

TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

The Tuskegee Institute 1965-1968 Community Education Program

This material was produced with assistance from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the narrators and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior.



Dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Dannette T. Hall and Dr. Shaik Jeelani



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INTRODUCTION

TISEP/TICEP History & Impact, is indicative of a project that includes a three-part documentation process: (1) oral history interviews largely of TISEP/TICEP personnel who were student tutors in TIS/CEP; (2) TIS/CEP sites; and (3) print documents provided by St. Olaf College archives and Dr. & Mrs. P. B. Phillips.

TISEP/TICEP History & Impact (Volumes 1 & 2), attempt to illuminate the work and philosophical foundations of Tuskegee Institute's 1965-68 community education initiative. The program, firmly positioned in the ongoing civil rights movement, developed, promoted and supported transformative student learning and community development ideals by dispatching college students to learning sites in 13 Alabama counties [Barbour, Bullock, Coosa, Crenshaw, Elmore, Jefferson, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Montgomery, Pike, Russell and Tallapoosa]. Throughout its history (summer 1965 through spring 1968), TIS/CEP trained and dispatched over 1200 Tuskegee students to 13 counties. During the summer of 1965, 200 students from other colleges and universities joined TISEP, creating a racially integrated program. The college students worked in various capacities. Many of them were tutors, role models and civil rights advocates for TIS/CEP center youth.

Tuskegee Institute's community education and outreach programs originated in the ideals of and initiated by the school's Dean of Students, Percival Bertand Phillips (referred to in this work as Dean Phillips). Retaining the focus and guiding principles established by Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver before him, Dean Phillips remained dedicated to extending Tuskegee Institute's reach beyond the campus's gates in an effort to influence social, cultural, economic and political change for African American communities. His goals were accomplished by 1) forging relationships with African American community leaders and organizations; 2) preparing students to interact among and in cooperation with community activists, educators and leaders; and 3) establishing learning centers in communities within the thirteen counties.



Preceding the summer 1965 program (TISEP), Dean Phillips organized students in similar community education/outreach programs, serving communities in relatively close proximity to Tuskegee's campus. The initial, volunteer programs laid the foundation for the 1965 summer program that received federal funding, enabling development and increased programming capacity.

The TISEP/TICEP History & Impact project, for which these printed volumes are named, began in 2020 after receiving Department of the Interior's National Park Service African American Civil Rights Division funding for research and documentation. The education programs are designated, in this work, as follows :

TISEP: Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program (Summer 1965)

TICEP: Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program (began Fall, 1965 and ended Spring 1968)

TIS/CEP or TISCEP: The program in its entirety, that is, Summer 1965 through Spring 1968

TISEP/TICEP History & Impact is comprised of two volumes. Volume 1 includes: (1) oral history interviews largely of TISEP/TICEP personnel who were student tutors in the program. Volume 2 includes TIS/CEP sites documentation and print documents from the archives of St. Olaf College and from Dr. & Mrs. P. B. Phillips.



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Guy Trammell is a trainer for Community-based Group Therapy and, for “Family to Family” the SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) approved mental illness education program, under NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness). He is the director for the Macon County Ministers’ Council Food Pantry. He is chair for The Collective 46 Inc. a community-based telehealth fiber network provider, in Macon County, Alabama. He is the historian for the City of Tuskegee, a member of the Tuskegee Historic Preservation Commission, and a founding member of the Macon History Network. His book “Macon 365” is a calendar-based history of Macon County, Alabama. He is founder and CEO of Macon Stories, an educational service interpreting the history of Macon County, Alabama to youth and tourists.

*Bios are included in TISEP/TICEP History & Impact narratives section.



ORAL HISTORY NARRATIVES

This cross section of TIS/CEP personnel and participants presents culturally and educationally rich, diverse, inspired insights that were foundational and grounded in the aspirations of Tuskegee Institute's founders. The subsequent thought, action and insights of a 1960s visionary (Dean P.B. Phillips), and those who shared, supported and participated in both the vision and the work brought inspired aspirations to fruition. The oral history narrators include TIS/CEP administrators, volunteers, support personnel, tutors and tutees.



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Billy Abrams/Auburn AL

Interviewer: Guy Trammell/Tuskegee AL

Date: June 16, 2021

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Billy Abrams was born in Opelika, Alabama to Clemmie Lee and Marilee Abrams. He grew up attending the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. Billy Abrams was a student at Carver Elementary School, and 1964 graduated as valedictorian from J.W. Darden High School. Abrams received a bachelor's degree from Tuskegee Institute in 1968. In 1969 he married Carolyn Moten and they have two sons. Abrams was drafted into the United States Army and stationed in Germany. Abrams retired from a major communications company. Throughout his adult life, he mentored youth through Kappa Alpha Psi led programs and the Boy Scouts of America.



Billy Abrams

[00:00:04] Guy Trammell: Today is Wednesday, June 16th, 2021. And it is now 11:13AM Central Standard Time. I am Guy Trammell in Tuskegee Institute Alabama. I'm here to interview Billy Abrams and who is also in Birmingham, Alabama.

[00:00:42] Billy Abrams: Auburn.

[00:00:43] Guy Trammell: Auburn, Alabama. This interview is part of the TIS/CEP Organizing Committee's, TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project, under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. Go ahead.

[00:01:11] Billy Abrams: My name is Billy Abrams. I am located in Auburn, Alabama. I am being interviewed by Guy Trammell. Today is Wednesday, June the 16th, 2021 at 11:13 am.

[00:01:28] Guy Trammell: Okay, let's see. I'd like to start out where did—where were you born and where did you grow up? Tell us a little bit about your family.

[00:01:41] Billy Abrams: Yes. I was born in Opelika, Alabama to Clemmie Lee and Marilee Abrams on a famous street in Opelika, called Tumor Street. I grew up there and went to Carver



Elementary School, and High School was to J.W. Darden High School under the principalship of Principal W. E. Morton. Graduated in 1964, as class valedictorian.

[00:02:17] Guy Trammell: Excellent. And coming up there. How, just tell us a little bit about the what the social life was. In other words, how were your community? How can I say, was it all black or all white? Was it mixed or? And then how are the relationships there?

[00:02:42] Billy Abrams: Coming up in pretty much an all-black neighborhood, I grew up in a very religious family, a Baptist family. Attended church there at the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. It's over a 100-year-old church, my family still attends that church. The neighborhood was a cluster, basically a cluster of houses, we did have houses at that time. Most of them were four room houses. Most of them did not have bathrooms and we had outhouses. In the neighborhood there were two stores that were owned by a family, I think those names, last name was Story. They had two stores in the neighborhood, one that was fairly close to where I lived, and then one that was like, some walking distance away. But they were the only—and they their house was somewhat in our neighborhood. So, it was only right on the edge of the black neighborhood. And I think there were a few vacant lots, and then black houses started. So, they kind of resided, that family kind of resided in that neighborhood and they were fairly friendly. Because all of his business basically was coming from the funds and the purchases from black people. So, there were, I never felt that when I went into stores, I never felt any race or racial prejudice, because that was not discussed in my home. Africa was not discussed in my home; slavery was not discussed in my home. So, I basically did not know about those institutions until I got to school. That they existed. It was not something that was discussed in my home.

[00:04:48] Guy Trammell: Now were, in the community, were a lot of people homeowners or renting? Do you know, you know, anything about what that was like as far as homes are concerned?

[00:05:03] Billy Abrams: Yes, in my neighborhood, there were a few homes that were owned. But most of them were rented. We owned our home, my grandfather's home. And I lived and I grew up in the home that was born in; in the house with my grandparents. My parents, my mother and father were separated at the time that I was conceived. They were trying to reconcile and then I was born. I came along during that reconciliation period. Unfortunately, they did not fully reconcile. And so, I ended up being born in the house with my grandfather and my grandmother. So, he owned his house, the house next door to us was owned by the people who lived there. And then there was one house across the street that was owned by the people who lived there. Pretty much all of the other houses in that cluster were rented. And then farther up the street from us three or four of those houses were owned by the people who live there. So, you had kind of a mixture. And right behind our property at the end of our property, and then about maybe 100 feet of field, they built the projects, the housing projects. So, in that neighborhood that used to be all houses, there was some wooded area in between; so, they took that wooded area, and they built projects in there.

[00:06:39] Guy Trammell: Did you—were you old enough to know when the projects were built? Or?



[00:06:44] Billy Abrams: Yes.

[00:06:44] Guy Trammell: Did this happen before you were born?

[00:06:47] Billy Abrams: No, no, no, they—I was born. I was about—this was about 1952. I think they kind of started building them around that time. And I know that in '54 they were, people were in them in '54. One of my first cousins was actually born in the projects and she was born 1954. So, they were in existence prior to 1954. I'm thinking like as early as 1952.

[00:07:14] Guy Trammell: Now did you live where you, I don't know, were you aware of any changes, in other words, before after that type of thing within the community? Socially or economically or anything.

[00:07:28] Billy Abrams: People were excited. I can tell you that they were excited about having those projects. And people were trying to get into those projects, from the kind of shanty houses that they were living in and we're renting from other people. Those became a more permanent, stable kind of living quarters. They were brick, I mean concrete. They were sturdy. They had, you know, heating that they didn't have to worry about. Yes, and then people did have jobs. People were working either domestic jobs, they worked in the textile mill, and some other, I think, a few factories that they had around there. But by and large, and then we had quite a few entrepreneurs. We had some. We had some black doctors, and we had some fast food, I guess is a fast food, Dairy Queens and Dairy Bars and cafes, so to speak, in town as well.

[00:08:45] Guy Trammell: And that, there was quite a bit of, what I remember, a lot of industry in Opelika. Period.

[00:08:51] Billy Abrams: Yes.

[00:08:53] Guy Trammell: That was kind of like a headquarters and I don't know if you want to speak a little bit about that also, I think there was a major train connection.

[00:09:04] Billy Abrams: That was, that's what caused the city to grow was the train connection that would be leading, I think, into Atlanta. Coming from other parts of the south and going up to Atlanta. The train depot was a huge success in Opelika. People started to move in, banks start to come in. You start having banks pretty much all over the downtown, like three or four or five or six banks. And banks are still coming to Opelika. I guess as they are Auburn. So, you had some of the, I think, there was like Anheuser Busch had a facility there. And then Uniroyal [Tire Plant] later came in and diversified products and so forth. But back then, downtown Opelika was a downtown. It was small, but you had good sized department stores. You know, clothing stores, furniture stores, appliance stores, the pharmacy in town. And so, it was a bustling town. It was a bustling town. And of course, it's still there being revitalized. But you had, and it was pretty much Jewish owned stores. Cause you had the Copelands, you had the Stearns, and Hagedorn's and—but never did I experience any kind of racial prejudice. The only thing that in Montgomery Fair that stood out was the fact that they had water there for you. The sign said colored and white inside the store. So that was segregation there. They were called nickel and dime stores?



[00:011:06] Guy Trammell: Was that Woolworth?

[00:011:07] Billy Abrams: Woolworth's and [unclear][crosstalk]. And there was another one.

[00:11:11] Guy Trammell: Was it Kress?

[00:11:13] Billy Abrams: Not Kress it was another one, but they had the lunch counters in there. And those were not integrated because I never saw blacks go in to eat in those places. I guess we knew what the situation was, and blacks just stayed away. Didn't start happening until the civil rights movement started. And then we started to go in and sit. But I worked and in high school, as a junior in high school, I went to work downtown for a Caucasian jewelry owner. He had the biggest jewelry store in town. He only would hire black boys to work. And so when the young man left to graduate, he asked me if I wanted to go to work there. I went and interviewed with—he took me to the owner and told him about me and, you know, how I was in school, and I was top of the class, and da-da-da-da, and he hired me on.

And that relationship continued even after I graduated and went and left and got married. I would always be able to go to that jewelry store, call him up, and say I need a pair of diamond earrings for my wife. He said what price range you want it in? I gave him the price range. He said you know that's half price because you still work here [laughter] or less if you want to ship it out of town so there's no tax on it. So, we had that relationship until he died. Until he died. Goodson. That was Goodson's Jewelry Store. My mother and family members could go in and get anything they wanted as a result of our relationship. But and he was the man who went across the street to Halls Department Store. Went down the street to Hagedorn, Norman and Stearns, the high end men's and women's store and told them to let me have anything I wanted, and I would pay them on time. He got me accounts at those top stores in town and told them to let me have what I wanted.

[00:13:24] Guy Trammell: Okay, excellent. Yes. And, again, go back again to your school now. Beause Darden, now that's a famous school there.

[00:13:36] Billy Abrams: Famous. Yes.

[00:13:38] Guy Trammell: Definitely within the black community. And—

[00:13:41] Billy Abrams: Yes.

[00:13:41] Guy Trammell: Leave you, again, those grades took you all the way up to a certain level for graduation. What was?

[00:13:48] Billy Abrams: Yes, yes.

[00:13:49] Guy Trammell: Tell us a little bit about that and what it was like going there too.

[00:13:54] Billy Abrams: Darden was, it was a fairly new school, built in what 1951, '50. So, I think the first class started in '52. Or, yes, first class is '52. And when I got there in '58, probably



it was like fairly new school. So, you had these young teachers coming in from Alabama State and Talladega, and, you know, Tuskegee, to teach. And so, we thought we had it going on in the sense of black schools, of schools. These are the only schools we, the only school we knew. We had not been to Opelika High School, so we didn't know how to compare. What we did feel was that our teachers were genuinely interested in us learning. They cared about us. And you felt that. I mean, one of the teachers, even when I was in elementary school, Miss Hunter; she would walk us to town on every Monday to deposit our pennies and nickels and dimes. So, she started us out on banking back in the fifth grade. Okay. But from that time, I was always somewhat in the top part of my class and got to high school.

High school at that time, Darden started at seventh grade. And from the seventh grade, all the way through. I had for seventh grade, I had Miss Anne Mitchell. And she loved me and I loved her. And she motivated me to excel. If I didn't want to do stuff, and she says, if you don't do it, I'm gonna take a grade away from you. And I'm like, no, I don't want that to happen, so I'll do whatever you want me to do [laughter]. But from that point on, from seventh grade, I carried the highest-grade point average all the way through to my senior year. And my mother, I think she went to the sixth or seventh grade. My father went to like the fourth or fifth grade. My grandmother was there. They never pushed me, they never. They, my grandmother would say, you need to go to bed, and you need to put those books down and go to bed. Because I was self-motivated, you know, to study and to get ahead.

But none of them and my grandmother was the only one that ever said that if I had money, I would send you to college. I didn't hear that from anybody else but her and I really praise and honor her today for planting that . . . planting that thought in my head. She said, if I had money, I would send you to college. And she died. She passed when I—crossed over—when I was about 16. And I tell her now when I talk to her, I say you crossed over so that you can get me to where I am today [laughter]. I believe you are the cause of me actually going to college. And in helping me to get through and to be what I am today. But Darden High School, Mr. Principal Morton was a dynamic educator. He motivated. He stood in the center of the hallway that if you were coming in late, he was there to greet you. And to get you on the right track. He didn't leave until the first bell. He was ready to go to the first class to make sure he called everybody who was coming in late. He was in the center so he could see people coming from all the wings. You couldn't see, you couldn't sneak in.

[00:17:35] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[00:17:36] Billy Abrams: And so, he took care of that. And so, as a result, that became less and less because we were walking to school, from wherever you lived. Except one location way out.

They had a bus that brought them in, but everybody else walked to school. So, you have to start out in time to get there. And so, and we learned, you know, if it takes 15 minutes there, you need to start out early enough to get there before President Professor Morton meets you in the hallway. And you didn't want that. He was kind, he was also a disciplinarian. He was a straight shooter. And so we all looked up to him for that. The teachers there were superb. I remember a lot of them. Some of them are still alive today. My seventh-grade teacher, who I love so much, she crossed over a couple of years ago. But there are others. My homeroom teacher Mr. Lou Walter



Gunn is still alive. My English teacher Miss Patsy Parker is still alive. And so, but it was a great experience. Oh, the other thing that you need to know is that [unclear] some of our books did come from Opelika High School. Because the name stamp was in them. Some of the students' names were still in them.

[00:19:01] Guy Trammell: You got these at the first part of the year?

[00:19:04] Billy Abrams: Yes.

[00:19:05] Guy Trammell: Wow.

[00:19:06] Billy Abrams: They were obviously books that they had been used and that I guess they weren't going to use them anymore. So, we did catch some of those, I guess you call it secondhand books. But as far as we were concerned, they were firsthand books. Because they provided us with the lessons and information that we needed to get through. So no, we didn't think anything about it, really.

[00:19:30] Guy Trammell: Yes. Excellent. Now what I wanted to ask too, because books, you mentioned it earlier. Did you or your classmates, or schoolmates, have access like to say, library privileges, any access to be able to go to the library?

[00:19:52] Billy Abrams: We had. We had our library in the school. Our school did have a library, we had a librarian, and a study hall. So, we were fortunate that way, that we did our research from our own library. I never even thought of going to another library outside of that. I couldn't have. Matter of fact, I couldn't have told you, I couldn't tell you where the library in Opelika existed at that time. Because everybody came in and used that library at J.W. Darden High School.

[00:20:28] Guy Trammell: Excellent, excellent. Again, heard so much about it. And I understood the parents really, or say the community itself, really, kind of really held that school up. And I think, you know, I heard that. Did they have like workdays and things by the parents or by the community? Because I understand that one time they actually, the community actually renovated it? I don't know if it was much later or, you know, if you were aware of that?

[00:21:01] Billy Abrams: Actually, [unclear].

[00:21:04] Guy Trammell: Yes, yes.

[00:21:06] Billy Abrams: We had a strong PTA. Is it called PTA or PTO back then? Unfortunately, my mother, because she worked nights, she was never able to go. And it was wondering, 'how is he doing, what he's doing, his mother won't even come to PTA' [laughter]. Well, she was working. She worked 3:00 to 11:00. I mean, she couldn't come to a PTA meeting. But she had a son who was self-motivated, was doing what he needed to do to keep her looking good as a parent, as a mother, putting out a child that was productive. And so, she always kind of regretted that. That she couldn't go. But it was, is unfortunate that was she was trying to make a living for us. Because at that point, they, my parents divorced when I was four. And then as,



when I was about nine or ten, my father moved from Opelika to Chattanooga, Tennessee. That's where he is. Where he lives now at age 97. And so, but she was doing what she needed to do. Yes.

[00:22:20] Guy Trammell: Yes. And again, and you were actually in a, somewhat of a close-knit community. Because you know, you, in other words, the parents, all the different ones kind of looking out for all the children, right there together.

[00:22:36] Billy Abrams: Oh, yes, absolutely. And see, when I grew up, there were about 41 of us first cousins.

[00:22:44] Guy Trammell: Wow.

[00:22:45] Billy Abrams: Right there in Opelika [laughter]. So, everywhere you turn at school, there was a cousin. It was like that all the way through. From elementary all the way through. You know, we just, we had that many. And some were older, you know, going out of high school when others come into elementary school. But there was always that rotation of a group that was going through at the same time. And so even, even today, when I plan the family reunions, there are about 27 of us first cousins still living. And most of them right here in Opelika and Auburn. And so, when we have a family reunion or a cookout, we'll have 100 people without a problem. Cause it's, like almost 200 of us with the children in the area. So, if you call a gathering, you can expect almost 100 people to show up [laughter]. Especially when they bring the kids, the smaller kids. My roster that I have is like 169 with, and that's from ages 19 and above. I don't put them into the roster until—because it's a mailing roster. When they get 19 we'd send them mailings of everything. But up to that point, there are those names, so the—all those names 18 and under would add up to that 200 easily.

[00:24:15] Guy Trammell: Excellent, excellent. Yes. That's an, that's a strong family, right there.

[00:24:22] Billy Abrams: Oh, yes.

[00:24:24] Guy Trammell: Okay, now. So, now you're, you know, approaching graduation everything. How did Tuskegee get into the picture for you to go to college? How did that take place? And were there others in your school that had made that decision also? How did that go?

[00:24:45] Billy Abrams: Well, it was, it happened kind of strangely because I never applied to Tuskegee, in the beginning of my senior year. I was trying to go to University of Illinois or Northwestern and the reason why, and that I should have, because when I was in 11th grade and based on my test scores, Tuskegee sent me a letter inviting me to come to school after my junior year. Okay. And now I wanted to graduate, Northwestern, Carbondale University, Illinois did the same thing. So, I responded back to them. I never responded back to Tuskegee. But it, and then when I got a letter from University of Illinois saying that they were—had a housing problem, here I am in '64, coming from Opelika, Alabama, going up to Illinois to be a fly in the buttermilk. And no housing on the campus. It wasn't gonna happen. And then we determined that we couldn't afford it. We just couldn't afford the transportation and all that going back and forth.



And so, my counselor said, well, you need to just go on down to Tuskegee and pick up a application [laughter]. They wanted you to come last year. So, I'm sure they'll let you in. So, this is after graduation. I went down like the first week of June, end of May, or something like that. Filled out the application down there. And they told me to come down, you can, we gonna accept you. You come in as a work study student, five-year program. And we need you to come down, in what I think, was in two weeks, I think, and report to the campus. It just happened that—just like that, quick. And there was another one of my classmates who was going to go to Tuskegee, Carl Trimble. We had other people in other classes, higher classes, who were already at Tuskegee, three or four of them there. So, it was on my radar. It's just that it wasn't at the top of my radar, because I wanted to kind of go away. But I'm glad I didn't go away. And then I couldn't afford to go away. Because it was one of the best things that happened to me after high school.

[00:27:16] Guy Trammell: Yes. Now, when you got there, well, how did you get into your major? Was that pre-thought or did that take place kind of in the process of going to Tuskegee? How did that work?

[00:27:32] Billy Abrams: I wanted to be a math major. I went there as a math major and struggled with that when it got to Calculus. And so, I decided at the end of my junior year that I was going to switch my major. I switched to business. And that summer, I took business law, and the only thing I really had to take from that point on was all business classes, I had all the other classes that I needed for electives, and so forth. So, both semesters my senior year, I was taking 21 credits each semester. And I was still missing one credit. Was like what's that two-hour credit? Like art appreciation, something. Something, a two-hour course of some sort, that I was missing. I tried to take it the first semester of senior year, they wouldn't allow it because it overlapped another class.

