

## TAPE INDEX

### [Cassette 1 of 1, Side A]

Born and grew up on Sixth Street, in First Ward. Interesting description of schools there, moving to an old white school and thinking it was a new school. Significance of Queen City Classic.

"There was an event called the Queen City Classic, and that was like a huge homecoming. And living in First Ward and walking to what was called the Park Center – now it's called the Grady Cole Center . . . You could just walk up Seventh Street – I grew up on Sixth Street – and walk all the way up to the Park Center. And right behind Park Center was Memorial Stadium which was this huge event for little kids to even think about looking at something as great as the Queen City Classic. Your two black high schools, West Charlotte vs. Second Ward. And it would fill up Memorial Stadium. And so for us growing up, that was the event. All these black people just filling up a big, huge arena was just – it was just unheard of. Every year, you'd just wait till the Queen City Classic."

Just knew were going to go to Second Ward, went in seventh grade.

Description of beginnings of urban renewal. Voting to rebuild Second Ward in 1962, '63. But then lots of middle-class blacks moving out into the West Charlotte area. Also some friends forced to move because of urban renewal.

Description of post high-school life, going into the military, Vietnam. Learned about closing of Second Ward while in the military.

"I ETS'd out of Vietnam in 1971. I came back to Charlotte, went back to school, got a job. And by that time of course I'd heard while in the military that 1969 was the last class from Second Ward. And that, I think it was torn down that summer or the very next summer. They actually bulldozed the administration building, a number of the classroom buildings . . .

"We thought that it was the utmost in betrayal, because no one had indicated at any time that the school was going to be closed. The best news we had received was that the students were having contests trying to decide what's the name of the school. What was the new name going to be? I've even looked through school board minutes back in the late sixties, where students came before the board of education and suggested that the school be called Metropolitan High School. So even up to the very last moment students, families and communities felt, and were promised that the school would continue. And not until many many years later, and even now going back, and reading the Swann desegregation lawsuit, it became a casualty of the lawsuit. . . .

The closest school is Myers Park. Myers Park would have been desegregated, so you would have had white students from Myers Park coming to Second Ward and black students from Second Ward going to Myers Park. And I think like in many other decisions back then, folk just said 'No. We're not going to a school that looks like this.' Because the school was not in great repair. Didn't have nearly the things that Myers Park High School had. And I just believe that economics decided that no, this one's going to close. Our kids, if they go anywhere, might go to West Charlotte.

Description of being moved to West Charlotte's area but continuing to go to Second Ward. Part of choice after family was forced to move.

Good description of walking to Second Ward and what they did. "What was it like to go to Second Ward High School? It was great. It was a big school. . . . All your friends were there. I mean, you'd go – you'd go early in the morning. You'd walk to school. Black kids in the city didn't have school buses. White kids did though, some of them. And we walked to school every

day, you'd walk to school with the same crowd, you had your little stores you'd stop by and buy your candy for two or three cents. They had penny Tootsie Rolls back then. You can't buy a penny Tootsie Roll at this point. I mean a big one, not just a little midget piece. And you'd stop on corners, you could talk to the store owners. They'd get to know you. And you'd just walk. And in the rain you'd all laugh about how you were all wet. Because there were no school buses, you had to walk, and your parents didn't have any cars to drive you. And when you'd get to school you'd play before the first period. You'd goof off, you'd see your friends."

Talks about students crying together when tragedies took place. Saying he thinks there has been progress. Remembers being in the band.

Parents didn't participate much in PTA. Good description. "There was a real sense of achievement. And a sense to get a quality education. And the teachers had that – they'd look at you, almost as if they were wanting to will a good education into your head. And you knew that people cared about you."

Activities, remembers going to Ovens Auditorium to hear the symphony. Talks about being like a family.

"We did the very best we could. We took all the courses that were offered. I was on a college prep track, where you took biology, chemistry, physics, trigonometry, and those types of things. And I didn't know until probably my senior year just what the lack of resources were. Because we would skip around. We would have a physics laboratory book. And we couldn't follow the book. Because if we didn't have the equipment to do the lab, Dr. Levi would sort of just skip over it. And it was sort of disjointed, but he would go to something where we had the equipment to do the labs. And I thought, well, I'm just doing what Dr. Levi wants us to do."

