petersburg Improvement Association, which really was the catalyst for really organizing and causing people to become very, very concerned and wanting to do something. All of the churches began to become involved, and all of that began to build to the point where as far as Petersburg was concerned that the civil rights struggle became to some degree a national issue, really. And I think that Petersburg really was a major factor in the struggle.

Q Give me more particular examples of how Petersburg was major.

A Martin Luther King came to Petersburg on a number of occasions and, of course, spoke here. Ultimately, he invited Wyatt T. Walker to come with him because I think he felt that he was an individual who could get some things done. So -- and there were some other persons who were working with us in the Petersburg Improvement Association and working with Wyatt T. who also left to go to some phase of Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership program.

And I think all of that took place because it was obvious that Petersburg at that point at least was on the move, and the organization had taken place in such a way that things had begun to happen in terms of the picketing, and the sit-ins, and the library situation, and it just -- it began to expand. So you know, from that, from that perspective I feel that Petersburg really was a major part of the total struggle.

Q Did you find resentment -- were you sort of in what we would call now the sandwich generation, did you find resentment that a lot of the black population or some of the black population

wanted to stay like your parents, don't make waves, during that time or was it more of a, really, a group effort that everyone wanted to move forward in the black community?

A There were some people who thought that we were rocking the boat too much, and that changes were going to take place and we didn't need to try to encourage that to happen because trouble may start, but I would say that -- I would say over 95 percent of the black population in Petersburg at that time came together in such a way that there was this very strong effort, and the cohesion was such that people were really, really working together, which is not happening today in terms of our churches.

I don't think you could have found a church at that point in time, particularly black churches, who -- or which was not involved in some way. We used to move around to different churches for mass meetings, and the ministers were involved, and they would talk about certain situations from the pulpit, which is not done today like it was at that point in time. So I think through the churches and other organizations and what was happening through the Petersburg Improvement Association that

the black citizens really, really came together.

The first mass meeting, the very first mass meeting that we had was at Zion Baptist Church, and it was snowing that night, and the place was packed. And Wyatt T. and a couple of the other people who had gone to the library of course had been arrested, and that was I think a very significant catalyst in getting the people to come out, but at least from that point on for a number of years we really, really were together, you know. The churches really were together, and other organizations, social and civic organizations. It was a situation where I think blacks realized that some changes can be made, and we need to be a part of this. We need to support this.

So from a financial point of view and physical participation point of view, the black citizens in the city, except for a very, very small percentage, were there whenever we needed them. You know, we had people who showed up for picket lines that had never done anything like that before, you know, or sit-ins, so the whole situation became one strong effort. There were a few, but very few whites, who did participate, but for the most part the blacks really just put it all together.

THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We need to change tape.

Q The whites you are talking about, the ones who joined --

(Change of tape)

BY MS. WILLIAMS:

Q Let's pick up back in -- it would be starting that you -- I guess the early sixties when the -- after the library situation, which probably was the turning point for Petersburg, or the call-to-action point that something has got to really be done that would cause a group to come together.

A That's what's generated the very first mass meeting that Wyatt T. Walker and his group, attempting to integrate the library.

Q When all this started and you were involved were you ever threatened or did you feel threat the from white people that -- or did you feel any -- that your family could be harmed in any way because of your involvement?

A Well, I think we were concerned about that, because there were times when we would get strange phone calls, you know. No one that I can recall at this point actually threatened our lives, you know, but in very subtle ways, you know,

they would, I suppose, try to tell us you better stop doing this, you know. So from that perspective I would say that, you know, we experienced some situations that you couldn't put your hand on, so to speak.

Q But you knew it was there?

A Yeah.

Q When -- after that movement or that incident, the call to rally you mentioned a lot of the meetings at churches and so forth, but weren't there a lot of meetings here?

A In this house?

Q Uh-huh.

A Yes, there were a number of meetings here. And I guess particularly at the time when the school integration effort began and continued in terms of getting the people together, bringing the lawyers in, and putting the whole plan together in terms of what was going to be. There were a number of meetings here when the decision was made to move towards a ward system in Petersburg because Petersburg's annexation of Dinwiddie and Prince George significantly changed the population in terms of more white citizens coming in and felt something needed to be done to sort of balance that.

Q I don't mean to interrupt. Let's get back to that. When you were elected council, there were no ward system. It was a city at large?

A Yes.

Q Pick up from there, then, about obviously they wanted annexation. I guess they thought they were losing power so they wanted to get more whites in, or talk about what happened when you were elected to city council and the progression.

A Shortly prior to the time that I was elected to the city council the decision was granted for Petersburg to annex part of Prince George and part of Dinwiddie, and that of course did in fact change the mix of people, and Petersburg picked up more white citizens at that point in time, and it would have negatively affected the black ability to elect people to the city council. We had a need, if you will, to look at that situation and try to determine how we can best negate some of this so that the black population could in fact be represented on the city council.

And as a result of much discussion, it was decided that the -- probably the best thing to do would be to try to move towards getting a ward system in the city. We did have a number of

meetings here to discuss that and decide what the best approach might be.

Ultimately, it ended up in federal court in D.C., and the court ruled in our favor, of course, and that brought on the ward system. So the situation began to change I would say to the degree that, and I'm talking population-wise, to the degree that white citizens began to move out of Dinwiddie or at least move a little further into Dinwiddie, same thing with Prince George.