And so, I ended up having my dean, Dr. King, I don't know if Dr. King, in the business department, was head of the business department. He wrote the registrar and told him that— [phone rings] excuse me—that I had more than enough credits to graduate. I had satisfied all the electives but this two-hour credit. And that based on these—all these other hours, too, if he could, waive that course. Now it's a course that I could have taken my freshman year, because I only took nine hours both semesters. They wouldn't allow you to take more than 11 being a work-study student, you know, they didn't want you full time. So, and [nobody] told me that, you know, I didn't realize that I was missing this class until it got down to my senior year and it's like we're looking through the whole list, trying to see how am I going to graduate with . . . 21 credits and 21 credits.

And he discovered that, you missing two hours here that we've overlooked the whole time, that you could have had these done. But the registrar said yes, this is the Wednesday before graduation. The registrar said yes, we will waive those two classes, and he can graduate on Sunday [laughter]. Well, I called home to Mama and said, “Hey, I'm graduating, you all can come on down,” you know. So that's how close it was. Now what happened was, because I went to summer school, two summers, I was able to get out in four years and not the five years. So, when the next school term came about, my five-year people were looking for me and I was already graduated. They said, well he was a five-year student. Yes [laughter].



[00:30:29] Guy Trammell: You already left the building.

[00:30:32] Billy Abrams: I'm gone. I was gone. And I was so happy that I was able to get out in four years. Because it was really time for me to leave. I felt that it was just time for me to leave, to go on to the next step.

[00:30:45] Guy Trammell: And just kind of go back a little bit, because coming into Tuskegee, to actually in a sense, live there for four years, compared to where you were at home. You know, what? How? Because I know it's a little bit different there, you know. How did? How did that feel to you? Or, you know, in other words, how did that fit. In other words, if there was a snug pair of socks, good clothes, you know, how did it feel coming into that environment in Tuskegee?

[00:31:20] Billy Abrams: You know, Opelika was a town that was really big on education. And you felt that with the teachers, you still felt it with the principal, you felt it with the PTA. And so going to Tuskegee, Tuskegee had that pride of education. I mean, the big-time pride for education, bigger than Opelika. You felt that broadness of it, you know, it kind of engulfed you. So, it was kind of an expansion of what I felt in Opelika, in terms of the importance of education. And I just felt that in the community when I went to community to talk to community people. I went to church at Friendship Baptist Church, and I sang with the group there, the Echoes of Harmony. It just, it just felt like home.

Actually, it felt bigger than home. It felt like you could take Opelika and put it in Tuskegee, in terms of educational systems and in how the people felt about it. But you felt comfortable, but you felt like there was something big going on in Tuskegee, that, you know, that, man, this is about achievement. They're about setting standards, you know. You know about making things happen. That's what I felt Tuskegee is like, and I don't I don't sense that going there now. Even with the university there. I don't think that that sense is strong like that anymore. Because those older people are gone. You're still there. Some of the other ones, but the younger ones don't quite have that sense of it. And but yes, I felt that I went into a bigger arena, in the educational arena, when I got to Tuskegee.

[00:33:13] Guy Trammell: And just, okay we'll transition now to, so how did you learn about TIS/CEP? You know, was that, you know, kind talked about around campus? Or how did you learn about that?

[00:33:31] Billy Abrams: It was talked about. It was talked about around campus. I don't know exactly how. I know that I had been in contact with Dean Phillips. He worked on making sure I got scholarships. Because what happened was, because I went in so late as a freshman, because I should have gotten I, with my grade point average and coming in as like, I probably could have commanded a scholarship right off the bat. And I didn't get it going in because I was accepted late. But he made sure that I got scholarship money and grant money. And so probably, I'm thinking in my mind it was probably through him that I learned about it. I don't remember any flyers, anything being up around the campus or posted any[where]. You know what, there might have been a poster in our dormitory. Now that I'm thinking about seeing posters, I think there might have been a poster in that dormitory, on that board, on that like, information board.



[00:34:44] Guy Trammell: Right, right, where the dorm director is, yes.

[00:34:48] Billy Abrams: Yes, right by his office. I think there was something that I kind of think it was that, really now that I'm thinking about it.

[00:34:56] Guy Trammell: And I want to make sure, because I think we already said it, but we've kind of alluded to it, make sure that we do want to make the point that you were the valedictorian of your graduating class also. Yes.

[00:35:13] Billy Abrams: I was.

[00:35:14] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[00:35:15] Billy Abrams: It was in a class, a class of 55 that graduated. And yes, I was, and until today, those students that were behind me and those students that were still above me, when I was in school, at the time that I was in school, they don't let me forget it. They still talk about it today. It's like, oh, my goodness. I can be somewhere, and they come, they will be talking to you the valedictorian. I'm like, oh, my goodness, they won't let me forget it. You know, and especially my cousins. They, I don't know, they're proud of what I did [laughter], I guess.

[00:36:01] Guy Trammell: Yes.

[00:36:03] Billy Abrams: Being in that family, you know, being in the family.

[00:36:06] Guy Trammell: Exactly. It's like an accomplishment everybody can share, yes.

[00:36:09] Billy Abrams: Everybody can share. It was like everybody could share it. And at first, I'm like, why are they doing this? And it's like, no, you got to accept it the way it is. They're proud of what you did. And the only thing you say is, thank you, I appreciate you, you know, and all that. So, that's what I learned to do over the years. Because I didn't want to, I didn't want it to be something, then, to be bragged about. I would never brag about it. I wouldn't even bring it up. I think it was important to put it in here. But it's not something I just put out there like that, you know, it's not something that everybody has to know about me.

[00:36:47] Trammell: But it helps to put things in perspective too like, you're saying, you know, because again, that type of achievement is tremendous. And it helps to transition again into college too and opens up opportunities. So, yes.

[00:37:07] Abrams: Yes, but I didn't do so—I didn't apply myself as heavily in college. I look back and say, oh, my goodness, you just went down and made a major kind of change, made a social change, made a change. And didn't apply myself with the same study skills that I knew I had. I was down there relying on my [unclear], I guess brainpower to kind of carry me through. And I look back and like, that's not good. And my mother knew it wasn't good. She, you know, she was used to seeing in these A's and B's scattered here and there. And, you know, coming out with C's and D's and A's and B's and C's, that, you know, it's just not something she was used to



from me. And, I can only say that I just didn't apply myself like I knew I could have. Can't change it, can't change it. But I always knew that I could do better.

[00:38:10] Guy Trammell: And again, that's a whole different arena. And so, again, going into TIS/CEP, do you remember what summer that was that you were in TIS/CEP?

[00:38:20] Billy Abrams: Summer '65.

[00:38:22] Guy Trammell: '65, okay.

[00:38:23] Billy Abrams: Now that we talked, I kind of think it was the poster flyer or something that was in a dorm, something in that dormitory. I think there was something in the dormitory. But yes, the summer of '65, it was end of my freshman year. There were about five of us, I think, or maybe six of us that went into Opelika. I approached Principal Morton, about using a wing of the school. I told him what we were doing and who was the overseer of it, Dean Phillips, and how we were going into different counties with the Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program. And I think we were TISEP with the S. On our side was with the S. And he agreed to allow us to use a wing of the building. Because during the summer months there was usually somebody a secretary or someone at the school. But he did, he allowed us. I was in there with John Owen, John, John Owens, I don't know where he is today. Vivian Lepre [sp?] out of Tuskegee, she's deceased. She was the English person. There was Larry Jones out of Tuscaloosa. He and I were very good friends and are still friends today. He's in Kansas. He was there with me. I was doing math. And I believe Carl Trimble was doing history. And John was doing history. So those are kind of the three areas that we concentrated on.

[00:40:02] Guy Trammell: [Unclear] And about what different grade levels with a—how broad a span were the grade levels of the children participating?

[00:40:14] Billy Abrams: It was seven through—this is '65—seven through ten, I believe. I don't think we had anybody that—well the 10th graders were going to 11th grade. They, yes, they were going to 11th grade.

[00:40:32] Guy Trammell: [Unclear] [crosstalk] They call them the rising, rising 11th graders Yes.

[00:40:40] Billy Abrams: Yes, yes. Because I remember Jared Johnson, Larry Spradling and John Lewis Williams they were all in the—yes, they were going to be juniors. Cause they were going to graduate in '67, yes.

[00:41:03] Guy Trammell: And did you use any particular books or were you mainly using the tools, you know, the tray, like the chalkboard, and pencil, paper?

[00:41:17] Billy Abrams: Morton allowed us to use some math books and some English books from the school so, any you know, it wasn't more than 20, less than 20 books. So, he allowed us to use books from the school. We had to you know leave them at the school and so everything we



did was pretty much done at the school. So, we could use the boards and all that, but he allowed us to use the books that we needed.

[00:41:49] Guy Trammell: How—did the principal ever look in? Because I know there's probably some—

[00:41:59] Billy Abrams: He did. He did look in. He would walk down, kind of peep and stand there for a few minutes and walk away never really stopped us to make a comment or anything. He, I guess, he wanted to make sure we were there, we were doing what we said we're going to do, we weren't tearing the building up, and we had our sessions. But yes, he did. He would walk down and kind of looking in periodically.

[00:42:27] Guy Trammell: I'm wondering if there was a little pride building up in him, that some of his own we're coming back to do some things in the community.

[00:42:36] Billy Abrams: Well, you know, he was community minded, and I can imagine, I don't know but I can imagine in you saying that, that that could be what he was feeling because he was very prideful of Darden High School. J.W. Darden High School. He loved that school. He opened the school, and he was the only principal at that point of the school. A very powerful one, so I can imagine him having his shoulders lifted about this project coming back to his school because he readily, once I explained to him what was happening with Dean Philips and where we were spreading, the communities, he readily said yes. And told us what end of the building we could use [laughter]. Well, he wanted us in that [unclear]. That end of the building, that side of the building. So.

[00:43:28] Guy Trammell: Excellent. Now, at this point because, well, you actually hadn't been gone and long, because you'd only been gone about a year in college. So, because I was going to ask, did you notice any changes with the children versus when you were in school? But I know that that's not a big time period. But was there any, anything there?

[00:43:54] Billy Abrams: No, I didn't notice any changes. The only thing I know is that my cousin Jerry Johnson and his buddies, Jerry's mother and my mother were twin sisters. And he stayed up with me sometime because I was, you know, I didn't have a brother and I had a sister. So, he'd come spend a night with me all the time. And so, he would, I mean, he was one of my biggest supporters, you know. And so, as a result, his buddies became like my cousins, too. And even today, even today, that's how they respected me today. And so, they showed us a lot of love, they, you know, they, I don't remember any disrespectful times or events that occurred. They just had the utmost respect because they were also thinking of possibly going to college. And I think Larry Spradling did. Jerry came down a summer at Tuskegee. John Lewis didn't go, he went in the military, then Jerry went into the military also. But Larry actually finished college, I think he went to A&M, he's also my fraternity brother. But and it's Donald Hodges went off Tuskegee – went off to Alabama A&M. He's also a fraternity brother. So, and when I see them today, they all, you know, they're like, oh, but they treat me like we were when we were in high school.

[00:45:40] Guy Trammell: So, now did you get any feedback from the parents? I don't know if you really had any contact much with that. Wondering how they, in other words, how you felt the



community received TIS/CEP, the TIS/CEP program in and right around Darden. [Pause] Are you there?

[00:46:17] Billy Abrams: Guy?

[00:46:18] Guy Trammell: Yes, yes, there you go.

[00:46:19] Billy Abrams: You froze.

[00:46:21] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay. Sorry about that. Okay. Yes, I was just asking, how do you think the TIS/CEP program was received by the community around Darden?

[00:46:35] Billy Abrams: You know, I don't recall having any contact with the parents. Back then, you know, there were quite a few parents that did not really get fully engaged with the children. Although we had those that did, we had a strong PTA, but there were just some parents just did not get involved. And we did not engage the parents. We did not and that's something I think, now that you mentioned it, would have been awesome. But a lot of the children were basically self-motivated. You know, the parents were not educated, they did what they did. And they were learning from the teachers, how to be better, to do better, how to learn and to aspire for higher education. So quite a few, quite a lot of them were not involved to that extent. As mine weren't, you know, they didn't push education. Although my mother's youngest sister finished high school. She finished at the Old East Street High School which became the Carver Elementary School that I went to. So, she finished high school. All the rest of the siblings above her, about probably the highest one was maybe seventh or eighth grade that they attended. And my mother later went back to adult school. She and her twin sister went back to adult education under my seventh-grade teacher. It is amazing that my mother's second-grade teacher, second-grade teacher, was my sister's second-grade teacher, and was also my second-grade teacher.

[00:48:27] Guy Trammell: Teacher on down, that's alright, okay.

[00:48:30] Billy Abrams: Right. That's, I mean amazing. Miss Lee Bertha Harris she was there for like forever. So, she taught my mother, my sister, and me.

[00:48:41] Guy Trammell: Dedicated teacher.

[00:48:43] Billy Abrams: Yes, but, but, but, no— [pause]

[00:48:53] Guy Trammell: Okay, can you hear me? [Pause] Okay, can you hear me?

[00:49:07] Billy Abrams: I can hear you now, but I said that we didn't have any contact with the parents as far as the TIS/CEP program is concerned.

[00:49:13] Guy Trammell: Right. Okay. Now within that, there was something I know. Saying that some of the things you remember, something about food that stood out to you?



[00: 49:28] Billy Abrams: Yes, we didn't. We didn't have food. We weren't offering food. And we had to start offering a little bit of food [laughter] from a Dairy Queen. But they didn't, they didn't really make a big fuss about it. You know if we had something we had it, once they brought it to our attention, we would try to get some things if— [pause]

[00:50:04] Guy Trammell: Can you hear me?

[00:50:07] Billy Abrams: Have you frozen again?

[00:50:09] Guy Trammell: Yes, it froze again. I'll tell you what, for the sake of things, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do a double take. Let's see if you could if you could pick up and then I'm gonna put this on mute here. Okay, just pick up on your phone, you can hear me just leave your phone on. So at least I can hear you to what you say. Okay. All right. But

[00:50:36] Billy Abrams: Yes, it wasn't a big issue, but it stood out in my mind.

[00:50:43] Guy Trammell: Feedback.

[00:50:45] Billy Abrams: And sometimes we had the food and sometimes we didn't.

[00:50:53] Guy Trammell: Okay. Oh, boy. Did you freeze again?

[00:50:57] Billy Abrams: No, you didn't freeze. Can you hear me?

[00:50:59] Guy Trammell: Yes, go ahead. Go ahead.

[00:51:01] Billy Abrams: So, it just, it just kind of stuck out in my mind as something that was kind of a little issue there for a minute. They were like, okay, we will be over here, like four or five hours? Oh, you know, at least, can you have something? So, we kind of made a few things happen. And, of course, when we couldn't, they understood. It wasn't, it wasn't a big issue. You know, wasn't a huge issue. Never, never did they do anything out of disrespect. So

[00:51:40] Guy Trammell: Well, that was good. Okay. And let me just transition from that. How was that experience with TIS/CEP? Has it, was there anything about that that possibly influenced you later later in life? And speak a little bit about your career after college.

[00:52:02] Billy Abrams: Yes, that experience did. It—from TIS/CEP I knew that I always wanted to mentor. I knew that. Like that was like in my bones, in my genetics. In my mind, I [unclear] wanted to help somebody who was less fortunate than I was and that carried through. And when I had the opportunity. After I got married, I had the opportunity. I told my wife, I said, I want to go to Big Brother Big Sister in New York. I worked in New York, and I used to hear all kinds of stuff about Big Brother and Big Sister, all you know, everywhere. I said I think I wanna go to Big Brother and Big Sister and get a young man. Now this is before, before my boys were born. She said, okay, so I went there.



Of course, you had to fill out the application, all your background history. You know, your mother, father, who you lived with, who you were, where you were raised, da-da-da-da. And I didn't know at the same time, this young man—this lady had brought her grandson, and they filled out the application. And he was being reared by his grandparents. Okay, so they took those two things and matched us up. Because we had the same kind of upbringing, in the house with our grandmother and grandfather, his grandfather, his parents—grandparents, both were living at the time. So, they matched us up.

He was eight years old at the time. And I must have been about 28. And got him as a little brother and that was like February. And then come January of next year, my first son was born. Then 11 months later, the same year, my second son was born. So, he grew up like being the big brother of my children. And we are still—he's 55 now. My oldest son is 46. He's 55 and so we are still in communication. His father, he was the youngest of six kids. His mother died from an asthma attack when he was 14 months old. And the six, the father took the six kids and handed them over to the grand—her parents. Ms. Ward took them in, he disappeared. He literally disappeared, cut off everything, communication, support, everything.

The year after I was with Trincy, that's the young man's name Trincy. The older boys who were then probably about 17, 18 in that range, were in Harlem. They came back and told Ms. Ward, said, we saw somebody that looked like our daddy. She said, well, maybe in a week or so you go back up there and see if you can locate him. Sure enough, they went back up there, and they found their daddy. Okay? He had been gone then for, oh my goodness, about eight years or so. Seven or eight years. They bonded right back as if nothing had ever happened. I mean, bonded, I've got my fingers crossed tight. They bonded like that. Like he had not missed a beat. But he told them, said, that one over there belongs to Billy.

[00:56:17] Guy Trammell: Okay. He recognized.

[00:56:21] Billy Abrams: He said that one belongs to Billy. Okay. And he and I had a relationship all the way through until his death. He crossed over, like three years ago. I think about three years ago. And we would talk back and forth, he invited us to family reunions and my wife and I would go. But that young man and I stayed together. Since then, I've picked up three or four others, and somebody asked what is your passion. I say I've been living my passion since I was 28 years old. Actually, from the time I was 19 or 20. Nineteen in TIS/CEP, that was the start of it. But then for 28 it became a total reality. Because I had this young man, he was like my child, I didn't have a child at the time. Okay, there was a child brewing in the belly after we—after I got him there was a child brewing in the belly, but he was my child that I could see and touch and talk to. And, you know, so I got I got Dominique, I have DJ, I have Fernando, I have Jeremy, I have Henry, you know, that are my mentees. Various ages.

[00:57:46] Guy Trammell: Excellent, yes.

[00:57:48] Billy Abrams: My youngest one is 30. Well, I take that back, DJ is 24. DJ is 24, so that's it. And, you know, my cousin—my nephew's son, I've been mentoring him. He's kind of shy, inward, very good student, very good student but kind of into himself. You know, and he'll



reach out when I reach out and I want to do some things. Now COVID has messed it up, really, because we can't get together. We would go to the gym together; we do some things together. He was in the Kappa LEAD program. I kept with the Kappas and so forth. But he's not as talkative as these other ones. These other ones will call, and they'll talk my head off, but I have to pull stuff out of him.

And he's a senior this year. And like I almost kind of like forgotten. You know what I was telling you who the youngest one was, I almost forgot him. [Unclear] Because he's not the communicative one. Like the other ones, just talk, talk, talk. But I can't put him down. And I, like I told him, I'll never—I'm always here. When you feel you want to talk, when you feel you want to do something, just call me. I'm just a telephone call away. And he's in Opelika. He's the only one that's right here, the rest of them are away.

[00:59:47] Guy Trammell: And that really is what builds community too. And then there's such a need for that too, for the mentoring of the boys.

[00:59:47] Billy Abrams: Oh, yes.

[00:59:49] Guy Trammell: And just speak a little bit about, because again, you're a lot more than this. And I know that you've been involved in other community work, and just tell us a bit more about what you're doing in the community too, at this point. So.

[01:00:10] Billy Abrams: Of course, you know, we've been doing things with Kappa, basically is how we pretty much do our community work. It's basically we've worked with the scouts. A Scout troop, Scout 70. We've worked with the girls home. I think they're called TEARS [Teens Empowerment Awareness with Resolutions] over there by almost downtown Tuskegee. They have a place over there; I think off Oak Street or something like that.

[01:00:44] Guy Trammell: That's right. Yes. Oak Street.

[01:00:47] Billy Abrams: We've done some things with them. We've given them some equipment, basketball equipment. We did put up a goal, basketball goal. We had a guy to come out and lay the court, the concrete court, and we gave them the balls, we gave badminton sets and stuff like that. We give them books to read for feminine uplift and education. And we've gone back, I think when they had—they've had some occasions they've invited us back to assist with them, and so forth.

[01:01:31] Guy Trammell: And that boy scout group, that's one of the oldest, one of the oldest Boy Scout troops in the country.

[01:01:37] Billy Abrams: In Tuskegee. No, in the country?

[01:01:39] Guy Trammell: Yes. For the black—

[01:01:42] Billy Abrams: Okay.



[01:01:43] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. It was actually established through the one that brought Boy Scout scouting to America. Yes. So—

[01:01:50] **Billy Abrams:** Was that—it seemed like it was in the '20s or something like that?

[01:01:53] **Guy Trammell:** Absolutely. Yes. Well, a little bit later than that.

[01:01:56] **Billy Abrams:** A little later than that?

[01:01:57] **Guy Trammell:** But yes, but that's, yes. It was actually brought there. And that's what how Camp Atkins and everything got started. Through that.

[01:02:07] **Billy Abrams:** So, they're older than troop 177?

[01:02:11] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, 70 goes way back. Oh, yes.

[01:02:13] **Billy Abrams:** Yes, yes.

[01:02:14] **Guy Trammell:** Yes.

[01:02:15] **Billy Abrams:** I can't remember the gentleman's name right now, the master, but Henderson, you've dealt with Henderson?

[01:02:23] **Guy Trammell:** Mmm-hmm, that's [crosstalk] [unclear] that's one of the ones that began Hall, Henderson, and Liston, I can't think his name but yes,

[01:02:32] **Billy Abrams:** I can't think of his name.

[01:02:34] **Guy Trammell:** Yes.

[01:02:34] **Billy Abrams:** But we provided. We provided uniforms for them. We provided manuals, flags, poles, and different things for them. We are—we have provided scholarships to high school students. Something else I was gonna tell you about Opelika, what we did end up doing in Opelika. Oh, I've assisted with campaigning with my nephew, who was running for the City Council seat. So, I assisted with that . . . him with that project for about four or five months? And that, now that's time consuming. Because I was one of the ones that was doing the calls. Because I've been in sales pretty much all my life. And I don't mind someone telling me no. You know, you could tell me. You could tell me no, I'm immune to that. So, they say you need to be on the phone. I said, yes, I'll do it. I call them, they can say no, that's fine, I'm going on to the next number.

