

Interview

with

Dan Okun

November 5, 1990

by Ann McColl

Transcribed by Jovita Flynn

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START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

ANN MCCOLL: This is an interview of Dan and Beth Okun on November 6, 1990 at 1:00 in their home. The topic of the interview is Dan Pollitt, his life and accomplishments. The interviewer is Ann McColl.

AM: I'd like to start this interview by asking you what your names are.

BETH OKUN: My name is Beth Okun.

DAN OKUN: And Dan Okun.

AM: How long have you lived in this area?

DO: We came here in 1952, several years before Dan came. I think he came in 1957 or something or a few years later.

AM: And can you just tell me a little bit about your lives here?

BO: Are you sure that's right? I thought he was a ...

DO: He did. I said we came in 1952. No, no we came well before they did.

AM: What can you just tell me a little bit of your life here? What have been your major interests, activities?

BO: Ours?

AM: Yes.

DO: Well, mine in relation to Dan are twofold. In terms of the University, I was fairly active in organizations in which he was also active such as the American Association of University Professors. And also, we were very active on campus together when it came to civil rights issues or when there were demonstrations on campus and this particularly came forward

during the Viet Nam War situation. Whenever there were critical events, there was a group of professors that came together and Dan Pollitt and I were among them. So, we were always active together on campus. I became chairman of the faculty in 1970, '70 to '73, which is the Viet Nam period, and then became chairman of the faculty, I guess about several terms later in the late seventies. And so we were both active in all of the liberal causes on campus, if you don't divide liberal the way Helms divides them.

BO: Another thing that brought us together was the fact that the Community Church had just started Chapel Hill. Many of us were fairly "religious." This church was being established around a minister who had been shoved away, I guess, from Presbyterian Church with the statement that he was "too Christian" and not sufficiently "Presbyterian".

AM: Who was this minister?

DO: Charlie Jones. You will probably hear a lot about Charlie Jones because he was . . .

BO: So this church was called the Community Church and had just started itself when we came. There were some people who had withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church at the same time that Charlie Jones was. . .

DO; Fired.

BO: Fired, yes. That's what I'm saying. And they were meeting in Hill Hall there on campus. And there was a very small core group there and we joined because Charlie Jones was there and he represented what we felt in Chapel Hill was a quality

school, _____ and what was happening in the area of peace and justice. And so we joined and as soon as the Pollitts came to town they joined. So we had this relationship before _____.

DO: Beth was active in the church; she was a member. I was never a member of the church. But Beth was actually active enough to become chairman of the board of the church. It's been along time ago and Dan Pollitt became very active. In fact, one of the amazing things to me is that he's kept. . . . I don't know what the current situation is. I don't think he's doing it now, but for many years he taught Sunday School and for the few years that we could get our children to go to Sunday School, which were not very many, he taught them.

BO: Dan is a quite individualistic grade teacher.

DO: Yes, he's not your ordinary Sunday School teacher either.

BO: The church at that time had no material which was to be presented. The teacher said, "Here, this is what we teach the children." It is mostly whoever wanted to teach or felt they could teach was given a group of children. You told them what age you wanted and they came. And I remember I substituted once for several teachers many times and I always read them a story not out of the Bible necessarily and, I think that's the one thing you know. He kind of tried to stay with the Bible but he made interesting stories. I remember he told this one when Joseph's coat many times he was way off up in the sky somewhere. But it's a charming and wonderful story.

DO: Have you ever been in one of his classes?

AM: Yes, I took Constitutional Law from him.

DO: Okay, then I think you have some idea about his style.

BO: But I was trying to think big before we came how, you know, when we really first. . . . I can't remember. It's been too long. I can't remember when we met or how we met or we just started along.

DO: We just gravitated together, both in our social lives and in our campus life, in our church life and in almost everything we participated. Of course, he was the founder of the a State Chapter of the American Civil liberties Union and we've both been active in that. Beth was on the local board. I'm on the board now, but Dan was very active. He started it and he's won a lot of awards. He won the Frank Porter Graham award as the outstanding Civil Libertarian.

BO: It's given by the local _____.

DO: So you ought to get a list. You ought to get Dan to sit down and write down all the awards he's gotten, but that's certainly one that he's gotten. In fact, he's run on the National Board of The American Civil Liberties Union. In fact. .