So with that happening, of course, we also began to move back towards a black populationin terms of the percentage of blacks increasing, but as a result of a need -- what was felt was a need to have more representation on city council it was decided that I would run in an at-large situation, and it was a lot of work, tremendous amount of work that was put into that. And I won as a result of that, and won notwithstanding the fact that it was still at large.

Q Now, talk about that a little bit. What were the other candidates like? Were you discouraged from running? And how did you get elected at large when Petersburg was still majority white?

A We worked hard. We really did. We put together a campaign which included personal contact, and we had a lot of people working, and we were knocking on a lot of doors, and we were having meetings, and as a result of that kind of activity, people began to become involved in the campaign, then they would go out and talk about what was going on and what the need was at that time.

We had a campaign office really which was on South Avenue at that time, because South Avenue was a bustling kind of place at that point. And I think that that helped in terms of people having somewhere to contact, somewhere to go. We had a lot of people who would work the office, go out and do different kinds of things. We had a tremendous TV program because the cost at that point in time with Channel 8 was, you know, not much at all. So we had a number of political ads, if you will, and commercials, and I did most of them personally. I mean we would put it together and, you know, and then periodically I would go to the station and I would present it. So people could see me on television, and we were talking about some issues that no doubt were of concern to the citizens of this city. But the work that went into that

campaign was such that it touched so many people that I came out with the highest number of votes.

Q Now, how did that reflect on or was that -- did that parallel -- did you also have a campaign to get people registered and how did that come about?

A Prior to the election, yes, we did.

Q Talk about that.

A The same kind of effort that we were putting into the political campaign, we really just tied it into voter registration, and as people went around campaigning for me, they were also campaigning, if you will, to get people registered to vote. So we really were able to increase the number of black voters in this city, and that also paid off tremendously.

Q Would you say that you, running for city council, was maybe the first time that black voters, it switched for them, no longer apathy, they wanted to vote, they had a reason to vote and become involved in the political process?

A I really would say, yes. We had two years prior to that, however, we had elected Joe Owens to the city council, and we worked on that one. We just sort of squeezed in on that one. There was a

run-off at that point, but we were able to weather and get him elected. We didn't have any significant turn-out for that election in 1964. I think the fact that he was there, and we talked about the fact that he needed some help, and then we put together, as I said, a significant campaign, and the voter registration, plus the political side of it in terms of campaigning is what paid off.

Q Were there all white males running against you?

A Yes.

Q Did you get any -- was there any conversation with any of those candidates?

A Oh, yes. Yes. In fact -- not prior to the election, because I think they didn't think that we had a chance, and I don't think they were really aware of everything that we were doing. But after I won in the general election, a run-off had developed, so two of the other candidates with the highest number of votes had to run against each other. And we invited them individually to come and talk to us on a couple of occasions, and tried to get some commitments in reference to things that we knew needed to be done.

So I think as the result of being

involved in that run-off, and getting the votes by virtue of encouraging blacks to come out again, after we'd made some decision about who we thought would be the best person, so they turned out again and we were able to elect Ray Houchens that we thought would be the better of the two candidates that were in the run-off, but we had a hand in that, too.

Q Talk about the -- what I'm hearing, and I want you to reiterate this, but this was a major turning point for this area, that is the first time that a black -- a white candidate realized they needed a black vote, or even cared about the black vote.

A Oh, I would say that that is absolutely true.

Q I want you to say what I did, instead of answering my question.

A The two white candidates who were in the run-off had no hesitation at all to accept our invitation and come and spend some time talking to us, and through that, of course, we could pass information to the black community. But I think they realized that after what we had done, putting my campaign together, and how the results came out,

that if they wanted to win, they had to come talk to us.

And that's what happened. And as a result of that, the person that we thought would be the better of the two was elected. So I think they realized at that point that they needed to continue talking to the black community, you know, and not going off on their own and thinking they were going to win it.

Q Did Petersburg set a precedent?

A I would say, yes, in the sense that we had not had the type of election and the type of campaigning up to that election that had happened before. Normally, you would have a few people running, and you know, they just I guess decided that whomever comes out of this and gets the most votes, which would not be too many, would be the person elected. And that whole situation in the 1966 election I think changed the whole atmosphere and the whole process, if you will.

Q When you were campaigning, did you ask for white votes?

A Yes, we did. We did.

Q What was the reaction?

A To some degree it was very favorable. And

then, of course, there were others who, you know, wouldn't even listen to us. But I think in addition to that door-to-door campaigning, the TV that we did I think helped tremendously, because it obviously got out to many, many people, but there were whites who supported us, yes.

Q Campaigns today are really nasty.

A Oh, yeah.

Q Was it nasty then?

A No. No. No. We really did a clean campaign in the sense that we came up with about -- I think it was about seven issues, and we wrote them up, and put them out, but there were issues that should have happened in terms of the end result long before I decided to run, you know. Blacks had been asking for some of these things, but never happened. So I think by the fact that I was able to disseminate that kind of information through the community, talk about it, put it out there as a result of our TV, we had some people to listen.

Q What were the issues?