So, we did that last summer. He—the first run, he was in the lead. But he had to do a run-off. His name's Jamie Lowe. He was 20 years old at the time. And so, on the second one, on the run-off. He lost in the run-off. Yes, he lost it in the run-off. But this young man, I can tell you this young man had gone to, consecutively, to six straight years he had gone to city council meetings. Studying the council, learning how they operate, seeing how they make decisions. So he was, he



was prepared. I mean, he was, I think, more prepared than the other candidates. But I think age and all probably played a part in it. Him not getting it. Strategically, the other candidate ran a better second campaign. Oh, because they went after the absentee ballot because a lot of older people in Opelika, that he doesn't know, that his parents don't know, but the guy that's 70 years old, and been around that system, and worked in that system, and all with Pastor Jones who was the other seat that was being vacated. They would, they got, they went and that's how they won. They went to those absentee ballots, went to those homes, got those signatures, and pulled out a huge run of absentee ballots. Because they say people don't come back to the polls the second time. You don't get as many coming back out the second time. So that's when they went for those, and they got hundreds of those absentee ballots and that popped the deal right there. Yes, yes.

[01:05:56] Guy Trammell: Well, just a couple more things. One is, because I know you're married so what's your wife's occupation and—

[01:06:09] Billy Abrams: Okay, my wife I met at Tuskegee. She was a nursing programmer at Tuskegee from Prattville, Alabama. Carolyn Moten, M-O-T-E-N, and we met there and kind of ran around in a buddy group together. She and I stayed in contact after we left school. And it led to we, a kind of courtship after college, in different cities. You know, with communicating, and got married August 2nd, 1969. On her 22nd birthday, she was 22. We got married on the 22nd birthday. She's an only child. Her mother was a teacher, an educator. And so, she finished nursing school, and she was commissioned Second Lieutenant for the nurses' corps in the army. She worked at Walter Reed Hospital during her entire military career.

And, of course, I later got drafted. I got drafted and I was a peon. I was a, you know, not an officer, like she was. She was a Second Lieutenant, went on to captain. And I spent 18 months in Germany, actually the first 18 months of my marriage, I was in Germany. She came over six months, stayed a couple of weeks. I came back six months later, stayed a month, and then went back and then six months later I was out. But she went on she retired as a nurse anesthetist, certified registered nurse anesthetist in 2014, she ended her work. I retired from AT&T as a project manager. And so, we had the two boys. Like I said, they were born the same year one was born in January '75 the other born in December '75. And of course, she said at the end of that, that's not gonna happen again.

[01:08:28] Guy Trammell: [Laughter] It was one tough experience.

[01:08:32] Billy Abrams: [Laughter] She was through. She was through with that childbirth thing. Two boys born the same year.

[01:08:38] Guy Trammell: Make a record like that, and it stands.

[01:08:41] Billy Abrams: That's it. Yes. So, and we moved around. You know, we lived in New Jersey. I worked in New York. I was, worked for Montgomery Ward. Do you remember Montgomery Ward?

[01:08:52] Guy Trammell: Oh, absolutely. Yes, that was a—



[01:08:54] Billy Abrams: That was my first job.

[01:08:56] Guy Trammell: That's the biggest competitor to Sears, by the way.

[01:08:59] Billy Abrams: Sears and Penny. Sears and Penny. I worked for them. I worked for them in New York in the buying office. I was assistant buyer, went on to a catalog sales manager, and then for a fulltime buyer, you know, senior buyer in menswear, men's clothing.

[01:09:17] Guy Trammell: Wow. Okay.

[01:09:18] Billy Abrams: Yes, left there, I opened, tried to open my own store. Left there, I had a store for a year, it bombed in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Johnson & Johnson was, had the town torn up putting that world headquarters down there. My store was down there and during the Christmas holidays, my first Christmas holidays, that street was all blocked off. People couldn't park, nobody got to me and I just, it was terrible. And the bank said, well, we cannot roll you through this process because we don't know. Johnson & Johnson is already a year and a half behind. We don't know how long it's going to take. And we can't bank roll you through that. So, I closed. Later on, moved to Atlanta, got on with AT&T, yes. I retired from that and

went into the hotel business with the Hilton Hotels. Became a salesperson for Hilton Hotels, left there, moved, built a house at Auburn. Once the house was built, I left that job, came home, and later on, got on with Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center as a salesperson, and later promoted to the general manager. I left in 2018. And so, I've been kind of hanging out ever since then.

[01:10:43] Guy Trammell: Now was, when you say Kellogg, was that connected with Tuskegee too by any chance?

[01:10:50] Billy Abrams: No, I'm saying I worked at Tuskegee.

[01:10:52] Guy Trammell: Oh okay, that was, okay. Right there.

[01:10:55] Billy Abrams: That hotel on campus, that's where I was.

[01:11:00] Guy Trammell: Okay. Yes. Alright, okay.

[01:11:03] Billy Abrams: But of course, while I was there, they turned it into a dormitory.

[01:11:07] Guy Trammell: Right, yes, yes.

[01:11:08] Billy Abrams: And I'm like, okay, I didn't come down here for this, so I think I'm going to do exit the scene.

[01:11:15] Guy Trammell: Exactly. Yes. Yes. Hopefully, hopefully, they have a new plan, we can kind of get that straight. Well, my last thing I want you to, on reflections. If you could say, what, was there anything about the TIS/CEP experience you think that would be applicable today? In other words, some of the, you know, maybe the principles or whatever. Or would with



the concept of TIS/CEP, any aspect of it, you know, be able to assist, be able to benefit our community today?

[01:11:54] Billy Abrams: Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. I think, to have college students going into a school, to coach and to assist those students would be awesome. How it did not continue, I don't know. But I tell you, that I've had a couple of young ladies to come up to me since I've been back in this area, to say that I taught them math. I don't remember them, per se. But they said I did it. What, and that goes a long way. And I'm thinking even through the years had that, something like that, continued you'd have students reflecting back on that, those experiences. Because—now one thing I don't know, in just talking to one of the people that said that it did help them in school, you know, going forward. What the total impact was.

But had it, something like that, continued and then was tracked. Anything, if we do it, whatever you do now going on, we got to have a tracking mechanism to see how people are faring, what they're doing, you know, what impact it's having on them. Got to have that tracking mechanism in place. But I certainly wish and hope that a form of TIS/CEP is brought back. To the point where you're in contact with the schools during the school year, to set it up. They know, students know that these college students are coming in town. Because when we did it, it was almost like school was out. I kind of if, I recall it, it was like we had to go let these students know. But with modernization and us being a little bit on top of procedures and processes, you, the school knows, the students know, that these tutoring classes are coming. They're gonna be here from June 2nd to July whatever, whatever time period. Go ahead and sign up now.

Okay, I just, oh yes. To have and these college students are not too far removed from those high school students, or junior high school, whatever level you want to start it at. They are not too far removed so there's a relationship there that can be built upon. Something to motivate. To see that, you know, I can get to right where you are. I'm only a few years back so I can prove I do what I need to do. I can be where you are. And then I can come back, you know, during the summer and do. Especially if they're gonna, because they are always looking for some way, some income, you know. They got to have some income, because they could be somewhere else making money to support them back at school.

So, how that's gonna happen? I don't know. But this philanthropic situation Dean Philips has to use his magic, you know, to bring the funds in, but they got to be compensated. Because Tuskegee, I don't think Tuskegee University is going to do it. They might. They might partner with the TIS/CEP because it's a Tuskegee thing. That would be great if they did. But I'm thinking this money is gonna have to come from outside philanthropic means to do it. But we need that. We need that. That's a step to me that's greater than a counselor, a high school counselor, or just as great of a step in helping these kids bridge from where they are to college. Because now you got—well you know the teacher went to college. Yes, yes, yes. But here are people that are still in college that can tell you how it is today, not 15 years ago, or 20 years ago, when your teacher was in school. The whole atmosphere has changed. There's a whole different dynamic going on, that these students can relate to, these now young mentees who could be inspired to go in there. Absolutely. Absolutely, wholeheartedly.



[01:16:34] Guy Trammell: And I like how you put it, because I'm essentially saying that they, they're telling them that it's not an achievement that's insurmountable. It is achievable.

[01:16:47] Billy Abrams: Because I was in your place three years ago. Or I was your place maybe two years ago, or four years ago. So, what is it that you need to know? What is it that you're missing? We can help fill these gaps. What is it you think you need; you're missing in terms of schoolwork? We can tell you; we can give you some study habits, some ways to build your study habits. Because I know specifically what I did in high school to get what I got. I know exactly what I did, that I didn't do in college like I should have. That will work today, for anybody who's willing, and has open mind and want to learn and to move their grades and move themselves ahead. So, then I can tell it to my grandkids, you know, here's what you do. That teacher's message might be different, but I'm telling you, this is a little method that you can use here that's going to work. It's going to it's going to help you make at least a B [laughter].

[01:17:59] Guy Trammell: Yes.

[01:18:00] Billy Abrams: You know?

[01:18:02] Guy Trammell: Yes.

[01:18:02] Billy Abrams: So, yes. We should. I don't know if that's on the burner to them, for them. If they're thinking about doing that. Bringing a form of it back, I'm with that wholeheartedly. And whatever—if I'm living, and whatever I could do to help that process, I'm available. I'm gonna make myself available to help that process along, to help get us started, to go into the schools, talk to the principals, however we want to lay it out. I will be one of those salespeople to go out there and help sell the program to get it in place. Put me down on the paper as one who would do that because I believe in that program. I trust in that program.

[01:18:52] Guy Trammell: Excellent, yes. Well, appreciate this so much. Thank you for participating in the oral history project. And like I said, hopefully we can speak to some other people. Hopefully this this will speak to some other people to say what's possible and what has been done too. But thank you so much and thank you for what you continue to do in the community too.

[01:19:18] Billy Abrams: Oh, you're welcome. And I will give you—oh do you know who called me? It was what's her name—Joan.

[01:19:29] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[01:19:30] Billy Abrams: She didn't know that I had, you had reached out to me. She said oh, I say I'm on, look, I've already signed up [laughter]. He got me booked. I've already signed the agreement.

[01:19:47] Guy Trammell: Yes, got you in there. Okay.

[01:19:48] Billy Abrams: Yes, but I got, do have some information for her.



[01:19:51] Guy Trammell: Okay, good. Okay.

[01:19:52] Billy Abrams: But I appreciate you stopping me, and you know, getting me on base with this. Kevin, I had read some stuff from Kevin. But yes, keep me in the loop. I appreciate it so much.

[01:20:04] Guy Trammell: It could have been okay. Well, thanks so much.

[01:20:06] Billy Abrams: You're welcome.

[01:20:07] Guy Trammell: We're gonna end the interview right here.

[01:20:09] Billy Abrams: All right.

[01:20:09] Guy Trammell: Have a great year.

[01:20:10] Billy Abrams: Thank you.

[01:20:11] Guy Trammell: Thank you.

[01:20:11] Billy Abrams: Okay, okay, bye now.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Calvin Austin/Millersville MD

Interviewer: Howard Robinson/Montgomery AL

Date: August 25, 2020

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Calvin R. Austin Tuskegee Institute (B. S.).

A Tuskegee Institute mathematics major, Calvin's career in the defense industry includes Reliability Engineer and Materials Management for Clevite and Gould in Cleveland OH, Gould in Melville NY and Landover MD. Calvin worked with several Maryland technology company and retired from Hewlett Packard Corp. in 2011. Calvin worked with TISEP and TICEP from 1965-1966. He tutored mathematics at Westfield High School in Birmingham AL. In both Hayneville (Lowndes County) and Troy Chapel (Montgomery County) he served as tutor captain. Calvin is married to Betty Villere of New Orleans, Louisiana.



Calvin R. Austin

[00:00:00] Robinson: This is August 25, 2020. I am Howard Robinson. I am talking to and I'm interviewing Calvin Austin. I am in Montgomery, Alabama. Calvin is in Millersville, Maryland. All right, we are conducting all history related to TISEP, the Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program. And I wanted to start our interview just getting a little background information. So, let's talk about, you know, where you were born, Calvin, and some of your recollections about your earliest experiences.

[00:00:41] Austin: Well, if you mean up into high school or . . .

[00:00:46] Robinson: Just generally. What do you remember about your immediate family, and then when, where did you go to high school and extracurricular activities. What type of experience?

[00:01:00] Calvin Austin: Okay, well, as I said, I'm from Birmingham. I was from a section of Birmingham called Powderly, which is on the southwest corner of Birmingham or toward Wenonah. That is, if anybody know about Birmingham, Alabama. I was born into a family of five kids. I was three of five. My mother was a schoolteacher in Birmingham public schools. My



father was a shipping clerk and my parents were not together. He lived in Cleveland, Ohio. As I said, I started elementary school at a Catholic school. And I went to Powderly elementary school and Ullman High School. Ullman High School High School was on the south side of Birmingham. It was the, I guess, the second High School founded in Birmingham. I think for bs Parker was the first and Ullman was the second, and Western-Olin was the third city school. And I guess, you know, the family was very close knit. We were 'po', you know, we couldn't afford the "o" "r". So we made it. My mother struggled, but she did the best she could and you know, like four of the five of us got degrees and we are all, I guess, contributing citizens of the United States. So, you didn't have to bail us out of jail. Not that I know of.

[00:02:52] Howard Robinson: When you say you were poor, can you talk about that a little bit? Was it poor as you look back on it or did you think that at the time?

[00:03:02] Calvin Austin: Oh, you know, it's one of those things where we just actually, from the standpoint of view, you know, we had what we needed and some of what we wanted. And I look back on it as though, I used to kid my mother before she passed: I said, "Look, it was just one of those things where we didn't have as much as I wanted and, you couldn't give us as much as you wanted to give us. But, we made it and that was all there was, you know, we never missed any meals, we never were lacking of a place to stay." But it was just one of those things where my mother struggled with bills. She struggled making sure that those thing happened, but did a great job.

[00:03:56] Howard Robinson: Do you think your growing up was typical?

[00:04:04] Calvin Austin: I can't really say, with it being the way the community was set up. I can't tell. I can tell you, you know, like, as I said, there were people in the neighborhood that had a lot more than us. And there were people that had a lot less than us. So it was just one of those things where considering where I am now, and where I came from, it was a big difference. It was a big difference. Because, you know, even . . .

[00:04:34] Howard Robinson: Did the realities of racial segregation or racial discrimination come into your life in any way?

[00:04:43] Calvin Austin: Well, it was it was, you know, it was everyday. I mean, if you look at it from the standpoint of going to school, if I wrote the bus, we had to get in the back of the bus. We had to make sure that we didn't cross that line that you couldn't cross. I'll bet that land that we couldn't cross. We couldn't drink from a certain fountains. We, as we used to say we had to drink colored water. We couldn't drink whitewater. And in stores and things along those lines, you could tell when you walked into the store wanted to look at something, they were all over you because you can try anything on. And it was obvious everywhere. The way our neighborhood was set up, there was a certain point in on the street that if you cross that point, you are the white section. And I didn't know any white people until I went off to college and really until I started working. So it was just a matter of that there were racists everywhere and you read the paper you hear the stories you know what's going on. If you didn't want to have encounters with the police because they were never positive.



[00:06:08] Howard Robinson: When you were in high school, you had a big operation, confrontation and huge movement and protests in Birmingham. Was that the first time that you understood that there could be a mobilized effort to come from segregation or discrimination?

[00:06:23] Calvin Austin: I guess if you look at, when the things started in Birmingham, they had already had the bus boycott in Montgomery. There were things going on. You know, my brother was in college at Knoxville. He was telling stories about what was going on there. I was aware of what was confrontations, just not at that level. We'd always known there were civil rights meetings and things along those lines, at the church that we attended, and things along those lines but not at the level of the marches and arrest and things along those lines. That didn't come until later.

[00:07:24] Howard Robinson: So, with high school when you were making a decision as to what you're going to do after high school, was it natural that you would want to go to college or was that a real fork in the road for you? Tell me about the decision and how you get to Tuskegee.

[00:07:41] Calvin Austin: When I started elementary school, I knew I was going to college. It was a given. My mother put that in our heads. She struggled to get us through college. She graduated from Miles College when I was in the second grade and she started teaching at Powderly Elementary School when I was in the third Grade. I went Powderly Elementary School in the third grade. Therefore, I was a teacher's child and I could do no right.

[00:08:45] Howard Robinson: Now, teachers, up until recently I guess, teachers, particularly in the community, had a little more status or some (inaudible section) some status. Do you feel that?

[00:08:47] Calvin Austin: Actually, I did and I felt the pressure behind it also. As I said, I can do no right because everything I did got blown out of proportion because, and plus, we lived in a community right down the hill from the school. It was a situation where everybody and my mother had grown up there. She knew all of the kids parents. You know, we were known by just about everybody. So, it was just one of those things where I couldn't blend in the crowd and hide because that's Alvina's boy.

[00:09:22] Howard Robinson: Okay, tell me a little about, just briefly, you with the protesters in Birmingham, raging around you, but you felt some restraints. Talk to me a little bit about that.

[00:09:34] Calvin Austin: Well, it was one of those situations where my mother made it quite clear to me and my sisters and brothers, other older brothers, that we could not do that because she was definitely afraid of losing her job. And I'm not you know, like I don't know if you lost it or not, but it's just a matter she was . . . that was just a burden that I couldn't put on her. Because if she had lost her job that would have meant probably, splitting up of the family and a whole bunch of other stuff. But we did . . . we did what we could do. We participated, we went to meetings, we were cheerleaders and things along those lines, we were on the fringes. I couldn't get arrested.

[00:10:30] Howard Robinson: Tell me about the decision to go to Tuskegee. Talk to me about that transition from Birmingham to Tuskegee.



[00:10:40] Calvin Austin: Well, the decision to go to Tuskegee was an easy one because I went to Tuskegee to major in architecture. And they had the architecture program and it was close to home and it my sister had gone to Tuskegee also. So there was a path from the family there. And so it was a sort of an easy decision to go to Tuskegee. It was not a, you know, I knew about Tuskegee. A number of people from the community that were older than I had gone there. And they had come back some had finished, a couple dropped out. But I knew about Tuskegee, I knew about, Booker T Washington, things along those lines. Plus, one of my instructors, mechanical drawing instructor, who sort of pushed me towards going into architecture, and had gone to Tuskegee also.

[00:11:51] Howard Robinson: Tell me about your coming to go into Tuskegee. What were your initial experiences and how did you end up? How did you make the jump from high school to college?

[00: 13:41] Calvin Austin: That's an interesting thing because I am, although people won't believe it, when I went to Tuskegee I was very introverted. My mother later told me when I went off to college, she was extremely concerned because I was standoffish and would not necessarily hang around with a lot of people. But all that changed. I got there, my roommates were very outgoing, gregarious type person. And I had to come out of my shyness as a part of self-defense because they were not cutting in slack. They said you can take it, we going give it to you. And I don't know, you have to come out, defend yourself. So from that standpoint. Academically, it was just a matter of going to Tuskegee, the high school that I had gone to prepared me for it. It was just like a continuation of what we had been doing. In fact, some of the classes were things that we had already had. So it was, freshman year was extremely easy. As we started to get into upper, the later years, it started to get a little bit harder, but it wasn't, it was never really that hard. It's just a matter of figuring out whether or not where I was going put my time.

[00:13:41] Howard Robinson: Talk to me about some of the transitions that you experienced at Tuskegee, the culture change. Talk to be about your observations around that.

[00:13:56] Calvin Austin: I'm not sure how I can if, when you say cultural change?

[00:14:02] Howard Robinson: Dress code, you know having to go to the chapel, these types of regimens that you experienced when you got there. They loosened up over time, didn't they?

[00:14:14] Calvin Austin: Well, they did. Because we disregarded those things. They had had a rule that you had to go to chapel. We didn't go to Chapel. They had Chapel cards but would have about 20 people in chapel and have 400 chapel cards. So it was just a matter of, they found out that that wasn't going to work without class. And they sort of let the reigns back a lot when we got there. The dress code was never really an official dress code. It was just some of you, upperclassmen, dressed a certain way. And they had gotten away from the hazing that the freshmen had to go through. At one point, they used to cut Ts, part of the hazing that the freshmen had to go through. Because at one point, they used to cut tees in freshman's heads and fortunately they did not do that to us because I probably would have been on a bus coming back home because no one was cutting a T in my head.



[00:15:13] Howard Robinson: You went to school in '64 right? So in '65, there is a whole immersion of Tuskegee students into the Civil Rights Movement. Does that come before you were involved in TISEP or after?

[00:15:48] Calvin Austin: It was probably in January '65. A lot of things started happening. And, TISEP started in the Spring of '65, in the May-June time frame. That's when we started getting training and things. There was a lot of activity going on. There was Gwen Patton, the Paris bothers, George Davis. A number of people that were very, very active in civil rights that went through there during the time frame. They kept us going. And Dean Phillips was also a supporter of the students being involved with those activities also.

[00:16:50] Howard Robinson: Did you come to Montgomery with the Tuskegee students when they traveled to Montgomery, downtown?

[00:17:02] Calvin Austin: Yes. We came down, I think, at the end of the march, when everybody got there or something. I think that was when we came down to Montgomery and we spent an afternoon there. But yes, I did participate.

[00:17:17] Howard Robinson: So tell me how you heard about TISEP. How was that project introduced to you and how you became involved with it.

[00:17:25] Calvin Austin: TISEP was the brainchild of Dean Phillips. He had been working on it for a while. It morphed from another program that he had and probably in the March-April time frame. Words started coming out that there's going to be a community education program and they were looking for students to participate as tutors. And I say, "Well, I can tutor math." And I looked at it from the standpoint as a good way to earn the mere pittance that we earned so that I could pay what was an extremely reasonable amount of money or tuition like \$260 to \$260 or something like that at Tuskegee back in those days. But that wasn't even a drop in the bucket compared to what it is now.

[00:18:30] Howard Robinson: What was the salary? How much did TISEP pay and how did they pay?

[00:18:35] Calvin Austin: I can't even remember. I think that it was a buck 75 an hour. And that was, at that time, a lot of money. Back in those days, my job on campus was getting about a dollar and a quarter an hour. So I was getting 50 cents more an hour. So I was (inaudible)

[00:18:55] Howard Robinson: So, how do you remember how you literally heard about TISEP and how do you make the approach and what's the application process like?

[00:19:06] Calvin Austin: Oh, you know, I really, as I said, it was announced and somehow I got an application from the Dean of Students Office and applied. I put down, you know, who I was, my grade point and all that type stuff and my field. And it was like, the bobbing for apple type thing. I put my name in, they immediately hired me. I said, "Hey, easy way to a job I ever got."



[00:19:39] Howard Robinson: Tell me a little bit about that. Did you have an orientation process?