BO: And state board. He's been on the state board. One of the most pleasant things that happened, a very pleasant thing that happened in my life was that he and I were on the state board for one year, together at the same time and the state board meetings are always held in Greensboro, and we would always travel over and back from the board meeting together. It was

during those times that I really got to see the side of Dan that I had hardly ever seen before. I remember once he came in the winter time and he had on a bright red outrageous cap somebody had knitted for him with the tail coming along down and a tassel which was not the thing that I ever would think Dan Pollitt would wear, but there he was wearing it and I asked him about it and he got into a long story about how many of these caps he had and where they had come from and what people had given him to and almost every time you start out talking with him, if you are alone with him, you will find some aspect of his personality or his life that you didn't know before. We've been knowing him for years and it still happens. Something will come up about where he's been or what he's done or something about him that's odd or that's interesting or intriguing, I should say. His range of friends is remarkable. I have never known anybody who knows as many people as he knows in the United States, everywhere. He knows them and he knows them instantly. He can tell you something about something that happened with this guy, or something happened to the other guy or this lady. He's quite a guy.

DO: The only thing in this connection that I ride him about all the time, when somebody does something well, he'll say, "But he's one of my former students". He never says that and more of his students if had known North Carolina have something _____, so, but he never says, "That's one of my students." (laughter). So you know, so we are constantly. . . . In fact, I hold him responsible for everything wrong in North Carolina because

presumably all of these people are all of his students. (laughter) So it doesn't slow him down though. He's still crazy. Which he should, there's no question about it, because I'm sure his lectures leave more of an impression, a lasting impression, than lectures of the committee or of his colleagues who are much more text book and organized. I'm sure he uses anecdotes and he has a philosophy which runs through everything. So this is what a good teacher does and I'm sure that students do not think him a good teacher, most students don't because, and I heard this, because he isn't organized. He doesn't give lectures that you can take neat notes about and study for the examination, but on the other hand, for the students who are there for the right reasons, I think he would be very good. Of course, I've never taken a course from him but I've heard him speak many times. But any rate, this is the case. But he's been involved. During the civil liberties issues here he's been involved in everything. I was very active. Well, we were both very active in the civil rights thing. My own particular area during that issue was with the integration of the schools in 1956 and he arrived here just after the Brown vs the Board of Education and we had already been organized here for that. We had a minister who was the preacher of the. . . . I guess he's not called a priest. He's an Episcopalian. You don't call an Episcopalian ministers preachers. (laughter) As David Yates, at the Chapel of the Cross, which is the one right off the campus and he was the first chairman of the Chapel Hill fellowship for school integration. It was the Chapel Hill Interracial Fellowship of

school integration. And he was the first chairman and I was very active. Then he left town and I became chairman and these were very critical periods that ran for about seven or eight years. We were the first school system to integrate in North Carolina. Of course, he played a very important role in this.

AM: What did he do?

DO: Well we had to . . .

BO: Everybody was doing. . .

DO: It's hard. I don't remember specifically what his role was, but I remember one of the major things we had. Well, it began when we went through a lot of different stages. The one I think he was most involved in was shortly right after he came. I'm sure he was very heavily involved and I don't have a good memory for details and things that go back, but if you would bring this up Dan has a very good memory for these kinds of things. Now, I guess if it was my field, you know, professionally, which is his field, I would remember them because I remember things in my field very well. But what I remember one of the early cases, was a suit by a youngster who wanted to come to the junior high school. It was the Vickers case. It took alot of nerve at that time to try to get to do this and it was also about the time that Chapel Hill and Carrboro schools were merged. But at any rate, he had to sue and so in that kind of thing Dan was involved. But what we had to do was even when the school board agreed to allow students to. . . . The beginning was that students would be allowed to apply to the junior high school but most black kids were not interested in going because

they had a school of their own. It was an unknown territory. They didn't know how they would be treated.

BO: _____ this was the black student had one _____
_____ and this was a pretty good student and they. . . .
I'm sorry.