A Well, one of the issues was talking about developing a ward system. And that was a very critical issue, I would say at that point in time. We talked about some other city kinds of things that

had not been considered, if you will, and no one was listening to, but they were all factual, and we just pushed them, and promised that we would do something about it. And again, I think all of that paid off.

Q How were you treated when you first became a council member by other council people, which I am assuming they were all males, right?

A Yes. I would say really very well. Arlie Andrews was the mayor at the time. There were only five, including me, there were only five. Joe Owens was still there when I was first elected. So really we were able to talk about a number of different situations. And during that period of time I proposed the Redevelopment and Housing Authority. And of course with Joe Owens' support, we were able to sell it, if you will to the extent that the council voted to have the referendum to see if the people wanted to do that, and it worked.

Because five years prior to that time it had been tried and there was a strong push to tell the citizens of Petersburg, don't do this. Federal government is going to come in here and take over the city. You know. So it lost. The referendum lost.

But we made sure that there were a

number of sessions, if you will, where information was put out in reference to what the results, the positive results could be and we made sure that it -- that the issue was disseminated in such a way that it was positive.

And as I said, the council as a whole, really, with the exception of one person, Lester Bowen, supported it. So you had white council members supporting it and that obviously helped in the white community.

Q When did that all start to change?

A The atmosphere or the environment? After the ward system was developed and the court decided that that would be, we elected four council members who were black, and the council of course increased to seven, so you had four blacks and three whites. We really kind of got into some hard kinds of discussion, and there was a lot of conflict that developed.

Q And what year was that?

A That was 1970 -- that was in 1972, because we only had one year -- the court gave us one year to get back to the even/odd kind of voting ward-wise, and in '73 we had to have another election.

Q Now, this all paralleled then, and you can reiterate this on camera, that there was good rapport with city council members until the time that you had the ward system and at the same time schools were integrated?

A Yeah, even though it didn't happen exactly at the same time but, yes, that was the period of time when Petersburg High School and Peabody were merged, and the school system integration process took place. There were issues on the council that we just couldn't get together on. And as I said, there was a tremendous amount of bickering, but at the same time conflict, and not being able to be such that we had good, smooth running council.

Q Let's step back just a little bit. When you were a city council member, when freedom of choice came about, talk about the climate in education and what was changing and how -- what was happening here in Petersburg when that came about or even before, because your daughters were involved before freedom of choice at Jackson, correct?

MRS. FAUNTLEROY: When they went to Jackson they were --

Q Well, you were on council then, so how did you -- was it a gradual change in atmosphere of

cooperation in Petersburg with at this time what I consider the politics starting to merge? There were -- you were on city council. There had been a black member previous to you. And then we start seeing the change in schools. How did you start seeing the change in --

MRS. FAUNTLEROY: Had the white flight. Had the with flight.

Q -- right -- what happened in Petersburg?

A I think the major issue and the major change was when the two high schools were merged. And what we began to see at that point really was, and just -- just before that when people realized that was going to happen, whites began to -- began to leave Petersburg High School. And that was about the time that the private high school out, you know, off of --

MRS. FAUNTLEROY: Overbrook.

A -- yeah -- was built, and -- yeah, many of the white students, of course, attended there. So that in itself I think -- that merger I think generated some concern on the part of whites that they didn't want to be in a -- as a part of that kind of situation.

As far as the elementary schools are

concerned, I didn't see that much of a change. The schools were -- well, the school boundaries and all were changed to accommodate, you know, the neighborhoods, if you will. And I don't recall that there was any really significant flight from the schools at that time elementary-wise, because our daughter and another one of her friends attended Walnut Hill School. And then you began to have more blacks into -- into that elementary system, if you will. So --

Q You have got to change tape?

THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Uh-huh.

(Change of tape.)

BY MS. WILLIAMS:

Q I'm trying to ascertain that time period from when you were elected to city council to when schools were totally integrated, that when you started out on council that it was a pretty positive atmosphere working with, you being the only black on city council, working with the white member -- other white members, but then it gradually got -- when it -- there started to be the conflict, not only the ward system, but the integration of the schools and white flight.

A When I was first elected, now, we had two

blacks, because Joe Owens was still there. He was not there after '68. I think the white flight began basically as a result of annexation. And when that started happening, of course, obviously, the population changed, the school system population began to change, the integration of the school system took place about the same time.

Petersburg High School and Peabody were merged, I think it was about 1970 --

MRS. FAUNTLEROY: It was 1970.

A It was 1970 when the two high schools were merged, and that of course I think added to the white flight. The situation in terms of the elementary schools, of course, as I've indicated, I don't think was affected as much. The high school situation was just one where you have got a significantly larger number of students, and there just were some attitudes in that kind of setting that people didn't want to deal with.

Q You had three daughters?

A Uh-huh.

Q Were -- did they mind going to a mixed school?

A I don't think so. I don't think so. Our oldest daughter was at Petersburg High School prior

to the merger. Now, she went through some things -- went through some attitudes being expressed by Peabody students, really. She was a cheerleader, and of course Petersburg High and Peabody began to play football and what have you together, I mean as opposing teams. This is prior to the merger.