[00:19:46] Calvin Austin: Oh, yes. That was a like, I can't remember exactly how long it was. I remember things like about a week of orientation. We had PT in the morning. We got up and did things on campus. We, we had training on, you know what we're going to do, how we're going to do it and we got to understand what our roles were, what we're going to do. And then they sent us to the various locations where we were going to go to support the program for the summer.

[00:20:24] Howard Robinson: About how many students were involved?

[00:20:32] Calvin Austin: I have a list. I can go back and check it but the first years there was, no that was not the first year. That was the second year when they had me in Montgomery. I'm not sure of the first year. There were probably maybe 200-300 students. Maybe even more than that because students came down from St. Olaf for the program also. About 67 people came down from there to participate. And please don't hold me accountable for any numbers that I give. You know, like, because I tell people I have a photographic memory but the film is a little defective.

[00:21:19] Howard Robinson: So you have this orientation process, you have been accepted, you have this orientation process, I guess you meet other participants. Tell me a little about how to determine how you're going to be located and then tell me where you're located and how you got there.

[00:21:35] Calvin Austin: Again, that part of it was not, you know, that was above my pay grade, where they were located. I was hoping I would get put in Birmingham since they would have a program there. And if asked if it went to Birmingham, I knew I had a place to stay. And fortunately I was assigned to Birmingham, went to Western-Olin High School. As I said, I just don't know how they selected me for that particular school because there were other places that were closer to where I lived. But Western was good. I did not have a problem getting there. Someone picked me up every morning to go there.

[00:22:21] Howard Robinson: I'm not sure if you would know, but the kids who were going places and located in places where they had no family. Where did they stay?

[00:22:33] Calvin Austin: One of the things that they did is that they set up people in the community. They . . . and that was the case my second year with TICEP. The first year it was summer education program. The second year it was the community education program. And they set it up so that you would pay rent at a family in the community's house and stay with them, eat with them, just like another member of the family. And that was really interesting, got a chance to meet some really good people.

[00:23:17] Howard Robinson: So now, when you started, tell me a little bit about your experiences. You know, in the classroom. First of all, where did you specifically meet in a classroom? It was at a school right?



[00:23:33] Calvin Austin: Yes. So it was sort of like it you had a summer school program at that particular school. We have different kids come through during the day and at different levels and you provide them with some level of tutoring, to help get them up to speed or enhance their abilities with what was coming up on their, on their curriculum.

[00:24:06] Howard Robinson: Tell me a little bit about a typical day.

[00:24:13] Calvin Austin: A typical day was you know, you get there, you meet with the people, the other tutors for a few minutes and then you go into your classroom and you deal with your students. It was, if there was no planned activity or anything along those line, you would spin a lot of time with the various classes. You discuss whatever was on the lesson plan or whatever you happen to communicate with them. And on a typical cay,it was just as though you had a job teaching some kids things. You didn't necessarily get a chance to spend a whole lot of time getting to know them individually because there was a large number of kids. You did get a chance to learn some of them and get to know them.

[00:25:07] Howard Robinson: So tell me how was this structured? You had you had students in the classroom for an hour or so, or did they move to other classes.

[00:25:18] Calvin Austin: Right. Correct.

[00:25:20] Howard Robinson: And about how many students were in a class. Typically

[00:25:23] Calvin Austin: Typically, it could be 10-12, somewhere in there. And it is, I am straining to recollect exactly how may because, you know, how many different classes are there. I know. I vaguely remember some of them, as I said, that was 55 year ago.

[00:25:53] Howard Robinson: Did you notice that the students had a range of capability levels?

[00:26:03] Calvin Austin: Absolutely. There were some kids that really could have been doing what I was doing there. And there were some that were really straining to understand what was going on. The people at Western-Olin had some really good kids that were there. You know, these were usually younger kids. I think that these people were going to be coming into the school in most cases. There were a couple that were finishing high school and about to go off to college and in the program. But, there were varying ranges of kids. I don't remember any problem kids or anything. They were really good people.

[00:26:53] Howard Robinson: So you did this your first two years at Tuskegee?

[26:56:00] Calvin Austin: Tuskegee, first two years? Yes

[00:27:01] Howard Robinson: So that was the summer of '64.

[00:27:04] Calvin Austin: The summer of '65 and the summer of '66.



[00:27:11] Howard Robinson: And so, so the Civil Rights Movement is continuing to occur occur around you in that time?

[00:27:21] Calvin Austin: Correct.

[00:27:25] Howard Robinson: Were the students that you dealt with, or the people that you were engaged with, were they involved in any way? How did your experience intersect with the larger civil rights movement?

[00:27:38] Calvin Austin: From the standpoint of community development, from the standpoint of preparing them for, and I'm just talking about my role, there were other people and other, you know, doing other things. We had nurses that were going out to places talking to parents, getting this, the people all together. But the marches and things along those lines, we didn't. It was a minimal direct interface with that. But, you know, some of the, you're always concerned about the blowback to the program as a result of what we were doing. Because of, you know, just the overall tenor of the communities that were around (inaudible).

[00:28:28] Howard Robinson: Oh, so by that time, I think SNCC certainly stood out about the coordinating committee and was certainly hosting classes for young people. The Black Panther Party does the same thing. I think they have an emphasis on Culture and African American History also. Were you aware of other approaches? And did you see any different emphasis in TISEP that was different from what they would get in school?

[00:29:17] Calvin Austin: No, I was a math person and my interfacing with them was, and I think one of the things about being in Birmingham the first year was I was less involved with them after I left, because more so the job. But the following year in Montgomery I did, like I was staying out in the community. And we did, you know, the churches and things along those lines. There were some other activities that occurred. But again, it was just one of those things where it was still structured with what I was supposed to do.

[00:30:06] Howard Robinson: Tell me about your second year, you said that you were in Montgomery. Tell me, in detail, what you experienced.

[00:30:21] Calvin Austin: Well, Montgomery was a different story because, as I said, I was living with a family in Montgomery. And it was, we were working out of a church. And there were about six or seven of us that were spending time with a lot of kids that were coming through. And it was, it was not a lunch program or anything like that. But it was one of those situations where a number of kids were, it was probably a good program for them, because they would not have had anything to do during that time. And they spent time with us. I was dealing with younger kids and not the parents or anything along those lines. So as far as other than trying to instill in them, a 'can do' spirit that they could achieve whatever they want to. All they have to do is to learn. They would be able to achieve anything that they wanted to achieve. So it was not an actively 'let's go march' or do something along those lines. These were kids in the 15 to 10 range or something along those lines.



[00:32:10] Howard Robinson: Do you think that the young people drew on the fact that you all were spending this time with them, that there were young college students in different fields, how do think that they perceived that and how do you think they internalized that?

[00:32:38] Calvin Austin: I can tell you how I hope they did. I cannot, did not have direct conversation with the attempt that was to make sure that they could see themselves in us and do a comparison of these people are spending their time with us trying to help us get to level. They are. They're good people they've learned, I'm sure we can learn we can do what they can do, and maybe even do it better. It's just a matter of what I always hoped they would do. Get it, you know, get the fire to want to learn and do better as opposed to whatever track they were on. Understand that that was another track that they could take. Unfortunately, I didn't get to go, I was not out in Lowndes County and those are in the, in the true black belt areas where it was a different story because people, kids did not have the luxury of being able to do a lot of things because a part of their, their family's livelihood was them being on the farm. But the kids in areas where I was, it was more of an urban type area where, even though the kids in Montgomery would have been kids that were of a status, say, like, I thought we were, we were not dirt poor, but we were not, you know, we didn't have a car or multiple things along those lines, but you take the bus.

[00:34:24] Howard Robinson: So, what types of extracurricular activities or field trips or what types of engagement were the student involved in or that you were involved.

[00:34:38] Calvin Austin: While we were doing this right? There, you know, there were meetings and things after hours that that we did attend in some, some occasion. But most of the extracurricular activity was getting ready for the next day. Or, in my case, when I was in Birmingham hanging out with my buddies in Birmingham. You know, like it was just a job you do what you had to do. There were some special things you do those things also get you involved. We were involved with the community that you know that I lived in somewhat. But it was it was getting ready for school, doing whatever reading I had to do for the next time and go to the library.

[00:35:40] Howard Robinson: Did TISEP participants have any retreats or any year end themes or any ways that you all came together.

[00:36:27] Calvin Austin: We had programs at the beginning, but I don't think we had any closeout programs or anything along those lines. Although at the centers we had close out programs. But we did not necessarily we didn't have a, a, come to the come to back to Tuskegee and your critique or debriefing on the program, I don't think.

[00:36:30] Howard Robinson: Did you have an opportunity to talk about your experience or the program with either your classmates at Tuskegee or people in the community?

[00:36:43] Calvin Austin: We talked, we talked a little bit but didn't, Some of us talked about, you know, some of the activities that we did during the summer, but not really. Not a whole lot.



[00:37:00] Howard Robinson: When you were in Montgomery, because that's when you're away from home and staying with a family; did you do things with that family? How did you spend your time when you were not in the classroom?

[00:37:17] Calvin Austin: The people that worked with me hated me because they were in an extremely rural portion of Montgomery and I got a chance to stay with a, one of the more affluent members of the community. I had my own room, my own bathroom. And they were staying in places that had outhouses and they, at some point, you must talk to them and let them, because you talk about abuses. An unintended or something that was not my fault person. I was extremely abused. And the people that I lived with were wonderful people.

[00:38:14] Howard Robinson: What part of town did you stay in?

[00:38:19] Calvin Austin: I'm having a problem with the, it was on the I guess it was on the west, southwest portion of town. And I've got to go back and look up that address and see but I think it was on the southwest but um, you know, I run into some of the family every now and then. It's always good to see them.

[00:38:46] Howard Robinson: So did they feed you? How did that work?

[00:38:50] Calvin Austin: They fed me. I got two meals a day. They had breakfast and dinner. As I said, I had, you know, the room off from the garage or whatever it was that I had to myself. When I got through doing what we were doing, I'd come in for dinner, talk to them for a few minutes and go get ready for the next day. I didn't have any transportation so I couldn't roam the streets or go to do anything.

[00:39:36] Howard Robinson: So this is the summer of '66. So you didn't really get a chance to engage what was happening in Montgomery? (inaudible)

[00:39:57] Calvin Austin: And maybe it goes back to you, when I was introverted. It was one of those things where this is what I was there to do. I was not there to go off and do a whole bunch of other stuff and all I needed to do was go off and get in trouble and that would put a damper in the whole thing. It was not something that I wanted to do.

[00: 40:24]Howard Robinson: Were you able to go home on weekends?

[00:40:31]Calvin Austin: I did go home a few weekends. Yes.

[00:40:34]Howard Robinson: And you say you were abused a bit by other people in the program. Where did you encounter them?

[00:40:42]Calvin Austin: At the site, at the community. You know at the site when we'd go in to work. They'd be complaining about what happened to them in the morning. Being able to take a bath you use, you know the number two tubs and things along those lines and take a bath. And I was taking a shower.



[00:41:14] Howard Robinson: What impact do you think this experience had on you?
(Inaudible)

[00:41:22] Calvin Austin: One of the things that, and I guess really, it made me really appreciate that I have and what I got. It also made me appreciative because you take people where they are and deal with them as the as best you can. You try and help them or, and if you can't help, you not to, as they say, do no harm.

[00:42:00] Howard Robinson: When you were involved in the program, and I'm not talking about in retrospect, I'm talking about at that time, if you could think back to that period. Did you see it as a job? Do you see yourself as part of a larger movement, a larger civil rights movement, particularly?

[00:42:19] Calvin Austin: Excellent. Actually, I though it's both because I really saw it as. But I was also representing Tuskegee. And I wanted to put the best face forward for testing, as well as do all I could to help the people that we were trying to help. Because if it were a job, I would have gone there and done what I had and drop the pencil at five, but it was not. I didn't, I didn't have that feeling. You know, like I was, I was always happy to get there. And it was always sort of sad to have to leave each day, because the kids were wonderful kids. I wish you know, one of the things that I wish that I had one of my hobbies now is taking pictures. I wish I'd had my camera so that I could have a picture story to tell about who and what we did and how we did. But as I said before, you know, like some of these things are fading. I have not had discussions with people that were on the program with me. Because some of the people that were at the site in Montgomery are still my really good friend and I still talk to him. You know, several times, well, maybe every, every six weeks or so we talk so make, you know, make some good, made some wonderful friendships as a part of work.

[00:43:52] Howard Robinson: So these were people who were TISEP tutors also?

Calvin Austin: Right, right.

Howard Robinson: And you didn't have both of Birmingham and Montgomery, where they can really host that you had any interaction with?

[00:44:10] Calvin Austin: Well, the community of, you know, at, Westfield there were a couple of people that I sort of kept in touch with, but not really because as I said, Westfield was one of those places where you had to really want to get to Westfield to go to Westfield. After I left that program, I didn't. I didn't go there that much because it was sort of off the beaten path and did not have any strong relationships over there. Other than a couple of people that came that although they attended the program, they went to Tuskegee. We had a good friendship.

[00:44:58] Howard Robinson: To look back at this, some of your involvement, but the whole project in itself: What are your thoughts about its advocacy. How would you describe programs.

[00:45:19] Calvin Austin: To describe the program is a, a program to go out and do several things that were . . . there was so many components of this thing. There was a community



development portion of it, which is probably where most of the Civil Rights activity took place where they were helping the people in the community, get themselves together so that they could align themselves and structure themselves and do what they needed to do to make an impact on their current status. Then there was the preparation of the young people to take a place and, I hate to use this term, to better themselves to understand what was available to them as opposed to what they had seen, because a lot of these people, they had sheltered lives.

And what they saw were just things in the community versus the possibilities of what they could do. And I know of a few cases that were had a tremendous impact on what they told us later on about the program. And then there was a health aspect because as I said, we had nurses come there and do things to get people to condition themselves get properly, exercise, do things that they should do. So it was a really a great opportunity to participate in a program that, it may have been as education under the guise of education. But there were other activities that were going on, under that guise of education that helped significantly. The people that were in those communities, especially the seniors and that were in community actively to do things. That's so different.

[00:47:47] Howard Robinson: So different students have different types of experiences?

[00:47:55] Calvin Austin: So you got it. Yes, that that's where you got to look at the overall program to see how it was made up. And people that went from county to county to county to do things. They saw it in a different light than someone that was stationary day to day. Do your tasks stay on task, stay on task, do those type thing. You had the managers you have the you have the reporters, you have the nurses, and you have I guess you could call them the public relations people and those that come out with games and things along those lines.

[00:48:44] Howard Robinson: Okay, and how much interaction did you have with folks who were doing different types of jobs, different types of responsibilities when they came to the site?

Calvin Austin: The second year, I was to the tutor captain, which was sort of a management role where I made sure that everything was flowing well with the other people and you had interface with these teachers, you know, the faculty and things along those lines. So I did communicate with them. At that point, you know, the schedule or to, when they showed up to make sure that they can do whatever they need.

[00:49:34] Howard Robinson: How many people worked out of your site?

[00:49:40] Calvin Austin: At my site, the second year, there were probably about eight or nine of us. There were two faculty or teachers from the Montgomery area that were part of the program and there were about five or six other people.

[00:50:07] Howard Robinson: Did anything happen that was particularly horrible or traumatic or exciting during your two years?



[00:50:19] Calvin Austin: With me, because I am like, everything's cool. Nothing, nothing significant happened because I don't avoid anything but I'm not going to stick my hand on that oven because I know it'll burn.

[00:50:40] Howard Robinson: Okay, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to say about the program?

[00:50:48] Calvin Austin: The thing that I probably would love for you to understand, looking back on this program, in retrospect, it was much larger than I was. It was one of those things where I was just a small cog in this big program. And if you look at what the intent of this program was, my doing the miniscule thing that I was supposed to, and tried to do it as well as I could. It was, you know, it may not have been where all the action was, and things along those lines, but it was a vital component of this overall, overarching program that had some goals, to do some things for individuals, communities, and for us, because I look back on it. And now, and I think it was probably one of the best things that I did in my whole life, you know, like, I got to be involved with people that were focused on helping other people. And although we made a miniscule amount of money that was Not the reason we were there. We were there to try and help somebody make sure that if these kids could be helped, we would help them. I was not you know, we were not you know out parading or out, confronting anybody about anything, but we were struggling trying to impact this, this program, this this situation that we were in back in the day by telling people that if they got smarter, it may help them do something that may put them in a better position. And so I would just like to say that it was a it was a wonderful program. I think Dean Philips did a masterful job of thinking it up, getting the funding. It was it was just so much going on that I did not know was happening, but it was a lot of things that had happened on this program. As we get more and more into it, we'll see the overall effect that it had on me.

[00:53:10] Howard Robinson: It seems like whoever made the selections did a pretty good job of matching, at least in your case, your proclivities, strengths with a particular job. And so having said that, did you feel content and fulfilled through the types of activities that you engaged in?

[00:53:38] Calvin Austin: I felt that they had utilized me to do what I could do. I could have done more if they had pushed me to do more. But they probably had other people that would, were probably able to do those things and didn't have as many people do what I could do. To get that person to teach math to someone (being the snob that I am, also I didn't mention that, about, you know subjects and things along those lines, to teach someone math is not necessarily an easy thing to do. And I've always told people that the best thing that anybody could ever major in is math because it teaches you everything. It teaches you how to think, it teaches us new logic, teaches how difficult things can be also petty good.

[00:54:45] Howard Robinson: Okay, I think that's going to wrap it up for our session. Again, this is Howard Robinson. I'm here with Calvin Austin. This is part of the TISEP/TICEP Interview. So that's it.

[End of Session



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Paul Benson/Dallas TX

Interviewer: Guy Trammell/Tuskegee AL

Date: March 5, 2021

Transcriptionist: Joan Burroughs

Paul Benson. From the beginning of his teaching career in the 1965 Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program to his appointment in 2018 as Director of the National Endowment for the Humanities' Institute Slavery and Constitution at the Library of Congress, Paul Benson dedicated his career to enriching the lives of others through education. Dr. Benson, a long-time Professor of Humanities at Mountain View College in Dallas, Texas, won four national teaching awards and directed National Endowment for the Humanities summer programs for college and university professors.



Paul Benson

[00:00:05] Guy Trammell: It is 9:28 AM and this is Friday, March the 5th 2021. I am Guy Trammell and am in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama; here to interview Paul Benson. He is in Dallas Texas. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TIS/CEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History division of the Department of Interior's National Park Service.

[00:00:53] Paul Benson: I am located here in Dallas, Texas. I am being interviewed by Guy Trammell on Friday, March 5, 2021. It is a great pleasure to be here to tell you the story, my story of TISEP. I was in TISEP in the year 1965. And I have since become a college and university professor. This is the end of my 51st year of teaching college and university. And much of that work that I'm doing because I was inspired by TISEP, to spend my life in education. The story of my life, related to TISEP is that I was, in 1963, started going to St. Olaf College. I wanted to be a music major and a choir director. I enjoyed my time at St. Olaf, but in the spring of 1965, Dean Phillips of Tuskegee Institute, at that time, came to Northfield, Minnesota to speak to on two college campuses. One is Carleton College and the other was St. Olaf College. He went to Carlton with, and gave the same speech he gave at St. Olaf, but Carlton people weren't too interested. But he had a huge response at St. Olaf.

So, I was very, very much interested in all this when he came, but I didn't, I had a summer job and this were already set. So, I didn't, I kind put it in the back of my mind. But there was a



professor at St. Olaf, by the name of Buckstead. He was an English professor, and he became a champion of, the leader, the instigator, the salesman to sell us the TISEP program. So, I heard him speak and I thought about this. In the meantime, the summer job that I had wasn't looking so good. So, I saw this as a golden opportunity to do two things, make a little money to continue my education but more importantly, to spend a summer in the south during the civil rights era. I'd like to remind everyone that this is 1965. This is the year of the Selma March. This is the year of the Voting Rights Act. This is the year of a tremendous change in America. So of course, I had no idea what to expect. But I signed on in this. And the, early, after school was over, I decided to hitchhike to Tuskegee, Alabama.

Which I did mostly, but here's what happened on the way. A nice young man in a Volkswagen gave me a ride going from Kentucky to Nashville. As we approached Nashville, going across the river, Tennessee River, a truck suddenly stopped in front of him, and we crashed into it. And I was hit, went into the window and I was bloody and knocked—almost knocked unconscious. And I kind of staggered out of there. He was, they had to take care of him. I believe that they, but I think, in the end, he was fine. But the car was totaled. And so, I had no idea what to do. So I kind of sat there for a few minutes. And I prayed to God. I said, "I don't know how you're going to do it, but you need to get me out of this mess if you possibly can. I'll certainly appreciate it." So I didn't know what to do other than start walking to Nashville. So I started walking across the bridge and just as I got to the other side of the bridge, I saw a man running toward me. And I thought, who is this? This guy looks familiar. But I was dazed, and I was bloody, and I looked like a mess. And it was my, my dorm counselor from St. Olaf. One in a billion chances that this would happen. But he was driving with two or three other St. Olaf students who were on their way to Tuskegee. And he happened to see me, only from the back of my head. But he said, "I know who that is." He called me Benny. And he came and he said, "What happened?" And I told him. And so I got in the car and they basically save me that day, from God know what. I was very appreciative, of course, and always believed that that was divine intervention. God wanted me to go to Tuskegee and do the work I did there. Okay—

[00:06:31] Guy Trammell: Okay, now had you been South before? Where were you actually from?

[00:06:36] Paul Benson: Well, I was born in South Dakota, and I grew up in South Dakota and Colorado. My dad had gotten a job at the Air Force Academy when I was a senior in high school. So I graduated from Air Academy High School, Colorado Springs, Colorado. And, but I always wanted, you know, I was interested in this choral music thing. And St. Olaf was a, you know, famous for that. Much of the same way that the schools like Fisk, the Jubilee singers, and Tuskegee had a great choir under Dr. William Dawson. And so that's why I was there. And it was, for me, an entirely new experience. I had not been south of, at that time, of Colorado. I knew nothing of the South, I had no connections. I figured I was going to learn a lot. And boy did I ever. I learned much. It was a summer of incredible experiences. And when we came on the campus, of course, we were very much welcomed. And there was kind of a whole new language that the Tuskegee students spoke. They had their own code. And so, we met some students right away. And they would, we would be walking on campus, and they would, somebody would come by, and they'll say, "Hey there, and the I'd say, "Who's that?" And they'd say, "That's my homeboy." And I said, "Homeboy, what's a homeboy?" And they'd say, "Well, homeboy is



somebody from your hometown. And so, you have a, you know, special relationship with that person in Tuskegee.” And lots of things like that.