DO: And it was scary to go into a situation, so we had to go to the families and talk with them and encourage some to go and I remember we got six children to go in the first year and then when the year was over we had a big assembly and asked these youngsters to come and speak and they said how difficult it was, how much more homework they had to do. Also, they had interracial problems that the _____, the fact that these were big shots. These were leadership type kids. They were big shots in their own school but here they weren't. And the idea was to try to encourage others to try and come in. Then we had to do alot of things because you had to meet with the school board and get the school board finally to agree to do these things. It took a lot of winning. The Culbreth, for whom the Culbreth school was named, was the chairman of the school board for many, many years and he was very conservative, but a very honest man, he wasn't he wasn't a demagogue, but he came from the background where these things were not being done. He wasn't a firebrand, but he was reasonable and we gradually over the years got him to accept and change. There was a lot of growth during that period. But that's what Dan Pollitt. . .

BO: But he played his role as he always did as he always does in every _____ of the knowledgeable lawyer, who can

be very, very helpful in any of these situations, and that's why the rest of us, and I'm sure that Dan did too, and Jean also. So he did and protested and we would _____ things and so on and do lots of things, and he was involved in those. But his chief role is always the one that is going on, the role of an experienced lawyer who has an ability to communicate.

DO: But he didn't stand back. He said, "Look, I'll give you the knowledge and you go out and do the picketing." He picketed, he carried signs on Main Street and it wasn't on Franklin Street and in restaurants there was certain particular places that were some of the more troublesome than other that became notorious and he was picketing there with everybody else. But to have somebody like him picket was very good because you get a lot of people picketing but then they don't carry so much weight. But somebody like Dan can carry a lot of weight. And also, on campus one of the ways we try to deal with things during the civil rights, there were many of different kinds of incidents. The one major one was the cafeteria workers strike, which was the only time that the state police have ever been on this campus. What the faculty agreed to do was to be present whenever there were demonstrations, or whenever the blacks were demonstrating and they had some white students participating. The idea was always to be there and Dan was amongst the first to be there, right in the middle of things, and if you were there, things were not apt to be so nasty than if you'd be away and just have the demonstrators and the police. So having a faculty was very

important and Dan was very active. He was very active in this way.

BO: Still is.

DO: Yes.

BO: If you read the Chapel Hill newspaper, you'll see the many issues of any importance, _____ civil rights arriving in this town almost always _____

DO: Yes. Well, one of the things, of course, when anybody is in trouble in this campus faculty, student, anybody, they go to him. It use to be when Charlie Jones was active, he's still living, but he's elderly and he's no longer a resource, but when Charlie Jones was here, we always said that people would go there in the South. Are you from the South?

AM: Yes.

DO: Well, you know in the South how important the churches are, so if people are in trouble they're suppose to go see the minister and who do the ministers go see when they're in trouble? They go and see Charlie Jones. See that was the pecking order. But to same thing was true for Dan Pollitt in the other end. In other words, everybody would go to see Dan Pollitt and other people would go and see him, but he was always there and the amount of time he gave to these things was very, very great. In fact, he said yesterday, I didn't realize that in law school there is a book. . . . I'm not sure it's law school. The University has a book, and I didn't even realize it. Maybe it's something new. He said he's the only law school faculty member

whose name is listed amongst those who are available for consultation.

BO: Back then?

DO: No, right now. This is was last Friday.

BO: Oh.

DO: A few of us meet every Friday. Not every Friday because we're not always here. I travel a lot and so I'm not as much present as the others are. But this last Friday at noon time he has a couple of martinis. He loves martinis. (phone rings) So Dan was acting very depressed and one of the reasons is. . . . This just came up and he said that he's found his colleagues over the years not to be people he talks with very comfortably. That there's nobody in tune with him. Apparently in the earlier days of law school it was more intimate and there were more faculty of this kind. So that's the trouble. But he mentioned this matter of the book. I imagine it's hard for me to believe that in a law school that he would be the only professor that listed as a being a resource for others who have a problem.

AM: What other activities on campus are you aware of that you thought he played a significant role?

DO: Well he played a very big role in the Speaker Ban Controversy. That's one you can ask him about.

BO: Well he can answer that better than we can.

DO: Yes.

BO: He's been involved in everything. I can't think of anything that's more important to the University than any civil

rights

area

We couldn't begin to name them all. I don't know them all.

DO: Yes, well, the other area in which he's been very active in, and we have our disagreements on this as we have our disagreements on many things, but this is very interesting. The last thing we did together. . . . I'm retired from the University I think five or some years, but a big controversy arose about the Cromm firing. Were you here when the football coach was asked to resign?