And she was the only black member of the cheering squad. So of course when, you know, the Peabody students saw her, then she had turned on them, you know, she's gone over here with the whites and, you know, left us over here and didn't want to be a part of us kind of thing, which of course was not true at all, because we were just trying to help the whole process. And she worked well in that situation.

I mean, she didn't -- she didn't do anything that would say that she was angry about having gone in that situation or -- she began to make some friends. So then of course after that, you know, the merger took place in 1970 and the whole environment, of course, obviously began to change.

Q How did you handle it as a family, though, when she would come home and she sort of would be caught in the middle because you know there were

still whites that didn't want blacks in the school, and then you have blacks that thought she had turned on them, how did you handle that?

A Well, I think we -- we talked to her, you know, and after school we would have some dinner-table conversation and just I guess try to find, the best way we could, find out if she was having any problems, if so, what were they. If we discovered something that might have been leading in that direction we tried to head it off, you know.

Ed Betts was the principal of Petersburg High School at the time, and I think he tried to do what he could to keep everything in order. I think maybe we met with him a couple times, but I think it was just a matter of conversation with our daughter. And of course the other two daughters -- you know, I mean all of us were there, so they obviously heard what was going on and whatever she had to say about the situation.

And I think by having those kinds of discussions, and open discussions, and making suggestions if we needed to in terms of handling a given situation at the high school, but really as far as Veronica was concerned when she was the only black, the situation really was rather harmonious I

would say because she seemed to have gotten along well with her teachers. We didn't find that there was any significant problem in terms of how the teachers were responding to her.

So unless something happened with, you know, one of these athletic contests and Peabody students sort of started jumping her kind of thing verbally, other than that, I think the number of incidents that she had really were relatively small in number.

Q What was the good about forced integration and what was the bad about it?

A I think I would have to say that the good really was that you were able to begin a process where the students ultimately began to find that everybody is the same, and began to really work together.

From an athletic point of view, some of the black boys began to play football and what have you and that helped, I think. But in terms of the good coming out of the integration, I think that the mixing of the two schools brought about what I would think would be situations where to some degree, although you wouldn't think that this might have happened at that point in time year-wise, but I

think that the students were exposed to some experiences that they had not had before and probably would not have had.

The Peabody students when the merger took place, the Peabody students didn't want to go. They really didn't. And I had the opportunity with Elmo Rainey at that time to meet with a number of the students on several occasions and talk to them about the change, and talk to them about what could happen, what good could happen by meeting with other people, if you will.

I guess the negative side of it is simply that there was, when the merger took place, there was some conflict. There were some students of course I think from both sides who didn't want it to happen, and I think to a degree they were doing what they could do to maybe cause it not to work. But even then, from what I saw, the teachers I think at both schools, but at the higher level at Petersburg High School, I think those teachers worked well with trying to cause the situation to be a good one, worked well with the students in terms of causing them to be exposed to whatever needed to be.

There was some, you know, mixing of

faculties, too, so you had white teachers who went to Peabody along with some white students, and same thing on the high school side.

I'm not aware, Gerry was at Peabody at the time, but I'm not aware of any major situations that took place as a result of the teachers being mixed. I think -- I think they began to mix well, if you will. And the educational side of it, I think, began to fit in and build, if you will, to the extent that the teachers were able to work with all of the students.

Q Talk a little bit during this period right before integration of what was happening here in Petersburg I guess from the mid sixties when you were on council to when integration happened in the 1970s of how Petersburg, the civil rights movement was moving forward in Petersburg as compared throughout the rest of the country.

A When the two schools were merged, when the two high schools were merged and the other elementary schools were beginning to change to some degree, the civil rights struggle, if you will, that era, really had begun to fade, the activity. I mean we didn't have picket lines and we didn't have people sitting in at lunch counters. We were more

into trying to get people jobs and bringing about some changes along that line.

So the major issue, if you will, at the 1970 forward really was, was the high school situation. So we didn't have any problem and to the degree of the active civil rights struggle other than trying to continue to work with what we were already doing. But as I said, I think the major situation then really was employment.

Q But during -- maybe we need to back up a little bit more, because I want you to talk about the parallel of before integration, though, and what was happening here from the -- from the -- when there's integration between the period between the library -- the arrests there and picketing started from the library situation to the point when schools were integrated, the atmosphere in Petersburg and how you saw that change based on the civil rights movement as opposed to -- I remember as a child, you see on TV the marches and everybody being sprayed with water and all the arrests and the beatings and so forth, was that happening here to any extent?

A Not -- not the -- not the physical part of it. I mean what we saw -- say what happened to the people who did the march across the Selma Bridge or

were trying to do other kinds of physical things in reference to Birmingham, and what we would see in terms of the police beating people and spraying them with fire hoses, excuse me, we didn't have that.

Gerry and some of her crew who did some sit-ins had some problems like having hot coffee poured on them and those kinds of situations, but not physical from the point of view that somebody was beating on you.

Q But emotionally?

A Oh, emotionally, I would think, and Gerry can speak to this later on, too, but I'm sure emotionally it was a very significant negative impact. You had -- you had young people who were a part of the sit-in activity, and obviously I'm sure they couldn't understand why somebody is pouring hot coffee on them, that kind of thing, and from an emotional point of view, I would think that that, you know, affected them quite a bit.