The very first night we were there, now you know where the old cafeteria was? I think at that time, it was kind of called the student center, right? When we went on campus, and because we ate dinner in the cafeteria, and oh my God, the food was fabulous. We particularly learned about greens and grits. And I never failed to have greens and grits when I was there, even though I’d never heard of them before. And the meals were, you know, your basic comfort food, your basic soul food. Those women that cooked in that cafeteria, Oh My God, they were incredibly good. So, that first night, we had a wonderful meal. And then we went outside and the students, now this sounds almost like a stage set, but they were on the steps and they were singing spirituals. I couldn’t believe it. It was, it was amazing.

Now at that time, Tuskegee was in turmoil. The big issue then, on that particular day we arrived, was whether SNCC, that organized the student organization, should be allowed on campus. There were those that wanted it. There were those that didn’t want it. And I, to this day, I’m not sure how that argument ever ended, if SNCC got on campus. I believe it did. But, you know, in some ways, Tuskegee was a little more conservative. Being out in the country and being somewhat isolated and things came slowly there. But anyway, it was, it was like, you couldn’t write the script any better.

So that night, we were put into one of the dorms that had air conditioning. And that was pretty nice. But, the next day, we were to meet at 6 AM. And Guy, you know this. 6AM, down on the field, on the football field. And there was Dean Phillips, and he was right, raring and ready to go. And we had to do calisthenics. So it turned out that first week was boot camp. And we didn’t have to get up the whole summer at six, although we ended up pretty much doing that. But we had to do our calisthenics and do our exercises for about 30 minutes. Then we ran. We wanted to be the very first one up to the cafeteria to get those grits and greens. And it was amazing how fast I could run if I had to. Right? And of course, all of us were in fantastic shape at about age 20. Now, and so we enjoyed that. We enjoyed that first week and met so many friends and everybody couldn’t have been more cordial, more friendly. We found at home there on Tuskegee’s campus from day one.

[00:11:46] Guy Trammell: You just mentioned how old everyone was, does that mean the majority were like maybe juniors and seniors versus?

[00:11:56] Paul Benson: I was unusual in that I was just finishing my sophomore year. There are only a handful of us that were sophomores. I don’t think they let freshmen go. And then most are juniors and seniors. And that friend that picked me up in Nashville, he was a senior and went on from there to seminary to become a Lutheran minister. So many of them never went back to St. Olaf. And by the way, I didn’t go back to St. Olaf either because I had run out of money. And my—the little money I had, that I earned at Tuskegee, working that whole summer was just enough to pay tuition at a school, very similar St. Olaf, the name of which was Pacific Lutheran University. So, I want to finish my college there because my parents lived down the street from Pacific Lutheran. They had moved there. My dad, of course, moved all over, he was a band director. And he was like a gypsy, you know, we just lived. We never stopped moving. So that’s



why it was relatively easy for me to fit in at Tuskegee and feel like I belong, because I was, I was used to moving around and meeting new people.

[00:13:20] Guy Trammell: But let me ask you one more question, and that is: Were there students there from other colleges besides Tuskegee and St. Olaf?

[00:13:28] Paul Benson: There were a few students from Auburn. One in particular I remember because we had the same name. His name was Barry Benson. He was a senior at Auburn, and we enjoyed him. There were a few students that I don't know where they came from, but they were from Alabama. They weren't from St. Olaf. The St. Olaf group was about, the group was supposed to come down with 60. Dean Phillips and I have gone over these numbers. We think it was about 56 to 60, right in that range.

There were, there were some people that didn't show up and then there were some that showed up that we weren't expecting, and you know, that kind of thing. But we worshipped, and I mean this literally, the ground that Dean Phillips walked. There was the greatest man. You cannot be among us kids, I'll say, from St. Olaf, you cannot find anyone that just didn't adore him. And I was so thrilled when we started thinking about having this reunion. We, you know, we had had two reunions now, one at St. Olaf and one at Tuskegee, basically around the 50th anniversary. I was so thrilled when I got to meet him and Judy, his wife, again. Oh God, I can't remember, his wife [Judy] in Washington, DC. That was a high point in my life. I tell you this, with all honesty and sincerity.

And so let me tell you what we did that summer, we had a lot of options, we could go with the group that went out and spent their summer in homes, and then taught in schools. Or we could go and teach music. For some reason, and I think this again, was the influence of my friend, Tom Nibi. He was an actor and he wanted me to be in the drama group. The drama group, our job was to go out to the 10 counties, plus we went to Birmingham, to present plays, and then talk to kids about plays, and the meaning of the story. And we did all kinds of plays. But, mainly what we did were plays geared to children. We did elementary schools, primarily. And we had a lot of, we had, say a lot of fun, putting it mildly. But what we were trying to do is have an enrichment experience for these kids, many of whom have never had summer school. Many of whom had had very limited educational opportunities, particularly out in the country. And so we were in churches, we were in gyms, we were mostly under trees, shade trees. And we would have some kind of makeshift stage and the kids would sit down. And oh, they would laugh, and they would carry on. And one day, we were way out somewhere. And this French news team, who was doing a documentary on civil rights and Alabama, happened to come by and saw us and filmed

one of our productions to show clips of that. To show how these, to show this program, this TIS/CEP program, was trying to help these young people. And it's true, many of them had never actually been to a play. Now, these are kids seven, eight, nine, 10, 11 years old. Many of them have never been to a play or had anybody talk about plays or what they mean or any of that. So we felt like this was very valuable. Now here's the amazing thing. We were together in a Volkswagen van, we had not very many props, not much equipment, but it was stuck in the back end, and there were six of us. And we were crammed in this van. And then we would go and do these shows. I was usually the driver. I don't know why, but I was the driver.



Now imagine, if you will, 1965. Here we were mixed Tuskegee students and St. Olaf students, going down the road, stopping for gas at convenience stores, going in to eat. And miraculously, of course, the three months that we were there, we never had an incident, or anybody yell at us or say racial slurs. Now this did happen to other TIS/CEP folks, but never happened to us. And I don't know why other than, we were, it's just like we had a halo over us. We were blessed. We had, we had a very, very good times. And there were, there were a few times when we were asked by Dean Phillips, to promote the program to people. So, we would go on Sunday, to a church somewhere. And we would get up and give a little talk and speech. And talk about the program and how valuable it was. And I got to meet a lot of people who lived down, in subsistence farms where they had just a little plot of land, maybe five acres.

And yet, you know, what was strange is, I had come down with the impression that, I guess these people were really destitute. They weren't. They didn't have many material things, but they were far from destitute. They were, they had a very rich life. They lived in a home. The home might not be much, but they, they always had food to eat. They had family, they, they, they had church. Church was really important for these people. They had each other, they had what we call community. The very thing that is so missing today in our lives is community. We live in anonymity, right? We live in these cities, and we don't know anybody. And we know only a few people. And we have to drive everywhere. They didn't have any of that. They lived in these little communities out in, out in the countryside. And they would walk to work. And they didn't have much money, but the appeal of making money was so great. We would see everywhere on these telephone posts and fence posts, we'd see these signs, like: "Maids wanted" in New York, or in Chicago, Detroit, you know, up north. Good pay. And I think the appeal of that was great, because many of those people, young people left and moved up to Detroit, Chicago. And then strangely enough, I think you know, that many of them eventually moved back to Alabama, to Mississippi, you know. Still places of much racism, but very different from the places that they left when they were young people. And they come back.

[00:21:48] Guy Trammell: Let me ask you, because I meant to ask earlier, what was mentioned was three months. So, could you name those three months? And then—

[00:22:00] Paul Benson: Yes, so July and August of 1965, we were there in early June. And most of us were gone before school started at Tuskegee. I presume school started about Labor Day. So, I would say, you know, toward the end of August, that's when we left. I had to get all the way up, and I hitchhiked most of this, way up to, from Tuskegee, to Seattle, Tacoma Washington area. And I got there in time to start school and head—and then when I arrived, there was my check, sent by TIS/CEP. \$900. That paid my tuition for that year.

[00:22:47] Guy Trammell: Okay. And one of the, as you were talking about driving, these were not exactly paved roads that you were on all the time, right?

[00:22:56] Paul Benson: That, boy, you're telling me. Driving was pretty iffy. And once you've gotten off the highways, we were on a lot of country roads, a lot of dirt roads. I was surprised when we were down there for our 50th, and you and others took us out, you know, in the



country. I was surprised how good the roads were. I mean, they have at least gotten better roads. I mean, actually, quite a few things have changed. And free movement. But you see, what I was amazed at is how much things changed from 1963 to 1965 already in Alabama. Along about the middle of the summer we heard, somebody said that Billy Graham was going to have a crusade in Montgomery. And that was, that we could go over on a Sunday. We always had Sundays off. Somebody had a car from St. Olaf. So, a few of us go in the car because I've never been to a Billy Graham crusade. And I thought that'd be interesting. What I didn't know at the time until we go there, was that this was Billy Graham's first integrated crusade. In other words, we're talking Montgomery, Alabama here. We're talking the cradle of Confederacy. We are talking about a place that didn't cotton to the idea of having African Americans and white Americans mixing together and sitting and singing in the choir together. And so, everybody was a little bit tense when the Crusade started. And I don't know if we were there on the first day or what, but I'll tell you this: They had absolutely no issues that I knew of. People sat together where they wanted to, there was no segregation. And the choir was just as mixed as it could be. And it was amazing, right? And I thought, why is this? How come they can't do this all the time? And then it occurred to me, well, Billy Graham said it was okay. Which means God said it was okay. Which means they could have their, they could have their time together.

Now, as you know, and most people know, that segregation is greatest in churches and even to this day. Because, from the time of slavery, until the civil rights period, the African American churches had become strong, and had become very, very important. AME, particularly. And these churches, oh, people felt at home. I mean, this is, this is home, and they had developed their own style of worship. And so I don't think there was a great incentive for integration, even at that point. Amongst certain churches, in particular, I'll mention United Methodist. It had always been strong about encouraging integration. The Roman Catholics, of course, never were separated. The Methodists had gone through a traumatic Civil War, pre-Civil War split over slavery. And then it took them until the 20th century to get back together. Which is, by the way, why you have a place like Southern Methodist University. It was the headquarters of the Methodists in the south. Once they, Vanderbilt, decided it didn't want to associate itself with this segregation, so about the turn of the century the Southern Methodist was a southern Episcopal Methodist. ME, Methodist Episcopal Church. And these folks headquartered in Dallas of all places and unveiled a seminary and all that. I mean, it's amazing if you think about it.

But, we so enjoyed going to services in these little country churches. And I continued, when I, part of my teaching was religion. American and world religion, and I'd always take my students to a little country church that I discovered years ago. And we would always enjoy being part of that service. Now, now you have these mega churches, like the famous Potter's House. TD Jakes, right? And TD Jakes was on the cover, around the year 2000, the cover of Time Magazine as the preacher of the century. Not the preacher of the week, not the preacher of the month, not the preacher of the year, not the preacher of the decade. The preacher of the century. And of course, he's built a huge mega church, which if you go there today, they are giving thousands, tens of thousands of COVID shots at the Potter's House. So, it is, it is amazing evolution, that these little country churches have become these big mega churches, where like at his church, he seats 12,000. And that's not big enough. So then, they have to have two services, you know, every Sunday, two services. Every Sunday, 12,000. It's amazing.



[00:28:53] Guy Trammell: Then were you part of the group? Because I understand there was one group that went downtown Tuskegee, to try to approach the white churches there?

[00:29:04] Paul Benson: Oh, yes. I heard the story. Yes, I was not part of that group. Well, the reason is because we tended to be out, we tended to be on the go. And we were out promoting the program in churches often on Sunday morning. But I think they, I think they were a little bit ambitious in that. The reason being that Tuskegee City and Tuskegee Institute didn't necessarily get along that well. So, as you know, Tuskegee Institute became the center then of a not a new town, a new city called, I think it's officially called Tuskegee Institute. What was amazing to me, is when we were there in 1965, the town of Tuskegee was a little country agriculture town. It was bigger on Saturday, and it was busy. There were people like crazy there. And then when we went back, you know, it was basically boarded up. It is hardly anything left. And yet Tuskegee Institute has been thriving, and lots and lots of buildings on campus. And the little community around there. We had a, one of our greatest joys was when we could go, particularly on a Saturday, when we could go this this chicken restaurant near the campus, where we could get a chicken dinner for \$1. And that included the drink. Do you remember the name of that by any chance?

[00:30:47] Guy Trammell: Okay, I'm thinking that it was fried chicken, right?

[00:30:47] Paul Benson: Yes. And yes and go ahead.

[00:30:55] Guy Trammell: It could have been The Chicken Coop. Because—

[00:30:58] Paul Benson: That's it, The Chicken Coop. And when we were there, on the bus, and the van going back, I think in our van stop is by where it used to be. But we loved to go to the Coop. And everybody said, "Let's go to the Coop". Oh God, that was it. And they knew how to fry chicken. Oh, Colonel Sanders knew nothing about fried chicken. Colonel Sanders was a beginner. These folks knew how to do it. We'd love it. And you know, it was all bad for you. It was all greasy stuff, and all these fries, and then you'd have a coke to go with it. You know, God, we couldn't have enjoyed anything more in this world than The Coop. And I think the coop went on for many years. But you know, obviously now closed. But we were so impressed going back

for the 50th about the campus, my god, the campus. So many beautiful buildings. Now that Kellogg Center, oh fabulous.

[00:32:07] Guy Trammell: Let me ask you too again, if you were going to the churches, now did they ever give you the church dinners when you went to visit?

[00:32:17] Paul Benson: Yes, we had dinner on the grounds, I think at least once. I don't remember because we were like, on the go. We were going from here to there. And those diners are on the grounds, so when you had some time. But, oh God, yes, they were fantastic. And I never saw a brush arbor there, but they used to have brush arbor, I'm told. Yes, I'd mentioned earlier, we started out in an air-conditioned dorm. But then they moved it to the famous Cassidy's and the Cassidy's, of course, were not air conditioned. And I thought, well this is going to be bad. But it turned out, it turned out not to be bad at all, because our bodies are acclimatized, to



the climate there. I don't remember suffering, particularly from the heat or humidity. I think that had something to do with my body that was 20 years old. Now, whereas you get older, you know, heat and cold become more of a factor.

But another highlight of this whole thing was to meet William Dawson. We knew all about, in fact, I think William Dawson is the only man that we really knew about other than the famous Booker T. Washing and Carver. Other than that, William Dawson, because he was so well, remember, I was in music. Choral music. And I was so very, very interested in his work, which was to collect all of these spirituals. And of course, the William Dawson series, everybody, you know, has one or two of those pieces in the choir repertoire. They do.

And one thing I'd like to mention before we run out of time is something that was, that I helped with. And that is, when I moved, started going to Pacific Lutheran, I was interested in developing a student exchange there too. I was thinking Tuskegee, so that, because St. Olaf had an exchange program and one of those young men that went on that exchange program to Tuskegee was named Lee Norrgard. And you're going to interview Lee Norrgard and he has some really interesting perspectives on living, you know, for a year there. And I think he came back later. He loved Tuskegee.

So when I go to Pacific Lutheran, I got on the student council and I pitched this idea of an exchange. So we could have students come and then send students. Well, it ended up, they worked a deal. Tuskegee already had a number of these exchanges. They didn't want to have any more. But Fisk University in Nashville did not have an exchange. So that proposal eventually became part of the program at Pacific Lutheran with the exchange with Fisk University. And Fisk, of course, was in a very different situation than Tuskegee. When integration came along, Fisk had a great, was next door to one of the great schools of the south, Vanderbilt. So what happened is, all of a sudden, Vanderbilt starts giving scholarships to these very, you know, high achieving students. And they, instead of going to Fisk, they go to Vanderbilt.

And so some of the smaller historically African American colleges, have disappeared because integration, good and great thing in and of itself, had unintended consequences. And that is, that really hurt some of these smaller schools. I think Fisk has hung on, but we in Texas, here we have a whole bunch of historically African American schools that have died. And it's, it's, it's tragic, in a way, because they provided a great, great service. But we have one great, historically African American public university, and it's called Texas Prairie View. And that school is top notch. And I guarantee you, they no longer cater to African American students, exclusively, they cater to everybody, and everybody wants to get in, because it's considered one of the very best schools in Texas. And so it's growing like crazy. And, and then, of course, UT got integrated and all that, you know. A&M, all these schools got integrated. Um, and that's, that's been, been a good thing. But let me go ahead. But let me, go ahead.

[00:37:35] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now for the drama, in particular, I wanted to ask a couple of things. In preparation, did you have all, have like sessions in the evening or whatever to prepare?

[00:37:49] Paul Benson: Yes, we did, you know, you'll remember there were some, what were called, temporary buildings where TIS/CEP offices were located. And we would have, they had a



place there where they had a reader's theatre. And that's what we used as kind of our staging area.

[00:38:09] Guy Trammell: Was that the Little Theater by any chance?

[00:38:13] Paul Benson: Yes, exactly. That's what it was. I had forgotten the name. But I remember that we attended reader's theater. See, we did all the stuff that was being done. And we went to all kinds of programs and movies and things. Just like the summer Tuskegee students did. But what they didn't have when we were there was, like, the marching band. That would have been great fun. And, but we were, we were, they were just starting to practice when we all left and went back to our home campuses.

[00:38:47] Guy Trammell:

Were you able to write your own scripts, to put on?

[00:38:50] Paul Benson: Oh, no. We did traditional plays. We did traditional plays that had been written for children. And so we didn't do any, we didn't do any of that. We probably did some innovating, and some ad-libbing in some of those plays. But my main memory is just how delighted the children were. I mean, they just would laugh and literally roll on the floor. Because there would be some comedy you know, stuff in these things. And then, and then sometimes they would laugh at things that they weren't supposed to laugh at, but it just struck them funny. You know? And that, that was such a sweet time. Such a very, very sweet time.

[00:39:39] Guy Trammell: And in different places, could you talk about, maybe there was some, because okay, eventually did some of the children actually, you had them involved? Actually, doing some of the—

[00:39:55] Paul Benson: Yes, many of these were taking classes with the TIS/CEP program. Some of them were some of them were kids that were in Vacation Bible School somewhere. And

they would, you know, the church would just let us put-on, put-on play. But no, most of them were in, we're in a TIS/CEP program. And so they would, they, this was kind of a break from, you know, doing math and writing all day long. And so they were happy to come. We always had a great crowd, you know, we have a lot of people. And they would applaud, and they enjoyed it. And it was it was sweet, very sweet. Yes.

[00:40:40] Guy Trammell: They would have, like an in-program type thing, or?

[00:40:46] Paul Benson: Yes, I would say I would, I would, I would call it that. The, the organization of TISEP (Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program), now, I'm only familiar with TISEP, not TICEP (Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program). But our TISEP was brilliantly organized. And I'll tell you, it's a good thing that Dean Phillips was young, because the man was constantly on the go. And he called a meeting one time, this is in probably about the middle of July, in which he was having some problems with, and I don't remember what the problems were, with some of the with, with a group or with the administration, I can't remember. But he said, I need your support. And everybody there all 60 of us, gave our support



to him without question, and, and that crisis, whatever it was past. When you, when you talk to Dean Phillips, he'll, he'll probably remember all that. He dealt with all kinds of issues. And by the way, he told me the day they started, in June, he didn't know if he had the funding. The funding had not been approved yet. But he said we have to start. So we started. And then the funding came through. And he was constantly flying to Washington, DC. And, you know, constantly trying to get somebody to sign something. And transportation was a huge problem, getting people out to the sites. And because it was constant back and forth. And so at one point, he just rented a bunch of vans. And that's how we got around.

[00:42:41] Guy Trammell: And that was something else I wanted to ask you. This is a little bit before GPS. So yea, if you were the driver. Okay, how on earth? You didn't have the internet, you didn't have your cell phone:

[00:42:54] Paul Benson: Well, the answer to that is twofold. Number one is, for whatever reason, God gave me the gift of geography. I always was, I'm a map hound. I love maps, I always knew exactly where we're going. And the other thing is the TISEP kids sometimes knew, because they were from Alabama, and they would, they will be very helpful. We never got lost. We never we never had any problem to get anywhere. And so this was, you would think it might be a problem. But it isn't. See we so depend on technology today that we forget, there were other ways. And, and it's like I was talking to Dean Phillips about the Green Book. You know, the Green Book was motels and hotels where African American people could stay when they were traveling throughout the South. And in Dallas, we still have one of those hotels, Greenbook hotels is still standing. And it's, it's amazing how when Dean Phillips came to Tuskegee about 61 or two, I think, right in that time period; they didn't have the Green Book. So on one occasion, they had to sleep in the car all night. I mean, this is awful. Unbelievable. And yet, my point of talking, about the Green Book, is there were ways there, were ways to find out what you needed to know. But you had to you had to be plugged in. We didn't have cell phones, right. But on the other hand, pay phones were everywhere. So you could pick up the phone if you had a quarter or a nickel or a dime and you could call. And so people adapted and we had, I remember down in the in those offices of TISEP's, they had mimeographs and right. Hand mimeographs, somebody had to sit there and crank those things out and take out materials. So they're constantly taking out materials to the schools out in the 10 county area.

[00:45:17] Guy Trammell: And one of the thing about traveling too, now the churches, because I know what it is like to find those southern churches. Now, how, what kind of GPA, you had to have some kind of way? Because the church is not, we're not necessarily on the map. Especially

[00:45:36] Paul Benson: Yes, yes, that's good that that, you know, is a great question how we precisely knew the name. And sometimes we'd have to stop and say, you know, where is Greater Antioch St. Philip's Church. I mean, they had these long names. Very, I don't know how that evolved. I think what happened is probably churches merged. And they, and they both wanted to keep the name. And so you get these long names. You know, missionaries often in in the, in the title, and we thought that was fun. And, and, and it was, but they boy, loyalty, people were loyal to their church and, and to the minister, that minister might not have gotten paid much money, but he got paid abundantly in food, and canned goods and, you know, a ham that had been smoked they would, somebody bring over and even cars. You know, people would get together



and get enough money together so that he could have a car, which was, that was a big deal. So that was impressive. Mostly, I would say Baptists, AME, maybe one or two Methodists. We were only in one Catholic Church one time, but that priest was totally committed to the cause. And that was up in Birmingham, and we really enjoyed meeting him. But generally speaking, Catholic, pretty rare in Alabama. It just happens that up there in Birmingham, there are quite a few Catholic churches, and monasteries and so forth, but most of Alabama is protestant. And it is to this day, I would say.