AM: No.

DO: The football coach was asked to resign. They gave him eight hundred thousand dollars to resign. So this made the faculty very mad, that this sort of thing could go on. So the faculty council appointed a committee of all former chairman of the faculty and the Chancellor of the _____ committee. These were elected officers, nothing to do with athletics so it wouldn't be tainted was the point, and Dan was on it of course and I was on it. And then at any rate, we got into a lot of concern about the role of athletics on the campus and the only sport he really cares anything about, that he does care about is basketball. As far as he's concerned that can abolish all of the others. In fact, one of the things he was advocating was because one of the excuses given by the Rams Club and by the athletic department from raising all this money is to support the so called non-revenue sports like baseball and women's basketball and gymnastics, swimming team and field hockey and that sort of thing, woman's soccer. So Dan said, "Gee, if we eliminated all

of these sports they wouldn't have any excuse to have to raise all of this money," and he's actually for eliminating these sports. He tells the story, and this is a true story that the daughter of a very good friend of his and friend of ours, and he was for the former dean of the law school, Dickson Phillips, who is now on the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, and he was dean of the law school here, he was on the faculty, and in fact, I first met him through Dan Pollitt. We went to a basketball game together in Raleigh. Then we got to know him well and our son, who is a lawyer, a clerk for Dick Phillips, so at this. . . . What was starting to say? (Laughter)

BO: Oh, I don't know.

DO: Yes. Dick Phillips' daughter had gone out for the soccer team and had been on the varsity soccer team but then when the women's soccer team began to get scholarships it began to recruit star high school players from all around the country and when she became a junior she could no longer make the team and Dan thought this was terrible. So, at any rate, this commercialization of all of the sports he decried very much.

BO: We can also _____ ask him _____ by accompanying Dean Smith to _____

DO: Oh yes, that's a good one. That's Charlie Scott. Just ask him about Charlie Scott. (laughter) You'll have to leave a couple of days because he loves to talk about these things and he'll enlarge out of all these things.

BO: And the _____ thing about him out of all the years I've known him for so many years I've seen him get excited and

sometimes I've seen him rather morose, but on the whole he's a very optimistic fellow and he goes about with a little smile on his face. Seems like he has a little sort of a half smile on his face all the time and he's just so intriguing to talk to him because you never find him down or unhappy. He's just going on figuring out how things could be done better.

DO: Yes, he's really a very unusual person.

BO: You don't ever see

DO: And of course he comes from a very rich legal tradition. His mother was lawyer and he's very proud of the fact that three of his children are lawyers.

DO: I think that one of things that shines out also in his character is he's so fond of his family, really fond, truly fond of his family. He and his wife seem to have a very, very congenial relationship. I don't know what this new thing that is going on about whether they are interdependent or something. They seem to be happily codependent on each other in a very real and warm way. Also, the other aspect of his personality. . . . I was trying to think before you came whether he had any hobbies. Most people have a hobby like they play tennis or they collect baseball cards or they go and do something. I don't think Dan has any hobbies. I can't think of a single thing that he does as a hobby because his hobby is people, telling stories. He likes to tell stories and he gets into that. Telling stories. His work just seems to be his whole life. It's not that he goes to work and comes home and that's his day. He's working all the time relating to people. He's thinking about what's going to

happen. On the other hand, when we vacation. . . . We have spent a little time at Dan's house at the beach and he's been at our house many times but always late. Always late. We used to always have big dinner parties. That was the thing. So if you invited Dan and Jean I got to where I would invite him thirty minutes earlier than I invited other people. (laughter) And I would chide them, "Why can't you people ever be on time? You're always late." Everybody is sitting there eating the hoers d'oeuvres until they're sick of them and then they would come in and he said, "Jean won't get out." And she'll say, "I'm always waiting on Dan."

DO: Well, I'll tell you. It depends on what's important. I am part of this athletic committee. We broke into subcommittees and I was on the subcommittee to study the Ram's Club. I am very much opposed to these kinds of things and what they do and we were very critical. But I decided this year that our tickets _____. So this year I paid fifty dollars and joined the Ram's Club against all my principles. But I wanted to see what kinds of communication and what they actually did. Well, the first thing that came up that they did besides sending letters saying, "You can go on this trip and that trip," was they had a barbecue dinner last Thursday night for Ram's Club members and for \$7.50 apiece you could get this barbecue dinner and you'd hear speeches and that sort of thing and then you could watch Dean Smith's basketball practice. You go to the Smith Center. So I invited Dan Pollitt. I invited my son, my grandson and Dan Pollitt. I got to the reception. I

said, "I'll meet you at the reception. It starts at 6:00. I'll meet you there at 6:30." I got there about 6:30. Dan Pollitt was already there.