On the picket line, you had people who would come by and call you names and maybe try to spit on you once in a while and that kind of thing, you know, so again, you've got an emotional situation from the point of view that our training and what we did to train the picketers and the

sit-in people was such that it was infused in them, you don't hit back. If something happens at the lunch counter, you sit there, you know.

So we didn't have any physical confrontation between the blacks and the whites at picket line and sit-ins that created a significant problem, but the people on the picket line and people who were sitting at the lunch counters had -- had a lot to deal with, maybe more than what you would think. But it was very difficult, you know, to be -- walking the picket line and you are told to not do anything that's going to create a problem, and if somebody calls you a name, you just keep on walking. If somebody tries to pour something on you or whatever, you just keep on going. You know.

And I'm sure that had to affect people, particularly young people because there were a lot of young people doing that. So as we talked to people, a debriefing kind of situation, and they would tell you how they felt and what may have happened to them, they went through some trying times just not being able to respond.

Q Before we leave the sixties and get into the seventies, go back and tell me about the Wilcox Lake situation.

A Well, what I remember about the Wilcox Lake situation is, first of all, that Wilcox Lake, of course, was all white in terms of the people who could use it, what I would consider to be the park area part of that, and of course the swimming in the lake. The city, of course, maintained it in such a way that it was a beautiful place, you know, and people had fun, I'm sure, by going to swim or using the area around Wilcox Lake.

About the middle fifties, a decision was made that this has been going on long enough, you know, and all of the citizens ought to be able to use this facility, it's a public facility owned by the city so everybody ought to be able to go there. And that effort was made. Mr. Alphonso McCain, who was the Director of the YMCA, the black YMCA on Harding Street at that time was one of the persons who coordinated and spearheaded that whole effort. Unfortunately, he lost his job by being involved in all of that.

Q Now, you say that he was head of the black YMCA.

A Yeah.

Q But was the black YMCA run by white?

A No. No. He -- he was the director, if

you will, and took care of whatever needed to be taken care of in that YMCA setting. Obviously, you know, the Harding Street YMCA, which is the recreation center that's still there, didn't have anything like what was on Union Street, I mean no swimming pool and those kind of things indoor-wise. But he -- he was the director, people that worked there, you know, he was responsible for them. So from that point of view, you know, he ran the whole situation on Harding Street.

Q But who fired him because of his -- because of the movement with Wilcox Lake?

A You know, I'm not absolutely sure how that took place except that it appeared I think at that point in time his activity and the publicity that came from it caused a decision to be made I think by the YMCA structure, and of course ultimately he had to leave.

But then, you know, the end result of Wilcox Lake was the city shut it down so nobody uses it, you know, and it has never been used since except for people going out there fishing. So the answer to that -- to that question by the City of Petersburg was, we'll close this and that will take care of it, which to me was a dumb way of doing it

but -- but it was done.

Q Before we move on to the seventies, when you look back at the sixties and the fifties of how things progressed here with civil rights, do you see anything that you wish you had been involved in that you did that you would have done differently? Hindsight is always 20/20.

A I am really not sure about that because I don't know how we might have changed the approach. We had to do some things that emphasized why we were doing what we did and to dramatize it, if you will, as best as we could to get as much publicity out of it as we could so that not only Petersburg but other places would know what was going on and what the situation was in Petersburg.

So I really don't know that I would have done anything in a different manner. Basically, I don't think we talked about trying anything different. We watched what was going on and how effective the picket lines were or the sit-ins were, and other related kinds of situations, but that was designed to better those situations, you know, to do the kinds of things that would bring about more notice of what ought to be.

Q How much tape do you have, before we start

the seventies?

THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We've got three minutes. Do you want to cahnge tape?

Q We'll change tapes, yeah. I was trying to give you a break because I knew you were probably fidgety.

(Change of tape.)

A The discussions that we had when we would put people out on the picket line, or to a sit-in or to go somewhere looking for a job, those kind of things, we always emphasized that you have to remember why you are there, and you don't want to create a situation where someone is going to be arrested for assault. You know, you can't jump somebody because they said something.

You know, the point being we're just trying to instill in all of the people who were involved that you have a purpose, you know, and it is not to be hitting on anyone. It is to make your point in terms of you need to do what's necessary to cause everybody to be able to sit at the lunch counter or to go in this store, you know, what have you.

Q Did that change with the young people when the schools merged, because there was some violence?

Talk about that.

A Well, I can't talk about it too much, I really can't because -- other than what I heard, see, because I wasn't there, you know, when it happened, I mean as far as the school is concerned.

Q But you had your daughter -- you had two daughters in school then.

A Yes, but they didn't -- they didn't see as much of that I think as maybe some others. You know, they knew or heard about a fight or something like that, but they may have been in a different section of the building or something, you know. So the discussion that we had with them really was based on more or less what somebody told them.

Once in a while they may have seen something, but in terms of the violence as it relates to the merger of the high schools, it really wasn't as much as I think people had anticipated. I think there were feelings about, you know, why am I here, or why did you come over here, but I think it just -- they went on to class and did whatever they had to do and then they went home, you know. But you know, there was some conflict, but not that much.