[00:47:33] Guy Trammell: And did, did, and when you visited some of the churches, were any of them at the same place with some of the actual children in the program that you attended?

[00:47:46] Paul Benson: Yes, yes. they these, these were kids who were from that community, and many of them attended that church. But, but the typical audience would be kids that were in the TISEP program, and they were taking a math class or whatever. And then they came to this program. We were always a special event, we were always an enrichment activity. The choir and orchestra went out, and they would, they would play. But the problem there, it was too big a group. So they, I think, it divided up and went down in smaller groups and taught music to these kids. That was very, very popular too. Then, of course, they had field days and sports stuff. I don't think we had anybody teaching sports, per se in TISEP. About the most outside of the straight academics would be the music and the drama. We integrated that into whatever else they were doing. So they have, you know, a larger world experience, because many of these kids had never been a mile away from home. I mean, they just live in these little, small worlds. But the word bucolic comes to mind, in some cases, they really had a nice life when they were in their little community. It was it was leaving the community where they faced a prejudice, racism, and all of these things. So I think the average TISEP student that we at least that we were dealing with, have lived in a very small little world.

We were trying to expand that world. Right. You know, and many of those kids have gone to do great, wonderful things. But I always, remember with great fondness, some of the TISEP folks that I worked with, and always wonder what happened to them because you know, after TISEP, and particularly after we left Tuskegee, you know, it's hard to keep track of anybody. And, but we, we, we honor, all of us think of Tuskegee as is our other, college. You know, other college as their other home. And I remember following the path of Ralph Ellison. You know, in *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison talks about the Tuskegee campus. And then he walks out, if you can imagine, he walks out to the VA, and is out there doing some things and that that all came to life once I'm on Tuskegee's campus. So Ralph Ellison was one of the other great names of Tuskegee.

[00:50:55] Guy Trammell: Let me go to two more questions. And one is, did you ever get involved with any of the ones with SNCC or Tuskegee Institute Advancement League or other groups? Sammy Younge, Wendy, Gwen Patton, Simuel Schultz or any of those?

[00:50:55] Paul Benson: No, we didn't, you know, we were we were somewhat isolated in this regard that we weren't in the mix. Now, if we had been there during the school year, this would be a very different story, but were there as summer folks. Most of the organizations and activities on the Tuskegee campus were closing down. One of the reasons we came, Tuskegee was just ending its term its spring term when we arrived. And so there were still quite a few students, then



it kind of emptied out, and you just had a very kind of minimal summer school. So we didn't see a lot of people on campus. And then we were busy, you know, we had stuff going on every day. As I said, there were a few summer school activities that we attended and enjoyed. But generally speaking, we, we it was all it was all business. We didn't also have any, the only time we ever had off as Fourth of July, we had a fourth July, and some folks went to visit some historic site or something. And we didn't do much of that. I know people went to Atlanta, Atlanta isn't all that far, but I never got to Atlanta, and or, for that matter, even to Auburn. You know, we stayed, and did we were pretty much doing the 10 counties, you know, when I learned that, that area very well.

[00:52:55] Guy Trammell: Now, were you were you? Did you ever have an opportunity to interact with the actual parents, to talk with him or hear from him? or?

[00:53:03] Paul Benson: Yes, only out in the field. So we would talk to people often and they usually say, well, you know, thank you so much for coming. We appreciate what you're doing. Thank you for caring enough to be here, you know, that kind of thing. But the actual people, like Jeff Strate who you're going to interview, they have kind of a whole different experience for TISEP, because they live with a family. They interacted with family and became close to the family and close to the community. Unfortunately, we didn't have that experience, but what we did have was a much broader experience of the whole range of where TISEP was operating. And getting to know a lot of different people but not in the depth that the St. Olaf people had when, by living out in the country. You know, living on well water and, and whatever could be grown in the garden, you know, that kind of thing. And, and so that that was a very meaningful to most of those folks. And, and I think Jeff Strate and Lee Norrgard would be too particular you'd want to talk to you about those experiences.

[00:54:22] Guy Trammell: Okay, well, just a couple of other perspectives, one is what, uh, anything, you mentioned a few things about things that are takeaways from it, from that experience, but I also want you to speak about the applicability if that's a word, but anyway, how applicable the concept of a TISEP would be possibly for today.

[00:54:54] Paul Benson: Yes, that's a great question. And the answer is, is very applicable to our time, because we have lots of kids, of course, now they're in cities, you know, there are, if you go out into the counties, there's hardly anybody there anymore. And so they're all in the city somewhere. But enrichment activities are always to be appreciated, always to be emphasized as important. Particularly in the summer, when you know, kids don't have that much to do. And always seems to me that the idea that you're off for three months in the summer, is not necessarily a good idea. Because, you know, maybe one month off, but three months off, where you're not doing that much, particularly if you're not a teenager, or you might get a job or something, you know, you're just you're just a lot of time, wasting time. Nowadays, these kids will spend 24/7 doing video games. I mean, how enriching can that be? Right?

So the answer is, yes, yes, yes, it's extremely applicable. But we've only had some limited development of summer programming, strangely enough, in the area of trying to get kids up to speed academically, where they, you know, they've fallen behind trying to bring them up speed.



And many school districts have these programs, and they're valuable programs. But I teach in community college as well as University and I see students who the problem isn't at all the opportunity for educational opportunity, the problem is motivation for them to put in the time and effort it takes to learn something. And they want it, they want to take every shortcut they can and not put in the effort it takes. For example, in writing a paper and composition, they just want to get it down and get it in, they don't care the quality. And of course, that then they do poorly. And they're not going to be successful in the university if they can't write well, and but they don't want to put in the effort. You know, there's been a lot of names applied to this. The old-fashioned word is lazy. But I think it's more complicated than that. I think it has to do with trying to motivate people to do something, so they too, can contribute. So many have sacrificed for them. They need to sacrifice, they need to do work hard, so they can contribute.

Now, strangely enough, this is not a problem with any kids who are immigrants. If they're if they're from, say, Mexico, for example. They are motivated, wow, are they motivated. Or any of the other students we have many in the community college are from all over the world. And I have sometimes, I have a class of nothing but students from Nepal, I mean, who's ever heard of Nepal, right? Well, these students are, they'll do what you tell them to, you know, jump upside down and backwards and they'll do it, because they are motivated to do whatever they have to do to get ahead, and they're going to go back to their home countries.

It's a cultural thing, Guy, it's a cultural thing, why people are motivated or not motivated. And the culture does not necessarily encourage them to be motivated. And therefore, they, they just have been given everything. They have never had to work for anything. They haven't had to struggle for anything. And therefore, they don't they don't feel motivated there to do anything, because they'll get it. In other words, it's always been given to them, why would they get it? And this idea that they're victims, as opposed to be somebody who's contributing, they're the ones that are being beat up upon when, when there may be some truth in that, but the point is, no matter what your status in life is, you have to make a commitment that you are going to make a difference. And you can only make a difference if you know something and have something to contribute. And that's where education . . . so education is always the most important factor in developing a person. It's certainly not the only factor but it's the most important factor.

[00:59:58] Guy Trammell: And you saw TISEP really making a difference?

[01:00:04] Paul Benson: A big difference with the kids. And it made a huge difference when from those of us who participated. I always say we got as much out of TISEP as kids we were teaching. And that is so, so very true. And I would, I would say to you, in all honesty that I'm a very different person than I would have been if I'd never been in TISEP. I realize that more now, as I grow older. At that time, your life is going kind of so fast, when you're at that age, but I now realize that it made me understand and appreciate that you have to create your own opportunities. This is the thing, the opportunities are there, but you have to, you have to work at it. You can't, opportunities will occasionally drop in your lap, but most of the times you have to create your own opportunity. And that's what people don't realize. And that's what TISEP did, give was just gave us all these opportunities to learn and to grow. Both the students and the advisees, I think we were called advisees. Something like that. It was kind of a strange child. Tutors mostly. And so, I was a tutor. I tutored a lot of students. But a lot of it wasn't just academic. It was, you know,



like things they need to know in life. And that in the end is sometimes more important than the straight academic stuff. Right? And so you know, your math tables, that's good. It's a good thing. But do you know how to talk to people, you know, how to act in public, you know, how to be considered and think of the other guy. All of those are life lessons that some people never quite learn. And we have amply examples of this in life where all people care about is themselves. And don't give a darn about anybody else. And that's, of course, that means their education has totally failed. Yes.

[01:02:03] Guy Trammell: Okay. Well, thank you so much. Thank you. It's been a wealth of information that you shared. I really appreciate that. Thank you also for serving retirees up too. Y

[01:02:42] Paul Benson: Oh, thank you Guy. You're doing great work. And you, you are one of my heroes now, because you've gone to the trouble. I'm trying to capture all of this. Which is getting harder and harder now, you know, because so many of us are getting in those senior years, we start forget things. And luckily, I'm not quite forgetting things yet. But that comes too. So keep up. Keep up the good work. And thank you. Thank you very much. And I'll be very interested in seeing who you eventually get to interview. But there there's, I'll, I'll send you one of the TISEP girls that was in our group. I'll send you her name and address. And maybe you can get a hold of her and interview her like you did me.

[01:03:39] Guy Trammell: Okay. All right then. Thank you.

[01:03:40] Paul Benson: Thank you, Guy.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Wilson Blount/Dade City, FL

Interviewer: Calvin Austin/Millersville, MD

Date: May 17, 2021

Transcriptionist: Kevin Holt

Colonel Wilson Blount, ret. U.S. Air Force Ball State, (MBA) Tuskegee Institute, (B.S.) Wilson Blount received commission as an officer in the United States Air Force by Tuskegee Airman, Lt. Col Herbert E. Carter. After serving 27 years of combined active duty and reserve service both stateside and abroad (in Canada, Taiwan, Spain and the Republic of Taiwan) Colonel Blount retired from military service in 1999. Post military career, he became a Department of Defense Weapons Safety manager, evaluating explosives site plans and ensuring sound, supportable and appropriate standards in explosives development. A summer 1965 TISEP participant, Wilson Blount's duties included logistics, voter registration, tutoring and delivering lunches to TISEP employees, tutors and students.



Wilson Blount

[00:00:12] Calvin Austin: It's 2:18 Eastern Standard time on May 7—17th 2021. I'm Calvin Austin in Millersville, Maryland, and I'm here to interview Wilson Blount, who's in Dade City, Florida. This interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee TIS/CEP history and impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of Interior's National Park Service.

[00: 00:54] Wilson Blount: Okay, I am Wilson Blount. Dade City, Florida. It is approximately 2:19 pm on April 17 2021. I am being interviewed by Calvin Austin. And as I said, today is April or May the 17th 2021.

[00:01:17] Calvin Austin: Okay, first, Wilson, I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this project, to—to chronicle the history of the TIS/CEP project and its implementation. To get started, we'd like to get some information about you; where you were, how you got to Tuskegee, where you came from. So tell us about where you came from, and the environment you came from?



[00:01:50] Wilson Blount: Well, I came to Tuskegee from a little farming community in rural South Georgia, Randolph County. I was born in Randolph County, son of sharecroppers. My mom and dad sharecropped from my grandparents and my grandparents actually owned the farm that we worked. I did not, I don't know when I became aware of that information. But when I found that out, I was quite surprised and proud that that was the case. At any rate, I went to high school in Randolph County, to graduate 1966. And I had no plans for college because I thought as a farm boy, I had no money to go to college. I was going to do like everybody else. Almost everybody is going to the army. And you use the GI Bill to go to college. Well, I had a discussion at some point with my high school Ag instructor who was Mr. Calvin A. Presley. And he was talking to me about a program over Tuskegee called the five-year program. Come to find out he got his master's degree in agriculture from Tuskegee and suggested, I might want to consider Tuskegee. I applied to Tuskegee, and was accepted on the five-year program. So that's how I got to Tuskegee. At the time, my uncle lived at Tuskegee. And he was a veteran, World War I veteran, I guess it was living in Tuskegee and working at the VA hospital. So he drove me to Tuskegee in his 1956 Buick Roadmaster. Okay. And I had, I have that Roadmaster today in Dade City. I'm trying to restore it as a connection between myself, my roots at Cuthbert and my roots at Tuskegee, and how I got here. I don't know if I'll ever fix that car, because it's expensive. But anyway, and I got to Tuskegee dropped me off at Emory too, and went on his way. And that was the beginning of my life. I believe that was a Sunday afternoon about two o'clock in September, August in 1962. That's how I got to Tuskegee.

[00:04:29] Calvin Austin: Okay, so I just want to make sure I understood you said you graduated from high school in '60. You said '66. But you made '62. I think—

[00:04:39] Wilson Blount: I did. I meant '62. Yes.

[00:04:41] Calvin Austin: Okay, thank you. Okay. Now, how was it coming from Randolph County to Tuskegee. How was your adjustment to Tuskegee?

[00:04:54] Wilson Blount: Ah, well, that was quite an adjustment. As a matter of fact. I graduated from Tuskegee. I guess I knew a little about Tuskegee in the sense that I knew Booker T. Washington started the school over there. But since I had not planned to go to college, I had not done a lot of research on Booker T. Washington or Tuskegee. And I was not politically aware of the social environment. And when I was growing up, in, in my little hometown, politically, it was just not the thing to do. I was not aware, for example, that there was even a statue in the city square of a Civil War soldier. I guess you could see it, but it never occurred to me that that was the statue of a Civil War soldier because I was raised in the country, so when you went, went to the city, he was just there to do what you do in the city. So I'm not that familiar with the city. But I was for some reason, and I don't know why, our school and our teachers did not dwell a lot on the political and social environment surrounding the black/white situation at that time. There was almost no discussion of the Civil War. Certainly not the impact of Civil War had in our area, matter of fact, the Civil War did not itself approach our area. We had a college there that housed a lot of the injured soldiers from the war. But that was not really addressed in our community. I guess the whites didn't want that brought up and the blacks didn't bring it up. So we sort of led a sheltered life there in our local community, and [tough enjoy as] regards the Civil War and all that. It wasn't until Tuskegee that I became aware of the Civil



Rights struggles, and all that. Keep in mind that was '62. So that wasn't really blossoming and blooming that much at that time, as far as I knew, anyway.

[00:07:18] Calvin Austin: Yes. So. So how, how did you find out about the TISEP program?

[00:07:28] Wilson Blount: Well, when I got to Tuskegee, I was working as a helping the janitorial staff, clean the Student Union, Huntington Hall, and Booker T. Washington's residence. So most of my time was spent just doing that. And in the summer, I was wanting to go study. So I was not aware. I knew that TISEP was there at the time. But for some reason, I did not apply to work with the program. I was sort of committed to my boss at the time. He was pretty satisfied with my work and telling me what a good job I was doing and how much the school needed me in that capacity. So I'm sort of committed to that. And it wasn't until I guess, '65 the spring of '65 that I became aware of what the TISEP was all about and then I could even work with the program so '63 to '65 that's when I started working with TISEP.

[00:08:48] Calvin Austin: Okay, so what did you do in your first job with TISEP?

[00:08:53] Wilson Blount: As I recall my first job at TISEP was to—and the only job I basically had in TISEP was to deliver the TISEP student staff to the training sites in Lowndes County. And at one point, I delivered lunches to—I guess during the summer program, I delivered in the summer '65 and summer of '66. I delivered what they call the chicken pot pies to these students at the training center. That's another whole story, but in my chicken pot pies and beverages to the students and to the community students, and the TISEP student staff at the training centers.

[00:09:45] Calvin Austin: So you're, you're in the transportation department then.

[00:09:48] Wilson Blount: Transportation department, yes.

[00:09:50] Calvin Austin: Okay. Now, okay. So your interaction was not necessarily with the participants in the program other than to transport material to them?

[00:10:07] Wilson Blount: When you say participants, are you talking about the Tuskegee—

[00:10:09] Calvin Austin: No, the students, the tutees or the people that were impacted, we hope to impact by the study.

[00:10:16] Wilson Blount: Oh, yes, yes, the students in the—from the homes in the community. Well, I think—my impact with them without delivering this Tuskegee staff to school was to pick them up from their homes when they did not have transportation to center. And most of them didn't, I would, I would drop the Tuskegee students off at the center of the churches or mostly with churches that didn't really have centers, community centers in those days, as I recall. Union halls, mostly churches. And from there, I would go pick up the students and bring the students, the community students, and sometimes parents to the churches to meet and work with. And occasionally I would help the Tuskegee students interact with the community students. Whatever they would have



me do.

[00:11:13] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[00:11:13] Wilson Blount: That would be that may be tutoring or reading or some math problems and those kinds of things.

[00:11:20] Calvin Austin: So did your efforts doing that have— I guess what impact did that that effort have on those students? Or? Or did you ever have any conversations or interactions with them to find out if that mere transportation did— had an impact on them? Or did you see an impact?

[00:11:44] Wilson Blount: Well, I—one impact you could see was for a few, when you went to their home to pick them up, they're always ready to go. So that lets me know that they were encouraged to participate in the program, and really wanted to learn. So I don't recall, the moms and guardians, and parents having to force them to go to the centers. They're always ready to go, well-disciplined, well-behaved, and clean and dressed and ready to go. And when they got to the centers, they appeared eager to learn, and they would listen attentively to whatever instructions were being passed at the time. I can't recall—I think in some cases, down to instruction about nutrition. And I think maybe instructions about behavior, social behavior, how you're supposed to act this environment, though. But basically, whatever the course of instruction was, they were attentive and ready to learn. And when I had occasion to work with them. Mostly it was with reading, or math or writing is something they were always attentive and to seem to grasp. I didn't have no formal training in teaching. So I will just follow the instructions of the teacher. I had no idea what I was doing. But they seemed to comprehend what I was trying to get them to, to understand.

[00:13:23] Calvin Austin: Okay, now, was that, in your travels? Did you see any Civil Rights implications of what we were doing? Or any, any activity or along those lines in Blount County, that you could tell us about?

[00:13:45] Wilson Blount: Well, you could clearly see most of the homes. The black parents and families was— showed signs of poverty and low income. And most of them almost all of them had gardens. And the gardens were well tended as a means of supplementing whatever income they had to buy food. And the roads to their homes were all for the most part was dirt road or gravel roads, not well maintained. So there was certainly signs of neglect. Not from the parents, the people occupying the home, but I would suppose the owners of the homes, I think most of them were sharecroppers, renters or whatever. And in that sense, there were clear signs of poverty in almost every home we attended. But there's a clear indication that the parents and even the students sense that there was something better beyond where they were, in the sense that they all saw that they need to get an education if they were to improve on their plight or their situation. Their parents clearly made that simple. "Take, my child and teach him" they would say, and so we were eager to do that. And the students were eager to learn. So yes, there were clear signs that there was work to be done by somebody, and that they were welcoming all efforts to improve their lives down there. They, they saw what we were doing as a way out, I think.



[00:15:45] Calvin Austin: So. So back to your, you know, your matriculation at Tuskegee. Were you active in any of the Civil Rights activities that were conducted at the university? Or were you? How? I know you couldn't, could not be aware of it. I think that's enough negatives. But—

[00:16:11] Wilson Blount: Yes. Well, I, as I said, you know, I, I came from a, I guess you call it a low environment, it was definitely low. And I wasn't—my freshman year, I was the first in my, my family to graduate, even graduate high school. And so I was the first to attend college. So I knew I had to succeed at that. And my primary goal was to succeed at Tuskegee, and not go back home as a failure by failing at Tuskegee. So I knew that there were things going on in Tuskegee's environment, that environment, here there and political, but I saw that as a distraction from my goals to graduate and, and show my folks back home that I could hack this thing called "Getting a college education" so I forego—I put aside, getting involved in a lot of the student activities involved in the community. Even going to church, I would—I went to chapel I didn't get involved in the local churches, because I needed to study on Sunday afternoon, rather, than get involved in additional church activities.

I wanted to do that. But my thrust was to graduate [cough]. So graduation, my thrust and at some point, I remember marching in some student marches, like downtown, I remember getting some involvements. We went downtown. I think I remember some of the marches led by Gwen Patton, and Sammy Young, and I remember going on some marches, I think, I can't remember where we left out of town going. But I did get involved with the march of Selma to Montgomery though. And I remember going to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery. And on several weekends, when we got, we did training, I can't remember who was doing the training at the church, but it was passive and non-violent reaction to protesting, I think to prepare us for the march from Montgomery to—in and around Montgomery and also other planned marches but basically it paid off when we got the, the opportunity to march from Selma to Montgomery.

And so that's a—and I did—I went to—on the morning of the march, we took a bus from Tuskegee, I believe the school provided a bus, I can't remember. But myself and twenty or thirty other students was on this bus and we're going to go to Selma, cross the bridge and hook up with the protesters, the marches at the church in Selma and march back across the bridge. Well, when we got— when we arrived in Selma on highway 80 I think it was past the base—Air Force Base and we could see the bridge. But we got inside of the bridge, and the city police stopped us and how they controlled all the people that you saw in the march: they said the bridge was closed and you can't cross the bridge. So the bus, we stopped, at that point and said "well, what can we do?" So we thought, well, we'll just wait here and when the marchers cross the bridge, we will connect up with marchers over here, and then we'll go to Montgomery. Well, that didn't happen, as you know, because on that day, as the marchers crossed the bridge the security forces repulsed everyone and from where we were, you could smell the gunfire to tear gas, dogs barking and all that mayhem and we thought, "whoa, this is what it's going to be here today." So we thought, "this is not going to be a good day." So we did not march. We did not join the crowd, the group to march across the bridge. At some point, we got back on the bus and returned to Tuskegee that day.

[00:20:57] Calvin Austin: Okay. That's interesting. So, you graduated Tuskegee in '67?



[00:21:09] Wilson Blount: January 27. Nin- Oh, no, no, I graduated. I forgot when the semester ended, but I only had to take one class, that was ROTC. So I think—now January, December, January, I took my final exam. And I . . . and that was enough to graduate. I passed the course. So on January 27, I got my commission and was sworn in by Herb Carter, that's an original Tuskegee Airman. And on January 27th, I got my commission in March. And March, end of March, entered the Air Force on active duty at Keesler Air Force Base.

[00:21:54] Calvin Austin: Okay, so. So you were a second lieutenant in the Air Force.

[00:21:59] Wilson Blount: Mmhmm.

[00:22:00] Calvin Austin: So, so tell me about your Air Force career?