AM: It was basketball?

OD: It was basketball.

BO: The other thing that surprises me about Dan is he is always coming up with surprises about what he can do or places he's been or things he's done or things he has participated in. I mean, it never ends. But we were singer of old time religious songs like "The Sweet By and By" and he'd just go into every one. I was totally taken off by it. He just started in. He knew all the words to several verses of all the songs like I do and sometimes Dan and I would sit here and I'd have a hymn singing partner party and he'd be right there with two or three others. But he knows all of them.

DO: I think that's part of his childhood. Well, there are two other things that I can think of that might be to the point. I guess in his biography about the time he spent in Europe. I don't know much about that, but that was his one _____. But also, of course, is his service in the Marines.

AM: He only briefly mentions it.

DO: Well, he went into the Marines as an enlisted man and I think it would be something that you ought to inquire more about. He doesn't ever say very much about it. Many people who have been much less involved in the War talk much more about it than he does. So it's not that he isn't', you know, American because he has all. . . . If you look at it, you know, he would make a

great politician. He has all the background kinds of things and qualities that you have to have, you know. This Marine service. He was in Okinawa.

BO: Another thing I want to say about his personal life. They are famous among a certain group of people for their New Year's Eve party.

DO: Christmas party.

BO: A New Year's Eve party. No. A Christmas Eve party which they have been having ever since I can remember. I think that's one of the first times we ever went to that other house was to this Christmas Eve party. So it started out, I think, to be just neighbors. Close neighbors. Then gradually people from the Law School would come. I don't know how they would get there, but _____ and all the children go. The children will not be seen dead in anybody else's house at a party. They always go.

OD: There are three generations there.

BO: Yes, there are two or three or four generations of people at this party. The grandmother, the mother, the kids, the grandchildren and other people around town. They all come to this party. They have a big house and sometimes there are so many people _____. But it's great fun and when the children come back to town, if their parents are not coming, the kids come. We have a lot of kids that show up and if you are not invited, you go anyway.

DO: Our kids go and our grandchildren are there.

BO: They always go. It's amazing.

DO: Let's see. What else?

AM: You are hitting all the things because we want to know both about his personal life as well as those political events or events in his teaching career.

DO: Another thing, I don't know whether he has taken pictures of them, but he's also known for having the car that is most heavily plastered with political bumper stickers. You can tell the Pollitt house as the house that has the car in front of it with all the bumper stickers. Something that we can say, I think, personally he helped us out with something that was very troublesome for us. Our son. . .

BO: This has nothing to do with Dan.

DO: But Dan Pollitt entered into it, didn't he?

BO: I don't think that's relevant. But he was very helpful to everybody who had a problem. If you had a problem that you were working on, he would be there and he would stand by you.

DO: He wasn't scared to go to jail.

BO: He was right there. _____ And he does that for everybody.

DO: I was just saying that the one we know about is when he helped us out and it was a very critical, very traumatic period in our lives.

BO: He was a true friend. But I believe that it's not just to his friends. He would help anybody who had a problem. He would do what he could.

AM: What do you think makes him tick? Events that have been really important or what do you think of his value system or something that makes him do all these things?

DO: He is so intolerant, I think, of most of us because when we cry on each other's shoulders, he's always more positive about change, but it's the injustice and the unfairness of things and the perceptions of things that are wrong. If he had a religion I think. . . . I don't think of the church as his religion as much as the Bill of Rights is his religion. In other words, he sees every issue in a much broader scope than I do. You know, I think I am a great legal justice and so on, but something might really be transpiring that I myself don't recognize the significance of what is happening, yet Dan sees it and not only does he see it, but he is not quiet about it. He will do something about it. He will organize people. Right now, he's been very much concerned about it and he got on a panel to do something about it about the war in the Gulf and about our President's acting unilaterally and sending people down. This is troublesome. So I think many people have a sense of fairness and so on and they are always on the right side. But the thing about Dan is he's acting on it.