Q Talk about -- you mentioned a few minutes

ago, and I didn't want to jump ahead this much, but we're now in the seventies, early seventies, and you are starting to see the civil rights movement change focus, and you mentioned the focus then was on getting better jobs. Talk about that.

A Well, after the active civil rights struggle in Petersburg, you know, the picketing the sit-ins, what have you, we spent a lot of time talking to employers and trying to do some assessment of how many blacks work here, you know, what kind of positions do they have? And we would spend time meeting with people to talk about that, and you know, what are your plans to try to change this structure that you have?

You don't have -- you don't have -- seem to have any upward ladder for the blacks that are here. Some of them have been here all of their lives and they are still doing the same thing, you know. So from that perspective, I think we spent a lot of time trying to be sure that as much as we could, create equal employment opportunities and, you know, affirmative action kinds of situations in terms of upward mobility within the plant or within whatever the business was at that time.

Q What were some of the responses you got

when you went out into the businesses and the community?

A I think the most prevalent one was that we can't -- we can't just move somebody, you know, arbitrarily. This person has been here for 15 years, this person has only been here 12 years kind of thing. And you try to cause the employer, if you will, to understand that that may be true, but this person over here progressed on to wherever he or she may be now, and this person that you say only has 12 years has been sitting there for, you know, that period of time, or less -- lesser period of time, but you don't have a program that provides for this person to be able to move up.

In a number of cases you had training or educational sessions where people may be exposed to managerial kinds of activities and what managers ought to be doing, or ought not to be doing. And then when something opens up, you've got this training and, you know, we can try you over here, but the person over here never got that, so how can you expect this person not to be frustrated or not to be angry when they see somebody else moving and they are still sort of sitting in the same place?

Q Do you think that your visits made a

difference, or that businesses ignored that until they were mandated to change by the government?

A Well, I think some of them did wait, if you will, or didn't do anything until it was mandated. In other situations, I think some of the employers did what I think they may have been able to do at that time to change the situation, you know, in their business. And I think from time to time you would see some people began to move, began to be able to get into supervisory type positions. And you try to follow up, if you will, to see whether or not what you've been trying to do has any positive effect and sometimes it has.

Q Well, once -- what you started back then is still work in progress, isn't it?

A Oh, yes. Oh, yes. No question about that. None. Not at all. Because there's still much of that that's going on and you don't see it from outside in, but on occasion more so than not, people will talk about what is not happening with them in a given setting, you know, and the fact that they have not had an opportunity, but in terms of a having a special program I would say that makes an effort to do what we were doing then, that's not the case at this point.

Q Let's talk about in the seventies, which now I can start to remember. You feel like the ward system had more to do with white flight than the integration of schools. What started happening when there were more blacks on city council than whites?

A Well, first of all, I think the ward system had some effect, but I also think that the annexation process had as much or maybe even a little bit more, because those persons may have been living here when annexation took place, and didn't have anywhere to go, so they moved out to one of the locations that didn't look quite as different to them as what they saw back here.

Q Now, let me stop you. Do you think that was racial or do you think it was because they didn't want to be part of the city or maybe some of both?

A I think it was some of both. I mean, I had people to tell me that Petersburg's tax rate, which is a classic example, is considerably higher than what it is in Dinwiddie as an example or Prince George, so they began to look for something else where they are not going to be paying as much in taxes.

The situation in terms of the racial

side of it, I do believe some of it was that simply because I don't want you living next door to me. It is hard to tell how much of that existed, but some of it did.

Q Move forward then about, because I interrupted you, things with city council started getting nasty when there were four blacks and three whites, or I should say uncompromising.

A Yeah, I think -- now, maybe that's a better word, uncompromising, because blacks would be proposing whatever it may have been, and you would always have some serious opposition to trying to get that done.

Now, as far as the racial breakdown is concerned, the black members of the council obviously could have caused it to happen, but in many cases I think we tried to bring somebody around or tried to get them to see the value in doing what we're talking about doing here. So from the point of view of having that kind of a conflict, it created a problem sometimes just in terms of the conversation, and what might or might not have been said, and that of course changes the environment, the atmosphere, and it gets more difficult to work in that kind of a setting.

Q I'm not going to mention names, but there were racist people on city council?

A Oh, I don't doubt that. You could tell. You know when something like that is happening, if you will. You -- it's no question about the fact that -- I mean, you can just -- you can see it in what they say, how they say it. To a degree you can see it through facial expressions if it's something that, you know, they don't want to deal with. So yes, there were people who -- well, who were racial from that point of view, yes.

Q I can go back now to personal experience living in that time frame that it was racist and there was always something going on here, and the black members of council were blamed for Brown & Williamson leaving and for losing shopping, the retail business in Petersburg.

A I had an experience as a council member, and with the council, meeting with the local management for Brown & Williamson and we had quite a discussion about, you know, what are your plans, what may be in the hopper, so to speak, in terms of what you are going to do in the future. And we went through considerable discussion about that.

And this is a fact. We were told

that, yes, there are going to be some changes. The change is going to be that a portion of our manufacturing process will go to Macon, Georgia and the rest of it is going to stay right here in Petersburg. Now, I don't recall which was which, but as an example, Macon was to take care of all of the foreign product and Petersburg was to take care of all the domestic product, as they referred to it.