[00:22:04] Wilson Blount: Well, I went to—I went to—I was a business major. Okay. And I expected—I told the Air Force I wanted to go into personnel management, finance, or procurement. Those are three choices; Buying and selling. That's what I wanted. Okay. Instead, they sent me to Keesler as a communications officer. And this is interesting, because, as I recall, we had people that very year before the summer of '66, graduating getting commissioned second lieutenant, and some of those went into what I want to go into but were not business majors. Okay. I think they went into— they had no business majors going into business. So I thought, well, there must be a way out of here. So I go over to Keesler and I tried against them; protests, write letters, and— "I don't want to become a communications officer." You know, first of all, you know, find out that "Hey, you can be communications sitting on a mountaintop somewhere isolated in the States." That's not what I wanted to do. Then they said "Well, you could go to Vietnam and you could still be on a mountaintop in Vietnam communication, satellite warning, and all that" so I didn't like that. So I let it be known that I didn't want to do that. And so they finally— I didn't do well in that school. I washed out of the school. And I think I did not apply myself well; deliberately did not apply myself—I guess I shouldn't say that but that's what happened. So anyway, from there, I went to alert like duties in Chatham Canada. Chatham New Brunswick, Canada.

[00:24:05] Calvin Austin: That sounds like fun.

[00:24:06] Wilson Blount: Well, it wasn't all fun. He was hitting a mark. And it was interesting writing a nice little isolated life I lived. Okay. The person—the people at the personnel office said "You're going to Chatham Canada. Lieutenant Blount, here's your orders. And here's how you get there." They knew lieutenants need lots of counseling, right? So they say "well you got to make your way to— here's the route you take and you can't travel this road because of hate and whatever reasons and— the route you take." So I get to Canada. I come through Detroit passageway, their customs. And they said "Lieutenant, where you headed?" I said, "I'm going to Chatham Canada." They said, "What are you go in there for?" "Well, I'm going to Chatham because there's an Air Force base there and that's where I'm going to be working" "No, you're not going to this Chatham. There's no Air Force Base this Chatham." The Chatham you want is on the other [continent] up by Nova Scotia. So you got three more days and three hours— And so now I thought, well, I don't want to be AWOL So I call the commander says "I'm going to be a



bit late." And so I go from Chatham, Canada, Chatham, New Chatham—I forget what province that was in that Chatham was. And I traveled to Montreal, I never been to Montreal, I guess I should have taken, studied French in college, but I studied Spanish. I get to Montreal couldn't understand a word they were saying. So then, I ended up at two or three days later, we did make it to Chatham Canada, and met— Canadians are a friendly country to work with. So that was my—Matter of fact, when I got to Canada, where I was working, I checked in to the base. And I was downtown Chatham, Canada one day, buying newspaper and getting acclimated with the county getting to know the yokels, the yokels— the friendliest. And the young man pull on my coattail, he looked at me and he says, I think he's maybe eight, nine years old. He says, "Are you American?" I said, "Yes, I'm American." He says, "I suspected that." And so "why do you say that I'm American." He said, "You just don't look like a Canadian. You certainly don't sound like a Canadian." He said, "Where you from?" And I said, "I'm from Tuskegee. So we went through that. And I say, "Why are you concerned about being an American?" He says, "You know, in that house across the street over there? There are lots of Americans over there in that house." I said, "How do you know?" He says, "Well, I just go over there And sometimes they send me to a store to buy stuff for them." And I said, "Well, why don't they go to the store themselves?" He said, "Because they're draft dodgers and they can't come out of the house." So here I have an American roaming around free in Canada and living across the street from draft Dodgers! Imagine the irony of that. But I got to work with Canadians—

[00:27:18] Calvin Austin: So what was what did you do up in Chatham?

[00:27:22] Wilson Blount: I was what they call alert duty officer. My job was to. . . we had the Canadians had the air intercept airplanes. What was designed to shoot allotted to intercept the Russian nuclear loaded bombers, as they would theoretically have to attack America. So my job was to, we had the we had two weapons, Canadian jet airplane, nuclear rocket, it was called. And our job was to train the Canadians to load to our weapon or to their airplane. And, of course, in America, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission says America must maintain customers and weapons at all times. So I maintain custody of the weapon until the alarm went off, and when alarm went off, I had this authenticator that I had an old plastic attorney Katie, you broke it. And then that was the code. And the Canadian pilot on the other end, on the other side. My counterpart, the Canadian, had its same type of authenticated, he would break he is it of decodes matched, he and I would release the weapon to the Canadian. If they didn't match. We never figured out what would happen if they didn't match. But then you got a real situation on your hands. That's what happened.

That was my job is to maintain custody and kill weapons until they really it's interesting, because I guess once a week, the Russians in their Russian big bombers would always try to penetrate our airspace. They use sitting out there day after day week, and nothing happens. You just drink coffee, read magazines and sleep. Until one day it always happens about one to two o'clock in the morning the alarm would go off. And his scrambled horn would scramble it in then the Canadians also had another interceptor airplane not loaded with nuclear weapons. But with conventional air missiles that theoretically would go out here densify this airplane and if they could shoot him down with the with the air missiles, then that's when you released the nuclear weapons. And once a month, they go out and scramble. In meetings with the Russians, and they've weighed each other that they get to be so often, partners got to know recognize the



Russian aircrew over there, they say, Oh, this is today's diamonds day. I read it then of all things that secret weapon was you had the Americans [who] could maneuver their airplanes to the Russians, so they pulled up Playboy magazine, the center fold and the Russians would maneuver their B-52s closer to our airplanes. And then we will start taking pictures of their airplanes as sort of a camp intelligence operation, but we would actually keep track of the Russians [inaudible].

[00:30:47] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, so—

[00:30:48] **Wilson Blount:** They were friendly people, they really loved us up there.

[00:30:51] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, and so you were—you always on the ground, though, right?

[00:30:56] **Wilson Blount:** Oh, yes, I was ground—ground—ground crew, never aircrew.

[00:31:01] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, now. Let's see, somewhere, I think in around '68 you got married?

[00:31:12] **Wilson Blount:** Yes, as a matter of fact, I went to Canada in April of '67. And I left Canada in April or May of '68. And I picked up Bobby at Tuskegee, where she was in summer school. And we went to Mobile and got married in Mobile June 1st, 1968. On my way to Homestead.

[00:31:45] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, so you were only up in Canada for one year.

[00:31:49] **Wilson Blount:** One year, absolutely. Yes. One year, two days, and 12 hours.

[00:31:55] **Calvin Austin:** [Laughs] but who's counting?

[00:31:56] **Wilson Blount:** [Laughs] Who's counting, who's counting? Yes [clears throat].

[00:32:00] **Calvin Austin:** So what did you do next?

[00:32:04] **Wilson Blount:** Um, my next one—I got married to Bobby and my next assignment was to Homestead Air Force Base, Florida, where I was the wing nuclear weapons—nuclear surety officer, as they called it. Pretty much the same thing inspecting the base for nuclear safety and all that. And there, I met a couple aircrew from Tuskegee that were well ahead of me and the—John Walker graduated in '59; he was a helicopter pilot at Homestead. And there was Rob Roberts, who was a back-seater in an F4 at Homestead. So we got to be really good friends down there. But he was also a helicopter pilot, but he was—early on, he was—he was a fighter pilot and a train[er]—He could fly about four or five different types of airplanes. So he was—he was an engineer at Tuskegee, but a pilot with the Air Force.

[00:33:13] **Calvin Austin:** He wasn't related to the lady on TV, was he? Roberts.

[00:33:19] **Wilson Blount:** No, no, no.



[00:33:21] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Okay.

[00:33:22] **Wilson Blount:** No, no, they're not related.

[00:33:24] **Calvin Austin:** Okay,

[00:33:25] **Wilson Blount:** As far as I know.

[00:33:25] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Let's see. So, so what—you ended up out in New Mexico, how did you end up out there?

[00:33:36] **Wilson Blount:** Well, that's a long story. As a matter of fact, at Tuskegee. I met a lot of people—old pilots and Tuskegee who were old pilots at Homestead, who was flying when the Tuskegee Airmen troops were flying. Okay, so, except they were not called Tuskegee Airmen. early on. The Tuskegee Airmen, I guess didn't use the term Tuskegee Airmen until around 19—I guess '74. So when I get the Homestead, there was a lot of people who flew with the pilots from Tuskegee. they called them in those days. And so that—that made you—when they found out you were from Tuskegee, that alone put you in good company. And when they find out that you were trained by some of the original Tuskegee Airmen, you got—you got treated well at happy hour [both laugh]. So that was, that was a good thing. That was a good thing.

So when I was at Homestead I was inspecting sack weapons B-52s, nuclear weapons and all that kind of stuff. So, I got to be pretty skilled at learning the nuclear surety rules from a bomber perspective. Okay? And at some point, this was 1969, thereabouts, that I got on with the good school and all of this and at some point we had B-52s and tankers stationed in Spain and at some point, a B-52 in Spain, B-52 and the tankers collided in flight over Spain. But when they did that the B-52 crashed and when it—when it fell apart in the air, came apart in air, the nuclear weapons fell out of the belly of the airplane, and into the ocean. And I think the tanker went back home and landed safely. But when the bombs landed in the ocean, they couldn't find one or two of them. Okay, and the Spaniards said "Well hey, you guys can't keep us safe, and you can't keep track of your weapons, so we want you to take your airplanes, your people, and get—leave Spain. We want you to do that overnight." And no, you couldn't do that, right? It—logistically, you—even if you wanted to you couldn't do it. So we convinced the Spaniards that "Hey, you need us here to take the Russians off you just like we do the rest." So we got an agreement with Spain.

We will leave airplanes and B-52s here, including the weapons, but we going to beef up security and safety. And so they knew that I was back at Homestead working with B-52 safety and security and said "Okay Blount, you got the fighter experience, you got the bomber experience. We want you to go to Spain to help us beef up the security and safety of the nuclear weapons in Spain." So that's how I ended up in Spain. I took the wife and kids and all of us went to Spain.

[00:37:14] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, so—So, so overall, did you enjoy your military career or what is it?



[00:37:24] Wilson Blount: Oh, oh, it was a blast. Oh, I forgot to tell you how I got to be. I don't know if I told you I got to—when I was at Homestead, I had the chance to work with Chappie James on an aircraft crash. We had two Air Force to collide midair and Chappie James was the colonel up at, I think, Eglin Air Force Base at the time? Well, I was at, I was the safety officer at Homestead and Chappie James came to investigate the accident. He was the board president, and I was his quote recorder or secretary for that investigation. So he—I walk in that he says "Um—Cap—Captain Blount?" He didn't—He knew—they had already told him the secretary was going to be Blount [clears throat] so I walk in "Blount, sit down, let's talk. I'll tell you how I want to do and what I want you to do." So he gave me my marching orders. And one day after the board had closed, and he and I were the only ones in the room he come and looked at me and said, damn Blount, you're from Tuskegee boy, right?" I didn't know how he knew that. But I said "Yes, sir. I am. I'm from Tuskegee." And he said "Well, all Tuskegee boys fly airplanes. Why don't you fly airplanes?" And I said I didn't have 20/20 [vision], You had to have 20/20 to fly, right? He said "Well that's old. We can waive that. I can get that waived. You want to fly?" [laughs] I don't know, hadn't thought about it. Go [inaudible] To make a long story short, he made me go get the application paper. And he wrote some stuff on it and gave to the secretary to have it typed up. So I turned to the Wing Commander. And I guess the 6 or 8 weeks later, I was accepted into pilot training.

[00:39:23] Calvin Austin: [Laughs] Okay.

[00:39:26] Wilson Blount: Oh that shocked the hell out of everybody at the base. That Will Blount is accepted in the pilot training. And they was sure [indecipherable] Chappie James. Well, I—I had to call him later on after I told my wife what I had done. I had never discussed this with her before. So I told him what I done and she convinced me that I didn't want to fly. So I didn't go fly. So I called Chappie up, Chappie James, called up Chappie James and I said—I told him I couldn't. And he called me everything except Captain Blount at the time [laughs]. Told me I was a disgrace to him and the flying profession.

[00:40:15] Calvin Austin: That had—that had to hurt.

[00:40:19] Wilson Blount: Mmhmm. I never had another discussion with Chappie James.

[00:40:22] Calvin Austin: I'm sure because—

[00:40:23] Wilson Blount: No.

[00:40:25] Calvin Austin: Okay, well, so tell me about—So how many years did you serve in the Air Force?

[00:40:35] Wilson Blount: I was on active duty—Well, I went and went to Spain. And I came back, and I went to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where I was a major supervisor. And again, you get the main supervisor at Myrtle Beach. And they say that they knew what—the supervisor by they knew you were a Tuskegee grad. And so again, you had the—got comfortable, you had a lot of respect and all that. And so that was a good thing. And so I did what, two and a half years there, then I go to Taiwan. And I was a maintenance supervisor in Taiwan for a year; I did a year



in Taiwan. And then I came back and went to Langley Air Force Base, Virginia as an air staff officer at Tactical Air Command. And I got passed over for promotion there to major. There was cut back as the Vietnam War ended. So they were—they were—a reduction in force. They were cut back, promotions were slow. So I didn't get promoted so then I got out and went into the reserves. And then I took a surveyor job with the Air Force and transitioned from active duty Air Force to reserves and a civilian position in the Air Force. I—and in civilian life, I did pretty much the same thing that I was doing in civilian as I did as an officer, so it all it all worked out.

[00:42:08] Calvin Austin: So—so you—you retired, you didn't do 20 years active—

[00:42:14] Wilson Blount: I did—I did 10 and a half years active and I—19 in the reserves, 29 and a half years in uniform.

[00:42:26] Calvin Austin: Okay. Okay. So—and you retired as a colonel?

[00:42:33] Wilson Blount: Colonel, yes. I have to say, and almost every base I went to you ran into some Tuskegee people, either in u—in—in uniform and/or civilian. So Tuskegee people are out there and doing good work.

[00:42:52] Calvin Austin: Okay. So, so after—after your military career, you were—where were you? You were out in—

[00:43:08] Wilson Blount: I separated from the Air Force, as an active-duty officer at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, in September 1978. And I signed on as a civilian at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. I believe it was April 1979.

[00:43:29] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[00:43:31] Wilson Blount: Again, lots of Air Force, civilians, and military in Ohio. So I felt comfortable.

00:43:40] Calvin Austin: Yes. Okay. Well, tell me. So after the military, what are—you were still doing basically the same thing just in a civilian capacity? Okay. So and you—you retired when? When did you officially pull the plug on everything?

[00:43:56] Wilson Blount: Right. Yes. I retired from the reserves in 1999. And I retired from civil service in 2001. And I went from Wright-Patt. I signed to Wright-Patt in April of '79. And in January of '81, I went to California, Norton Air Force Base in California. And from California, stayed there until 1994—'94, yep. And then I went to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and I retired from reserves and the Air Force in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

[00:44:57] Calvin Austin: Okay. So that's how you got to Albuquerque.

[00:45:00] Wilson Blount: That's how I got to Albuquerque. And your classmate was with me all this time.



[00:45:07] **Calvin Austin:** Yes, sir. Okay [both laugh]. Well, you lucked out.

[00:45:16] **Wilson Blount:** I lucked out! Yes. Yes! [both laugh]

[00:45:19] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, well, tell me in your—all of your duties and things along those lines. Did—were you able to take something from Tuskegee or the TIS/CEP program with you? And all these career moves? Did you—was anything that was instilled in you in that project; did that translate into life experience?

[00:45:47] **Wilson Blount:** I, I, well I'd have to say the answer to that is yes. I grew up on a farm in Georgia, poor farm boy in Georgia. So when I get to Tuskegee, and then I go to Lowndes County. And I see in Lowndes County, that—the situation in Lowndes County is not that much different from what I grew up in, in Georgia. Okay, so I looked at that, and I said, there has to be a better way here somehow rather. Especially, I'm now what, 19 and 20. And I look at these kids, that, what are they, maybe nine or 10. And they're looking to me to teach them, at least math and reading. And they are assuming I'm getting it right. Right? [Laughs] So and then—when they look up to you with that big smile on their face and—and they put their arm around you, and that kind of thing. And they get out of the car, and they go into their house, and they look back at you. In a sense. They don't say, "I want you to come take me back again," you just know from the expression on their face that they enjoy what they were doing. And they wanted more of it. And so I look at that. And wherever I've gone, especially the Air Force, you are an officer, and you got these Airmen there. And you're looking at them and they look at you and—and they don't say it, but they are looking at you to—to take care of them. And you say "well, I did it before in Lowndes County and I got these airmen here—" And they're there to learn. They didn't work for me. But they're in uniform. And they look at you as if to say I'm—as a matter of fact, I was on the flight line at Jericho Spain once and I had an encounter with an airman there. And, and I wrote him up for some infraction that he made. And he thanked me for that. Okay, as if to say, "nobody ever told me that this is the wrong way to do this." And I saw him I think he was a three-striper-airman at the time, maybe only about four or five years in service. And I was a captain. And years later, he was a Senior Master sign, almost an E-9 in the Pentagon and I was a lieutenant colonel, and we had occasion to meet each other again. And he said to me that...that day, he says, "you know, we had that encounter on the flight line back in 19- whatever year it was. He says that "Man, I was going to get out the Air Force until we had that encounter." He says, "I knew I could...I can make the Air Force a career." And he says, "I want to thank you for..." in fact, "writing me up." He says that he got disciplined over it...for what I wrote him up for, but he says he knew at that point somebody cared.

[00:46:22] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[00:46:23] **Wilson Blount:** He wasn't just there to do a job; he was there to do it right and I made sure he was doing it right and I—he thanked me for that. So there were other cases like that. There was another one where I think I was in Taiwan. When I asked my secretary to write up a reward for—Chinese—two Chinese ladies in my office and an African American NGR, and I got a notice from personnel that we should submit your Chinese employees for an award. So I said, "Okay." So I said, "okay, I'm going to do this, right." And the older lady sees—I'm about 26, 27—and the older Chinese lady was about 50. So I asked the younger Chinese clerk to write



her up for this award. And so normally, she does this, I gave her a draft, she put that thing up, instantaneous. Three days later, nothing. So I asked her, "Where was the paperwork that she was supposed to—?" Then she came to me in tears, when she says, "Sir, can we close the door? I need to talk to you." This shit is serious. So she came in, and she sat there on the edge of my couch in tears, she said to me, she says, "I thought you were different. You're a different officer than any other officer to ever come to hear that any of us ever worked for." And I said, "What do you mean?" She says, "You're the first black officer we have ever had to work with here. All the other previously" she says "I've been here for 10- to-15 and you're the first black officer." I said "What's that got to do with it?" She says, "We thought you would see us differently." And she says, "You're just like all the other—You prefer the Chinese over the Taiwanese." [Laughs] "What the hell? What are you talking about?" She says, "You asked me to write Betty up—" the other lady's name was Betty, "You ask me to write a video for this award. Well Betty is Chinese and I'm Taiwanese, and you show preference for her!" [Laughs] Imagine this. I said, "What the hell are you talking about? You're both Chinese! You're both Taiwa—whatever you are you're the same!" She says "No, sir. We are different. I'm Taiwanese, and she's Chinese." But how the hell was I supposed to know that? But she said, "Everybody else knows." "No, help me with this." She says—stares and she opens the door and she [says] "Can I bring Betty in here?" So she brought Betty in and she, and then she looked and said "Can't you see the difference between me and Betty?" And I looked at this, and I thought, well, she's older and you're younger. Other than that, I don't see the difference. Explain to me the difference." And she looks at me and she says "Oh, Jesus! You are hopeless." [Laughs] And she was ready to note that thing up. And we got to be the best of friends after that and I swear, I didn't—

[00:53:12] Calvin Austin: But I guess—Okay, that's interesting. But it just goes to show you that it's not just here.

[00:53:20] Wilson Blount: No, no, no, no. And I can tell you—as matter of fact, in in, in Spain, it's probably—I can, I can—I can vouch that there is—there is—I've in been Canada, "A what, five? All the, all the countries I've been in, there is prejudice or just somebody in every country I've been in. I think it's a natural thing. I think it's certainly economic. And geopolitical. Might not be natural. But it's definitely racial, economic, and geopolitical. [I've] never been to a country where it didn't work and apply.

[54:09] Calvin Austin: So have you—have you maintained relationships with the people that you worked on the TICEP program with?

[00:54:19] Wilson Blount: A lot of them, and I think a lot of it is—The ones that I probably already had a relationship before I started the program. A lot of them are my frat brothers and classmates that we work with, for example—I don't recall working with you in the—Did we ever work together in the TICEP? I don't think so.

[00:54:47] Calvin Austin: No, I knew who you were, but I didn't meet you until I visited you guys in Albuquerque.

[00:54:55] Wilson Blount: Okay, okay.



[00:54:56] Calvin Austin: That was, that was our first encounter, our first conversation.

[00:55:00] Wilson Blount: Yes, I remember seeing you around the campus, but you were such a lowlife at the point that I—

[00:55:04] Calvin Austin: That is so true because [laughs], but I was still looking down at you! [Both laugh] But any event, you mentioned your fraternity, I'll let you tell everybody who you are. You're a member of what organization now? Now that was—that was either C or D.

[00:55:23] Wilson Blount: Oh, I'm a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity. Manhood, scholarship, and perseverance and all that. Matter of fact, that was four cardinal principles, manhood scholarship, perseverance, and uplift. And I do remember that, that I tried to live up to that. But even before that, I was living in residence hall D. I think we were facing the vet school over there. Okay. You're right. Whichever one it was, it sort of faced the road that went out to the vet school. To the veterinary—veterinary hospital.

[00:56:12] Calvin Austin: Oh okay, then that was further out. That might have been D.

[00:56:13] Wilson Blount: Yes. I can't remember—anyway. My room face that road and every morning, every Saturday morning, I would see these—these guys get on that bus and go to—leave and go to VA hospital and later on in the evening, they'd come back. Middle of the afternoon all cheerful, having a good time. And some of them had these purple and gold jackets on. I guess I knew they were omega. So one day I went out there and I said "Where do you guys go on this bus? What do you do out there?" And they were telling me that—and this my sophomore year—about this VA hospital that they went to. "So why don't you come on and go with us next week?" So I got on a bus and went out there and man, it was fun. You get to meet these veterans out there and—that's how I got started. They were doing something good in the community. And I thought "I could do this too." So—that's how I got started. So but, but they, at some point, I guess '65 I went to—did I go to? I think it was summer camp—summer of '65, I came back—No spring of '65 we were having a frat meeting, we were talking about working with—doing something different: work with the TICEP program and you could, you could do that you could carry forth the omega psi phi principles, manhood, scholarship, perseverance and uplift in Lowndes County; go down and spread omega purple and gold and uplift and all that. That sounds like fun to do. So that's when I went—I don't know who I talked to at—It wasn't Dean Phillips. I don't know who was doing the hiring and firing at—maybe it was Dean Phillips, I can't remember. I don't think so though. At any rate, there was Russell Greaves, Willie Austin, and I think Sol-, I think Solomon Banks was involved in it and Mike Jothan I think was involved in it. A lot of these were involved in recruiting, getting people trained to go down there. Not all these people went down to Lowndes County. I guess they were management, supervision or whatever. But they were in charge of handing out tasking and all of this. So we are—I'm involved with some of them, but I don't remember hardly any—well wait a minute, there was one of the guys that was a tutor. I forgot his name. He lives here somewhere in Florida. And I see him occasionally. We go back to homecoming, and we talk about things.