BO: I was just trying to think about something that he does to relax or to get away from it all. He does go to his place at the beach. They have a house down at the beach and he goes down there about two weeks out of every year. But the rest of the time, his relaxation is taking on a different kind of activity that has to do with the law. It's amazing.

DO: He enjoys the people he works with on these things because they are kindred spirits and if you are working with kindred spirits, that's self-rewarding. Also, I should say this. I think in the last ten years he's begun to be very much appreciated and this is very rewarding, too. I think he has enjoyed this. It's been very nice. A lot of times when people get honored and so on, somebody doesn't really deserve it or it becomes your turn and you get older, but in the case of Dan everybody feels like it was a big evening for him and in fact, you could ask him for the program. There was a big dinner at the Carolina Inn on behalf of Dan Pollitt. He was the honoree. People made speeches about him.

AM: Who was the sponsoring organization?

DO: I don't recall who the sponsoring organization was. The time he said something and they were singing something. This was just a dinner. It wasn't one of the standard honors. It was just something that was done. I think it may have been the state Civil Liberties Union.

BO: That was the second time _____.

DO: The Frank Porter Graham Award.

BO: The Frank Porter Graham Award. But I think this was something else.

DO: But again, it was sort of, not a roast of him, but an honoring of him and there were a lot of people from out of town who came. In fact, one of the important. . . . Where he got a lot of his skills from is his work with Joe Rauh. Has he ever spoken about that in class? Do you know who Joe Rauh is?

AM: I can't remember.

DO: It's R-A-U-H. He was an eminent. . . He had a law firm in Washington and he worked with him summers when he'd go back there when he wasn't teaching at Georgetown or when he is teaching, he still works there. But in the summer time he used to go work for Joe Rauh. Joe Rauh is a very big civil rights lawyer and has taken very many cases and Dan Pollitt has worked with him. At the time Dan was young, Rauh was the one who got all the credit and Dan was doing all of the work. Not all the work. Some of the work. But Dan was there and he learned a lot and he was involved in a lot of cases and so on. So this was very important. So Joe Rauh came down for that dinner and spoke. This is another thing that troubles me in my field, that young people don't really have an appreciation of history of people who went before who broke ground on some of these things and Joe Rauh is such a person. So that would be something. The one thing I never did find out from Dan, he may have told me about his period in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Did he ever speak about being a professor at Arkansas?

AM: No.

DO: Dan Pollitt would end up in Arkansas was hard to understand.

BO: That was one of his first jobs, wasn't it?

DO: Yes, I think it was one of the first jobs.

BO: I don't know anything about how they met and got married and all that stuff, but he is very, very fond of his wife.

DO: I think her father was a Supreme Court Justice. Rutlege. And she has a brother who is a big lawyer. Dan Pollitt's brother is a lawyer. They are all lawyers. His mother was a very dynamic woman. Very, very _____ civil rights, so he grew up in that kind of setting and of course, his kids grew up in that kind of setting. That's one of the really great things. His kids. And that must be one of the lights of his life that his children have the same views that he has.

BO: Well, as you can see we are very biased in our opinions about Dan.

DO: His kids are all doing jobs that are all jobs that make big money, but the job where they are doing. . . . Now that's the same kind of thing that our kids do and we are pleased about that.

AM: You have mentioned a couple of people that he was involved with. Are there any other people that you think have played a significant part in his life or that he has had strong alliances with in his work or personally?

BO: That you might interview? Is that what you are asking?

AM: For an interview or just for part of the record of who he was strongly involved with.

BO: Well, I think he and his wife. . . . I don't know who they all are, but he and his wife both come from strong lawyer families and they don't all live here, but they are very much involved with their whole family. I can say that. But around Chapel Hill, he was very much involved. . .

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

DAN OKUN: And actually, I think another one would be very good and would give you a different perspective would be Dick Phillips. He lives in Chapel Hill and his office is in Durham.

ANN MCCOLL: Is he also a lawyer?

DO: He's the Appellate Court judge. He's the highest judge that's ever come out of Chapel Hill. He was the former Dean of the Law School and he was on the Law School faculty. I think he may have recruited Dan Pollitt to come to Chapel Hill. He wasn't a dean when Dan Pollitt came. Another person who would be good to talk to on the Law School faculty would be Barry Nikelle. And Barry Nikelle, in a sense, would have a better appreciation of what he does right around the school.