For the next year we never heard anything different than that. And then all of a sudden one day we wake up and find that Brown and Williamson is talking about shutting down, and where -- how they got to that point, I don't know because we weren't involved in that part of the discussion when maybe higher management or somebody made a decision like that.

But every time someone brings that up, I make that statement. I don't think they believe it, but that's what we were told. So you know, with that in mind, we had no reason to believe that Brown & Williamson as a whole was going to move, but the split would be just as I described it.

Q Why do you think, then, go back to that, racism was still very prominent in the city, that the black faction of council has been blamed for

something that really you had no control over?

A The only thing that I can think of really is that I think someone was looking for a reason to blame somebody, and the fact that, you know, Brown and Williamson is going to move, really going to move, then the black portion of the city council has caused that to happen because of the conflict among council members, et cetera, you know.

I've been told on a number of occasions that Brown and Williamson -- Brown and Williamson attempted to buy some property right around them so they could make some changes. In fact, several occasions I was advised that they wanted to buy the church I'm a member of, Gillfield Baptist Church. And of course the age and significance of that church, the church said, no, we were not ready to sell. And I think the reason simply was the historical significance that is there.

Q Go back to that. If that had been a white church would Brown & Williamson ever have been located there?

A You mean from the very beginning?

Q Would they have ever -- if Gillfield had been a white church would the powers that be have

ever let Brown & Williamson buy the property around it to begin with?

A I can understand your question but I'm not -- I don't know. I'm not sure. Gillfield -- Gillfield bought a considerable portion of property there because there were houses all the way between the church and what is now Farmer Street and some other locations around there so that they could build the addition that they have now, but in terms of whether it would have happened, I really don't know. I really don't.

Gillfield had been there so long, you know, that I just -- I just don't think that there was anything that could have caused Gillfield Baptist Church to make a decision to sell that facility. I really don't.

We had, you know, church meetings and you talk about it and all of that but I just don't believe that -- I just don't believe that anything could have been done to sell Gillfield Baptist Church. I really don't have.

Q Going back, because you mentioned this and I don't want to forget it, you were talking about creating the ward systems and the whole redistricting and that type of thing, was that some

of the hardest part of moving -- of what you had to face in Petersburg with moving civil rights movement forward?

A In terms of the ward system?

Q And redistricting.

A And redistricting? I don't think so, from this perspective, that the ward system came about as a result of annexation and the need to expand the council because of annexation and try to get more people on the council. So I wouldn't say that that was the most difficult period, really.

Q What was the most difficult period?

A One of the most difficult periods was trying really to get through the ward system structure, and I think the only reason that I'm saying it and putting it that way is because I think there were a number of people who did not want the ward system. There was, you know, considerable discussion about what would happen if you had a ward system, and how from other places the ward system had ended up being something that caused people to be able to do things that were illegal and all of that kind of thing.

But that took quite a while and, you know, we had to have many discussions, and you know,

the court hearings and what have you, so in order to move from a five-member, at-large system to the ward system I think -- I think was very, very difficult, simply because you had people who really fought it. And --

Q People fighting it, white people fighting it?

A Yeah. Yeah. Uh-huh. Yes. Yes. The smaller council, five-person council and the at-large voting system over the years had been something that the white population could control. And I think they saw that that would not necessarily be the same under the ward system, so I think that, again, I think that the proposal to do the ward system was very difficult. We just had to go through so much, and there were so many people who wanted it and so many people who didn't want it and, you know, and it just created all kinds of problems really until the court resolved it.

Q In the big picture, looking back, and looking at what's happened, and looking forward, Petersburg is still going, I guess it mirrors probably the south and the rest of the country that there's still racism, and from the time of white flight you have seen a lot of economic decline in

Petersburg. I guess it's gone through spurts of coming back up and then other things drive it down, the economy or whatever, now it seems to be coming back up. Can you address the overall picture of how as a society that we didn't do a good job at dealing with the civil rights movement but racism is still prevalent?

A Well, I think -- I think the civil rights movement in the City of Petersburg accomplished what it was designed to accomplish, and that is to open the city up in terms of people not having to be concerned about whether they go in this restroom or whether they can drink out of this water fountain and to a great degree there has been some change in reference to employment patterns because of some of the new businesses or light industry that has come in, and I those companies brought something with them that didn't carry that kind of a stigma.

I believe that Petersburg is on an up-swing. I really do. It's obviously moving south, but I think the hospital, new hospital I think will generate some more business. I think they're already doing something. I mean the rehabilitation hospital is there I'm sure as a result of Southside Regional moving. I'm not

exactly sure what's going to happen to the old mall area, but it looks like Food Lion, and if they are responsible for this, it looks like Food Lion is adding on something else to that structure that is supposed to I guess provide facilities for other smaller businesses.

You know, from time to time, you hear about other situations that might develop in the southern end of the city. Now, I would hope that Sycamore Street will come back. There's consideralbe discussion about the river, the harbor, and what can be. It will take -- in my opinion I would say it would probably take another eight to ten years before we see anything that will be the type of harbor that people are talking about.

Q Well, hold that thought. He's got to change tapes.

A Okay.