Playing West Charlotte, York Road. County school; Plato Price and Torrence Lytle in the county.

Good description Teachers talked to you about your life – not just academics. Goes to family.

Description of two schools. Wherever you go, it was Second Ward vs. West Charlotte, but were also connected.

Came back from Vietnam in 1971. Description of all the black schools that were closing. About 1975, 1976 parents came in complaining about their children being unfairly expelled from school; he tried to help. This was his first real contact with school desegregation.

Remembers introduction of California Achievement Test and black students doing badly. Becoming involved in school issues. Decline in number of African American teachers. Beginnings of Charlotte's growth in late 1980s. 1978-1985 desegregation wasn't issue. 1988 first board member elected on neighborhood school platform. John Murphy and magnet school program.

Sees "alternative school" as being more elite. When magnet schools came in whites loved them, blacks were afraid of them. Magnets were in black communities, forced black kids out. And were concerned about change from mandatory desegregation.

Larger description of standardized tests. Something was wrong. Description of the process by which he attempted to understand and to press the school district into acting. Says problems were in expectations, accountability. Focus was on harmony and peace. "If your school

was quiet, it was a good school." Issue of Hidden Valley which was a neighborhood black school, where students still weren't doing well. Also problem of constant teacher turnover in black schools.

**[Cassette 1 of 1 Side B]**

Discussion of difficulties allocating resources. Problems compounded because there are fewer African American teachers – have lost all the black women who could do nothing but be in education. Many of that older group have recently retired. Need to help young teachers to become more comfortable in different surroundings.

Description of different groups of students going to West Charlotte. Sees it split between high achievers and less high achievers, generally poorer kids. Parents in Myers Park aging out, and have fewer kids there.

Says kids do well, but parents don't do quite as well.

Talks about significance of blending of the old with the new at West Charlotte that gives it a different flavor, different atmosphere.

Good description of significance of West Charlotte and how it would be important. "On the school board or not on the school board, I would fight to save it." Second Ward wouldn't be closed today.

Description of the loss of the landscape of his youth.

Second Ward as being a part of him – lengthy discussion.

Discussion of needing roots. Discussion of effects of urban renewal and the length of time it takes a community to recover.

Discussion of York Road High School, and how it's been forgotten. Mentions that white parents wanted to change the mascot.

Description of how broader community needs to know about the history of black institutions.

Lessons of Second Ward. One of them is to see how much people could do with little, and see what they could do today.

Sense of learning to live together better.

"Growing up at Second Ward, we'd say "Let's go beat the white boy's ass." We'd say, "Why won't they let us go play Myers Park?" Not for sheer competitiveness, but there was a sense of anger and hostility. We wanted to play white schools so we could beat them up and bloody them. Not to just play them, athletically."

. . . . This is a memorable experience. Probably about three years ago, at Memorial Stadium, South Mecklenburg played West Charlotte High. My kids attended South Mecklenburg because we live in that quadrant of the county. And West Charlotte kids were on one side, my kids were on the South Meck side. And a friend of mine . . . named Michael Todd. Michael went to Myers Park. . . . We were saying, man, isn't this something? All these white people over there

on West Charlotte's side, rooting for West Charlotte to beat. You had these black folk over here on the South Mecklenburg side, yelling for South Mecklenburg to beat West Charlotte. Isn't it something? And we almost cried, just saying, look how far we have come, with respect to the races getting along. Not to fight them, not to cut them. . . . We've learned to live a lot better. You don't have the hostility and the hate. "

Remembers South Mecklenburg playing West Charlotte.

Says that experience of integrated schools can carry over into voting and deciding on civic issues. "Desegregation brings about a greater sense of democracy." Also black students have greater opportunities, in terms of equipment, as well as a lot of understanding of other possibilities, moving beyond ideas of doctors and lawyers to things like landscape architects.

Talks about demographic changes in the country and preparing young people for the future. Compares diversity to cutting-edge technology.

Started off about access to resources, but now he thinks the issues are much broader. Long discussion about the significance of diversity worldwide.

His change in worldview comes from seeing places that were all African American fail economically, and have their schools come apart. Concern for country as a whole. Repeats the football story, talking about racial avoidance.

Thanks to Second Ward for teaching him to read so he could learn. Discussion of the anger he felt being in Vietnam.

**End of interview**