BETH OKUN: I think he was _____ at one time in his life. I don't know much about it. He was a former chancellor, an early chancellor.

DO: Bill Aycock is very fond of him.

AM: What is their connection together?

DO: Bill Aycock was Dean of the Law School. No, Bill Aycock was never Dean of the Law School. Bill Aycock was Chancellor of the University.

BO: He was in the Law School. He was a lawyer.

DO: He was in law school first and then he became a chancellor. Then he went back to teaching law school and until he retired. For the last four or five years, he always won the best teacher award. You have never heard the name of Bill Aycock?

AM: I know the name, but I wasn't sure what his connection was.

BO: The Aycocks are big in education in this state.

DO: But Bill Aycock is a very fine man and of course, would have a real appreciation for Dan Pollitt. They didn't always see eye to eye. The only one who would be close in terms of activism would be Barry Nikelle, but Bill Aycock would be a good friend. There is no question about that. There are other former deans that he worked with.

BO: How have you gotten these names so far? Through the Law School or from yourself?

AM: Dan.

DO: Oh, Dan. Who else did he suggest?

AM: Bill Geer.

DO: There is another man. Did he mention Les Dunbar?

AM: I believe so.

DO: Okay. He's in Durham.

BO: Charlie Jones would be a good one if he's well enough.

DO: He lives in town.

BO: He's quite old and sort of out of it most of the time, so I don't know if that would be possible or not.

DO: If you wanted to try, his wife would know, I guess, when he's most alert.

BO: She might have some things to say.

DO: Yes, she would know, too, because she was involved in everything. Charlie Jones was a very important leader in this community. Also, he would attract at his sermons people who had

nothing to do with the Church because he was a wonderful speaker; a down home type, country type. But Bill Aycock wasn't a member of the Church and he came to all his sermons. Bill Friday would come. But Charlie Jones was a very important figure in his life and in our lives and in many others. I'm trying to think of what other organizations he was in.

BO: A lot of people who were students are out and have settled around the country in various law firms and stuff like that, but I don't think they'd _____. James Ferguson might be able to give you some insights.

DO: He is the head of the firm that is the number two man. . . . Julius Chambers used to be the head of it. You've heard the name Julius Chambers? Ferguson is now the head of it and that's the firm where the next partner is Mel Watt. Mel Watt is the campaign manager for Harvey Gant. And of course, Harvey Gant would know him. No, no, Harvey Gant wouldn't know him. I don't know that Harvey Gant would know him.

BO: James Ferguson would know him.

DO: They were both very active in the Civil Liberties Union.

BO: I think it would be interesting from your point of view.

AM: That James Ferguson knew Dan Pollitt through the ACLU?

DO: And also when they were in school. Another one who would be very good. This would be a very good person to speak to. Floyd McKissick. I forgot to mention Floyd McKissick. Do you know who Floyd McKissick is?

AM: Is he a judge?

DO: Yes, he's a judge now. He was the first black student in the law school. That was before Dan was there, but he started Sole City. Have you ever heard of Sole City?

AM: No. What is it?

DO: Well, what it was. It's still there. During the Nixon administration, he founded this. Floyd McKissick was at one time head of CORE, The Council on Racial Equality. Very active during the Civil Rights Movement. He was a great leader around here during demonstrations. Everybody was involved. This was on a larger scene than just Chapel Hill. Anyway, after all this was over and this was more than ten years later, he became a Republican when Nixon was President. He got money out of the government at a time when they were starting new cities. He got money to have the Federal government investing in a new city. It was called Sole City. It is in Warren County, one of the poorest counties in North Carolina. What part of North Carolina are you from?

AM: Raleigh.

DO: Well, Warren County is in the northern part of the state; a very poor county. So he started Sole City. Dan Pollitt was on the Board of Directors of Sole City and he made a notice in his campaign ads that Helms has made a lot of about, was a planner for Sole City. But Floyd McKissick would know Dan Pollitt very, very well. I think he would probably know him better than anybody else in terms of the Civil Rights movement in those days. They have kept up. In fact, Floyd McKissick was

invited during Civil Rights Week two years ago to speak in the Student Union and I went to hear him and I didn't realize that Dan Pollitt was the one who had been invited to introduce him and there weren't many people there. I don't think there were but fifteen or twenty people there. People forget about the old days. But Floyd McKissick would be a very good one. His home is in Sole City which is an interesting drive there. It still exists, but it hasn't been developed. His office is in Oxford and he is very sick. But he is still quite active. He has a brain tumor, so I think I would hit on Floyd McKissick as quickly as you can.