(Change of tape)

Q Before we stopped rolling you mentioned about -- I think we were talking about the most difficult period of time --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- was the -- trying to have the ward system accepted. Overall, though, what -- and you

talked about the civil rights movement did accomplish what it set out to accomplish at that time, but certainly from -- after integration through now, there has still been a racial divide in this city, and I think that probably reflects throughout the country, it could be more here or less here, but on issues, and we even see it on council today that there is a racial divide, what do we need to do that -- to move forward as one? I don't have the answer. I'm trying to -- I don't understand it.

A This unfortunately I think is an age-old problem, because we spend more time discussing issues related to each individual on the council than we do in terms of discussing issues in reference to the growth of the city, and I would agree, I think that there are council situations and people on the council who don't want certain things to happen, and I think that the racial divide, if you will, is there, and until such time as you are able to really address municipal issues, I don't think we're going to be able to move like we ought to move as fast as we need to move. And I don't mean just do something over night, but in some way we I think have to cause the people on the council

to come together, if you will, and work on some projects that will cause the city to do what needs to be done to move it forward, to attract desirable businesses.

And we have some land that could be used for light industry, and that's the kind of thing I think that's got to happen if we plan the city to become one that is really going to attract more business and people. Some, as I indicated, some new businesses have come in, but I think there's much more that can be done.

Q Looking back, what are you most proud of in moving civil rights forward and the betterment of Petersburg that you are proud that you had a hand in making that happen?

A I think that to a great degree the, in my opinion, at least, the Redevelopment and Housing Authority I think has come about as a result of people working together at that point in time to eliminate housing, housing that people never should have been living in, and I think without the civil rights movement, I don't think we would have stopped, so to speak and taken a look at what needed to be done in places like the Gillfield area and some of the buildings that have come up as a result

of that.

I think to a degree we have -- we have changed -- maybe not much, but I think we've changed the environment or the atmosphere to the degree that some people are coming back to Petersburg. Some businesses that would not possibly have come are coming or are now here, and I think it's as a result of, to a degree, people being able to work in such a way, to work together to get those kinds of things to happen.

I think we have a long ways to go in terms of the working together of all of the citizens, or majority of the citizens to cause Petersburg to recognize really the fact that there's still much to be done in terms of bringing people together -- excuse me -- and using that, if you will, to cause more businesses to come into the city.

It's difficult at this point I think to pinpoint one situation, let's say, that came about as a result of the civil rights era that has caused significant progress in the city. We just need -- we just need to I think take advantage of some of what we have and what looks like some of what may be coming, and I would hope that as a

result of the fact that now you don't have at least blatant racism, it is kind of subtle, but it's there, but getting people to work together so that we can take advantage, as I said, of what we have, and turn it into a city that will grow people-wise as well as business-wise to cause Petersburg to be a city that we really will be proud of.

If LIST is able to do what they want to do in reference to the Halifax Street Triangle, South Avenue area, and not only from a business perspective, but maybe some housing, that would be a significant growth factor, I think.

But just thinking about what, what was in 1963, '64 in terms of whether or not I could go into Rucker Rosenstock's Tea Room, or sit down at the lunch counter, or go to the Blue Bird Theater, which theaters aren't even there anymore, anywhere, that obviously has changed, but we've lost I think all of what could have been if we had -- and I don't know what we should have done at that point, but if we had done whatever we needed to do at that time to take advantage of providing for Sycamore Street to be what I think it could have been if we could have held onto some of the businesses, if we could have -- and this may happen, if we could have caused more

housing, particularly second-level housing and bring some people into that area, I think, I think we would be ahead of the game.

Q Why is racism still -- it was -- there has been a great deal accomplished in the civil rights movement, and you hit on that, that it was blatant racism then, the underlying racism is there now; why is it still there, and to what degree?

A I think to -- I think it's there to a great degree, really, in relationship to the fact that it's hidden. It's there, and I think every once in a while it raises its head. In terms of why it's there, I think we still have many people who really don't want Petersburg to grow too much because it would take away from their ability to make money. There is I think an obvious effort to stop certain growth in this city. I really do. You know, I recognize that the southern end of the city is and probably will continue to grow to a degree, but I think we are forgetting the inner city, and I think until we do something about that and bring a good mix of people, I think that underlying racism factor is still going to be there. We've got to do some things that will cause the city to grow in such a way that there won't be room for that.

Q Is it as much black and white racism or is it economic racism?

A I think it is more economic racism than black and white. However, I think unfortunately there is still black and white racism. Now, the economic side of it may tend to lessen if we can get that up to a point where people -- where there are more jobs, more reasonably paid jobs, and do away with still some of the blight that we have that exists. I think we've got to do that.

I sit on the Planning Commission now, and we won't -- it will be very, very soon that we will begin to work on a new comprehensive plan. Well, we have already gotten consultants to begin to take a look at it. And I'm hoping that we'll be able to develop a plan that will point the city in certain directions. We won't be able to dictate to people that you do this, that or the other, but at least we would have a plan that says this section of the city should be this, and over here should be this, and if we can get that done, I really think that we'll move.

Q Anything that I haven't asked you that I have missed? And I know it will be. I'll think about it some before I come back to do Gerry, but

overall, was there anything that we haven't touched on?

A I can't think of anything really at this point that we haven't touched on. If I do, I'll let you know.

Q All right. Well, I'll go back too. You know --

(End of DVD)