BO: _____.

AM: You have already told me a lot of good stories about him. Are there any others that you can think of that you can tell me that Dan Pollitt won't be likely to tell me himself?

BO: He doesn't tell jokes, but he tells marvelous anecdotes.

DO: I'm not a story teller. Dan himself is a good subject because he would be. . . . He can just trigger some of these words that you've got. You mention them and it will start him off on a whole train. He won't be at all reluctant so I think you can do this. And also, you may find. . .

BO: _____.

DO: And Bill Geer would be interesting, too. Bill Geer is a very interesting fellow. I wouldn't wait too long to go and see Dan because he will give you a lot of leads for others which may be better than some.

BO: Then you can come back. You can come back several times. I don't know how you do it.

DO: And maybe you can come back to see us because he may say something that we didn't think of. I've been involved in a couple of these and you go back and forth. Do you know Bob. . . . He's in the history department. He does oral history of the school. Do you know Jackie Hall? Have you met her?

AM: No. She is the head of the oral history program?

DO: Yes. Bob Corsted. Jackie and Bob live together. He's an historian. He does oral history. I think you've got plenty there.

BO: He has a lot of admirers that are students who are out there operating the wide, wide world. _____. In the law school there are a lot of fellows around there who are great admirers of Dan.

DO: The staff, the people who have been here a long time in the library or the office, would be good people because there is nothing that reveals a person's character and background more than the feelings of the people that worked for him in a different relationship. Colleagues are one thing, but a secretary or somebody in the law school is another, because how he behaves there. . . . He admires the people who work for him and they would be good contacts. There is a Mrs. . . . I've heard the name because he's mentioned her so often, but I think she's retired now, but she may still be living. Ann Oliver. She used to be in charge of the library. You might find out. Talk with the librarian and find out who has been the librarian the

longest time and that will be the one to see. I presume law students always get to know the librarian very well.

BO: Are you doing this as part of your work?

AM: I'm a research assistant for Dean Wagoner and so I'm doing this as part of that.

DO: Did she ask you to do this?

AM: Choosing Dan Pollitt was my idea.

DO: But doing an oral history was her idea?

AM: She wants to start a program of doing it with alumni of the law school and so we wanted to start with a project. I chose this as not really related to that, but as a way to get into oral history. So many people have wanted Dan Pollitt to be interviewed that he seemed like a good choice from that perspective.

BO: Another good friend of his that we haven't mentioned is not here now, but they are really good friends, Gressmon.

DO: Oh, yes. Gene Gressmon. He's at Seton Hall.

BO: He's had a connection with the University and taught here for several years and then was forced to retire by age. Now he's teaching around. This year he's at Seton Hall. But they have had a long and nice _____. How you are going to get in touch with him I don't know. But they do come down here. I guess they will be back. He will talk and talk and talk. He is a very interesting man.

DO: He was a clerk for a Supreme Court justice for many terms, I think more than anybody else and I think he wrote a book about the Supreme Court.

AM: Gene Gressmon?

DO: Gene Gressmon. Yes. One thing you might do is. . . . I don't know if the Chapel Hill newspaper would be the best place, it probably would be the best place if they keep files on people and you could thumb through that.

BO: If you had the time, which I'm sure you don't have, but an interesting thing to do would be to go back and take six months out of some year or a whole year and just look through the newspaper and see how many times Dan Pollitt is in there and has come forward to do something or to lead something because he is always picking up things that nobody else does.

DO: Well, he enjoys the challenge. That's meat and drink to him. I think if people didn't call on him, he would be troubled. It's not a sacrifice for him. That's what he wants to do. He just wishes there were more people to join him in doing it.

BO: More people like him.

DO: That's it. It's when faculty are stuck here. I don't think we've ever served on a faculty hearings committee together, but you know, there have been issues of faculty members. They would always go to him first and students would go to him first. Although now students do have an attorney that serves them on campus.

AM: Is this a good place to stop?

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B