[00:56:13] Calvin Austin: Okay.



[00:56:13] **Wilson Blount:** Yes.

[00:56:13] **Calvin Austin:** That might have been D.

[00:56:21] **Wilson Blount:** But probably four or five of them that we talked about.

[00:59:15] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Yes, if you think of their names, if you could, you could get them to me, I'd appreciate it.

[00:59:20] **Wilson Blount:** Yes, yes. Okay. Let me make a—

[00:59:21] **Calvin Austin:** Now, a couple of other things you are—.So now what are you doing in your community? What, how are you involved with your community? I know, you—I've seen a couple of awards pop up that you're doing. So tell us about that?

[00:59:39] **Wilson Blount:** Well, I um—As a result of TIS/CEP and community involvement in Tuskegee with the marching and all that, I kept my foot in the political arena. Even when I was in the military, and you were sort of frowned upon to not get too deeply in Military, some people thought in the military, in a successful, successful military career political involvement didn't—didn't—was not compatible. And certainly, military is not a truly democratic organization, that's for sure. But anyway, I stayed in the, in the political environment. I think, I believe I always voted. In the military, I think I voted a lot by absentee ballot. So it's not like you go down and work in the campaign. But you're always involved, reading newspapers, and staying involved. That kind of thing. And when—and when I—when I, I think my first real involvement in—in politics, I guess, I've been involved with the NAACP, I think. I can't remember who— I think I got involved with the NAACP and the alumni club in California in '81. So I've been involved with alumni club, I think. We didn't have an alumni, an official alumni club in in, in California. But I was paying attention to Tuskegee and the NAACP and the political environment. And even encouraging people to register to vote for very long, long time. And I got really involved in political environment when I went to Albuquerque, New Mexico, as a young man out there running for city council. And I got involved in his campaign. I became his, What do you call it, spokesman? Unofficial spokesman for a campaign?

[01:01:57] **Calvin Austin:** You were his campaign manager or—

[01:02:00] **Wilson Blount:** Campaign manager, fundraiser—

[01:02:03] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[01:02:04] **Wilson Blount:** speaker and work out, and then working on— Obama ran for president, and I really got involved with knocking on doors, making phone call fundraising. I got really deeply involved in that and I'm still involved, and I was—we didn't have an alumni club at Tuskegee in Albuquerque at the time. But I was still supporting and donating to Tuskegee. And I became—When I retired from civil service, I became the NAACP president at Albuquerque, and before I became president, I was secretary or something like that, held office, and I was involved



in the SAT, SAT, ACT-SO and all that. And campaigned, I was a precinct captain in Albuquerque. And so—and then I was—sums it now— still involved in the front all that time.

Let's see what else I was involved in. Oh, I was in the—I was a—I sponsored a young man at big boys and big girl—Big Boy—Big Brothers and Big Sisters. From six years old, I think first grade through eighth grade, maybe eighth or ninth grade. So I was with him for about seven or eight years. Until he, I think, he left town, or we left town moving down, moving here. So, I've been involved with political activism and all that.

When I came to Florida I ran—I was the campaign manager for and ran Obama's campaign here in the city of, Dade City, which is a city in eastern Pasco County. I ran his campaign for Eastern Pasco County, which was Dade City, and a couple of other little towns around here. After that, I was politically involved with the Democratic Party here. I was vice president of that group, and I was also a campaign manager for a lady running for Florida's House of Representatives. And I am still involved in all of those things here.

[01:03:20] Calvin Austin: Mmhmm. Okay. Very good. Let's see. Let's see. So I guess you have been very active with the Alumni Association. You've been I guess active with the political, your, your fraternity. I try to take everything back to TIS/CEP. That was early on in your life, and the impact—I'm trying to see if that had an impact. And also, from the standpoint of TIS/CEP, did you see a civil rights aspect of TIS/CEP? And the TIS/CEP impact on the civil rights struggle that we were going through back in the '60s? Did you see any, any impact that TIS/CEP may or may not have had?

[01:05:48] Wilson Blount: Well, I am— Well, like I said, I was not politically attuned during those times. But I can definitely, I remember, Dean Phillips and some of the older heads involved with TIS/CEP making it clear that what was going on, was clearly in a factor of the federal government having a positive impact on people's lives. I mean, it was clear to me that the state, and the county and the city was not going to do it. Primarily because there was no will to do it. And I guess, had no money to do so. And I remember someone saying, funding to make all this happen, for example, the cars—these vehicles used to get the students where they were going, and the food to feed the families when they came to the center . . .

[01:07:13] Calvin Austin: Mmhmm.

[01:07:14] Wilson Blount: Those things were provided by an outfit from D.C. someplace. It wasn't clear to me where the money came from. But it did not come from Tuskegee, and it did not come from Alabama. These—it was clear that these were federal funds. Okay? And, it was made clear to me that if you want to get things done, you have to learn how the system worked. Okay? The system works better when you understand who the players are, and how they interact with each other in forces beyond their control. I'm—I started economics, I was a business major. So I had a clear understanding that money was clearly driving this operation. And I took management, so I knew people had to work together to get all this done. And so I guess, if, if I had to put a finger on it, I would say that TIS/CEP was the laboratory to give me the chance to put into practice what I was learning in economics, sociology, politics, and all that from the classroom, you see?



I saw all this playing out in TIS/CEP. I mean, I did, we didn't, the business school didn't have a laboratory, right? I mean, I guess some schools do, but we didn't have that. So, what I could see was, I got this car, okay? And to go with this— station wagon, well maintained station wagon, to go— new station wagon to go to Lowndes County and it had fuel in it. These people, and these students, and it was all made possible by this, this operation called TIS/CEP. So, where's TIS/CEP? What keeps TIS/CEP alive was these forces, primarily Dean Philips and his group and somebody that he was working with in Washington. That's all I know. He's working with somebody in Washington. He was sending all these reports too saying that we're doing well down here and keep the funding up. So he made clear to me that if you want to get any—if you're smart, you will keep all this in mind. And that's what I did. I looked at the lessons learned from TIS/CEP, and I said, "this is good management experience. And you can do well, you could, you could do well. And when you're doing well, you need to try to remember where you came from, and what you experienced along the way." So that was my motivation. Like I said, when I left TIS/CEP, I went to the Air Force, I tried to remember, "You're an officer." Okay? "and you need to remember that people here who enlisted, they don't have the most education. Like I didn't, I don't. And we're all in this together. So let's try to make the best that we can do on this side." And that's what I tried to do down at—down in Lowndes County.

I found out about it through my frat, and I thought "well, my frat is for manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift." I could do that in Lowndes County, but I could do that if I use all the tools, I got to do that with. I got a car here and I got food, and I got students, and I got coaches. Let's put it all together and get it done. You know, so that's what I tried—That's what I took from TIS/CEP, and it's done me well. I'm proud of where I am and how I got here, and I know I didn't get here by myself. So that's, that's what TIS/CEP did for me. I'm thankful every day for the opportunities I had with TIS/CEP, and I hope somewhere along the way, I helped someone. You know, you—every time I go down there now, whether I'm going homecoming or going through Lowndes County . . . anywhere in Alabama, I wish I had had some pictures of those kids, you know, that I hauled into those churches and I wonder what would they look like? What? Here they won't happen? So you got to hope that you made a difference. And we did. I'm convinced we did.

[01:12:10] Calvin Austin: Okay. Well, sir, I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this endeavor that we have going, and I thank you. I will look forward to further conversations with you at other times about other things, but I really appreciate your, your supporting this, this series of interviews. So thank you and I will stop recording. And we can chat for a couple of seconds.

[01:12:54] Wilson Blount: Okay, well, thank you for the interview, which—I enjoyed it.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Walter Bowers/Cincinnati, OH
Interviewer: Calvin Austin/ Millersville, MD
Date: December 12, 2021
Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Walter T. Bowers II, MD. University of Michigan (MD), Tuskegee Institute, (B.S) During his medical career, Dr. Bowers provided obstetrics care for and delivered Cincinnati's first in-vitro fertilization and frozen embryo infants. His humanitarian service includes providing teaching and medical relief work in Ethiopia and Kenya, chairing Ohio's Commission on Minority Health, and serving as vice chair of United Way, to name a few. A University of Cincinnati Medical School faculty member, Dr. Bowers served more than 40 years on the school's Admissions Committee.



Walter Bowers

[00:11] Calvin Austin: It is 9:22 pm on December 12, 2022, I'm Calvin Austin in Millersville, Maryland, here to interview Walter Bowers, who is in Cincinnati, Ohio. This interview is a part of the TIS/CEP Organizing Committee's TIS/CEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

[00:44] Walter Bowers: I am Dr. Walter Bowers II of Cincinnati, Ohio. Today's date is the 13th of December 2022. Interviewing about the TIS/CEP Tuskegee program with Calvin Austin.

[01:12] Calvin Austin: First, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. This is, this project is to help us understand exactly the impact of Tuskegee's TIS/CEP program had on the, on the country. And we want to get some information about the people that participated and their views. So first, tell us something about yourself. Tell us where you came from, your family. How you got to Tuskegee? Why Tuskegee? Maybe a little about your high school, your background, and things along those lines.

[01:56] Walter Bowers: Thank you, Mr. Austin. My life of activism started around nine years of age. Back in 1954, the Brown decision by the Supreme Court as desegregated, by law, schools that were separate but equal was unconstitutional. My mother was a high school master's trained



educator who taught English at a local high school. My mother had always been an activist. And once that decision was handed down, she along with other teachers, petitioned the local school board to hold or to satisfy the dictates of the Brown decision. That was not done and those persons that circulated the petition, were summarily fired from their jobs. So, my mother was one of those that got fired from a job and had to work as a domestic in white folks' homes in order to provide some source of income that she had missed, because of her being dismissed from the school system. So, can you imagine a person with a master's degree scrubbing floors and cooking and taking care of children in order to make ends meet? So, but she was a proud woman. And she passed that down to her sons, she had three sons. We were all told that we had to read something every day. You had to maximize your opportunities as far as education is concerned. And we took that to heart.

During my high school years, I was a student leader in desegregation activities. We boycotted the city of Orangeburg and thus picketing businesses that did not allow people of color to enjoy their facilities. During this boycott, being a student leader, my task each night at our rallies was to call out the names of those people that cross picket lines. We had to identify them. So, they will be shamed about crossing that line again. I was instrumental in the planning of those demonstrations. During my high school senior year, I was arrested for a sit-in demonstration at a local drugstore lunch counter. From there, we were arrested, were taken to the city jail, had a trial the next day and was sent to the county work gang for 30 days. Our attorneys raised the money to get us out on bond. Still spent about four to five days on the county work gang. When we got off the county work gang, we went to a mass rally. And that next day, they put us on a train to the March on Washington. So, I was at the first march on Washington.

The train came out of Florida, up through Orangeburg, up the east coast, an all-night ride into Washington, DC. And so, I was there listening to the orations. It was awe inspiring. I mean to see black folks with a common goal, witnessing the multitude of orations of the speaker themselves. So, when we got back on the train, came back to South Carolina, and two and a half, three years later, I was at Tuskegee. How did I get the Tuskegee? Well, my father was an auditor for an insurance company that was headquartered in Augusta. And his job was to travel the Southeast to audit books and stuff. So, he got sick in Tuskegee, got terribly sick. We thought he was, while he was gone, he was going to pass. So, at the—when it was time for him to come home. I was driving at the time. So, my mother and I drove from Orangeburg, South Carolina, to Tuskegee to pick up my father. When I saw that campus, I told my mother, this is where I'm going to school.

That was the only school that I applied to as far as my college was concerned. I was fortunate enough to be placed in an honors program at Tuskegee. And because I did graduate valedictorian of my class at from high school. So, of note, my father's mother's sister lived in Tuskegee. She was a plaintiff in the Gomillion versus Lightfoot suit that outlawed gerrymandering in Tuskegee, she lived down on Farmville Street. And I would visit them during my tenure at Tuskegee, driving to Montgomery, all the places and stuff. And that's how I knew Jessalyn Pendarvis. Jessalyn was my daddy's cousin. And so, we met Jessalyn Pendarvis. And she also went to school to Tuskegee became an attorney and recently expired not too long ago. So that's how I got to Tuskegee because I only applied to one school. If they would have rejected me, I don't know where I would've gone to school because I did have an opportunity to go to Florida A& M on a music scholarship. I had no interest in music. I'm a jazz musician wannabe. I figured I had to do



something with my life to make some money. And I wouldn't—I was good, I was not great. So I had to put the horn down and do some studying.

So anyhow, came to Tuskegee, 1963. Tuskegee was my bridge from adolescence into adulthood. I was president of my freshman class, which is how I met Dean Phillips. At the time we had work study at Tuskegee, everybody was working trying to get a little money. So, I got identified, I don't know how, by the dean, or by me or whatever. Anyhow, we got together my, the middle of the end of my freshman year. And I was employed in the Dean of Students Office for my entire time at Tuskegee. That experience was magnanimous, I mean, I got to meet all the people who ran the school, I got to interact with those individuals. And it did a lot as far as my formative education on how to deal with people and what have you. And while at Tuskegee, I became involved in my fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, which in turn became president one year, I was on the Judicial Council, college union board. Other activities they're too numerous to count.

But Tuskegee was a place that was our refuge and oasis where people would come and can congregate without fear of being intimidated. I can remember the likes of John Lewis and James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, they all came to Tuskegee. They all went out into the communities but then came back to Tuskegee in the evening, because that was a safe-haven. The next morning, they would go out, and similar with TIS/CEP, which we'll talk about in a few minutes. So that's how I got to Tuskegee. You know while at Tuskegee, I was involved in the Air Force ROTC, received an Air Force Scholarship, which paid for my college expenses my last two years of school, got a commission, and entered Air Force as a second lieutenant. So that kind of synopsis was my experience at Tuskegee, excluding the whole TIS/CEP experience, which we'll talk about when that, I guess, when that question comes along. But that's how I got there, met my wife there. We dated for two years, graduated in May, got married in August 1967. We have two children. One is a physician, and one is a real estate entrepreneur and insurance adjustor.

[12:55] Calvin Austin: Well, I just want to make sure that everyone knows that you were born and raised in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

[13:05] Walter Bowers: That's correct. Yes, Orangeburg. South Carolina. My home. People have probably heard about the Orangeburg massacre that happened once I had left town. But had I gone to South Carolina State, I probably would have been involved in that whole demonstration that led to the killing of those three young men.

[13:26] Calvin Austin: Yes.

[13:27] Walter Bowers: At you know, Orange—

[13:30] Calvin Austin: And the cover up afterwards, but—

[13:35] Walter Bowers: Yes, they've never assigned guilt to anybody.

[13:40] Calvin Austin: Did they ever release that report?



[13:43] **Walter Bowers:** Yes, in fact, there's a book out that talks about that. They never really identified the individual who fired those—well he fired multiple shots, but no one was ever held accountable for the slaying of those three gentlemen.

[14:07] **Calvin Austin:** So, once you, we'll come back and talk about TIS/CEP in a couple of seconds. After Tuskegee, what did you do?

[14:18] **Walter Bowers:** Okay, after Tuskegee, I went to the Air Force. I was in the Air Force for four years. I was a chemical weapons officer which was my responsibility for developing dispensing admissions for nerve agents and biologicals. While in the Air Force several things happened. [Daniel] "Chappie" James [Jr.] happened to be, who's the Tuskegee Airman, was at the base when I was there. So Chappie took all the young black officers under his wing, kind of mentored us and guided us towards what we need to do, what we did not need to do.

[14:57] **Calvin Austin:** What base was that?

[14:59] **Walter Bowers:** That [unclear] is Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. So, while at Eglin, Fort Walton Beach, being a small number of black officers. Somehow, I was chosen to be on every court martial of a black airman. So, I did that for three years a lieutenant and sir and as a captain. They always had to have, they always have one black on the panel, which was me. And so, my responsibility was to raise the conscious of those other officers there to give a black airman a fair shake. And I pat myself on the back, not one was dismissed dishonorably from the Air Force because of my speaking in their behalf. They were hell bent on putting people out of the service. But we got, at least during my tenure there, we saved them. So, with that experience there, my duties involved taking me to the Pentagon in Washington, and also the Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. Did not do any Vietnam service. I guess they figured what I was doing was critical enough to keep me out of going to Vietnam. So, I did that service for four years, after which I then went to medical school. While at Tuskegee, I majored in biology and chemistry with the idea of going to medical school. I would have gone to medical school right out of college, but I could not get deferred to go because of the Vietnam situation. So, after Vietnam, actually after the service, then I went to medical school. And fortuitously by going to the service, I competed for a Martin Luther King Fellowship, which was sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. So that paid for my four years of tuition, plus a stipend for four years. So that along with the GI Bill, and some other hooks and crooks and getting some money, I was able to go to medical school, free almost, with a wife and a child. So, I was very fortunate, very blessed to have had that opportunity to avail myself of that financial assistance in going to med school.

I went to med school, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor four years, and then from there—okay, while at medical school again, my activism came into play. I was on the Judicial Council again at medical school and also various service organizations that the medical students ran while I was there. Of note, I was also on the admissions committee at the medical school. And again, my primary reason for joining that was to ensure that black students got a fair shake in trying to go to medical school. So, after medical school, I came to Cincinnati, did my residency in obstetrics and gynecology, practiced for approximately 50 years during my stint on—well, not my stint but while in Cincinnati, well since being in Cincinnati, now I've been active politically



and socially. I've served on the health board. I was vice chair of the United Way. [Clears throat] Excuse me. I was on the play house, the park board. I was on the state commission for minority health [Ohio Commission on Minority Health], served as chairman for two years and as secretary. So that was my statewide contribution to minority health.

And then while—and then once out of medical—once out of residency and in practice, I served on the admissions committee at the University [of Cincinnati] Medical School, and also have a teaching position at the University of Cincinnati Medical School. I've been on the medical school's as [unclear] admissions committee since 1992. And I still am on that committee and I'm the senior guy on the committee. And my, again, my reason being there is to ensure that we get black students into medical school, we graduate them, and get them into, you know, the whole medical profession.

So, currently I am retired. I still maintain my position on the admissions committee at the medical school, I do surgical teaching, and I do surgical assisting now. You know, I always love to operate. I still get to operate a little bit with no patient responsibilities, I just punch a clock, go in, do the surgery, punch a clock and go home. Been active socially, again, with my fraternity in the graduate chapter there. And active in my church, having served in multiple leadership positions there. So it's kind of a snapshot of what I do, or what I've done, what I'm all about. And I can't stay still, I still have to do things. I still would try to read every day like my mother taught me and just do what I can do.

[21:26] Calvin Austin: Okay. Well, let's go back to the TIS/CEP program. What was your involvement with that?

[21:37] Walter Bowers: My involvement with TIS/CEP was started at the ground level, working in the Dean's office. I was there when the Dean had this epiphany that it's what we should do. So, I was involved in the initial planning, strategizing what we needed to do, formulating budget, preparing evaluation tools, and what have you. So, I got out into the field, not as frequently as I would have loved to. I did site visits, went to meetings representing the dean, and traveling throughout the counties involved, and the sites that were involved with the TIS/CEP program. I bought into TIS/CEP very early, just probably see it by my working with the Dean and putting the program together and helping to administer the program. Mainly, like I said, evaluation tools, preparation of reports—[clears throat] excuse me—budget preparations. I didn't disperse any monies, but in putting together budgets and this kind of thing. Inviting students from all over the country to come, you know, Saint Olaf was one. And there were other universities that sent people to Tuskegee for that summer project. And [unclear] finding housing and getting them fed, sort of a do-everything kind of person, you know, working at the direction and the behest of Dean Phillips.

[23:48] Calvin Austin: From your standpoint, what was the purpose of that program? What—tell me about what the intent of the program was? And did it do what it was supposed to do?

[23:59] Walter Bowers: Okay, the intent of the program? Well, first of all, historically, the black belt of Alabama had been undereducated, underrepresented, non-voting people, impoverished people. The purpose of TIS/CEP was to get out into the community, to empower these



individuals to become socially active, to become registered to vote, to become—take advantage of financial opportunities that may be available. Also, [get] them educationally prepared to do some of these things. And being students, we all had the passion to make this happen. The passion. People were, our constituents, were literally initially afraid to deal with us as students. They felt that we would come in to stir up stuff that they had to eventually live with. But we had to get out and live with them, sleep with them, eat with them, talk with them, educate them, you know, that life is not small. Your horizons can be extended. And I felt that was the purpose of TIS/CEP. And it was an interracial kind of . . . they weren't all blacks, wasn't all whites, and people could see that white and blacks could work together for a common cause or a common purpose. And I think Tuskegee, TIS/CEP served that purpose. The university bought into the program, from the President, Dr. Foster on down. Dr. Foster himself went out into the fields out into the communities and stuff. So that presence of the educational before extending his tentacles out into the community, so people could see and could enjoy the opportunity that was afforded to the students that were there. [Unclear] came to Tuskegee to school, students went out into higher education, they learned the value of education. And I felt that they appreciated us, and we appreciated them for giving us the opportunity to serve.

[26:56] Calvin Austin: Okay. The civil rights climate was, I think you hit on it somewhat, when you said that they thought we were there to be agitators or to create problems. Why don't you describe what you thought the Civil Rights climate was in those rural areas?

[27:20] Walter Bowers: Well, it was almost like a caste system. Most of the people share—were sharecroppers. They didn't own land. They worked the land and got paid a pittance of what they were [unclear]. They certainly were not a voting educated population. And I think that's one of the biggest things though, one of the greatest things that we did is to get people registered, to vote and to have them vote, and let them realize the importance of voting. White folks understand what voting is, [unclear], and that's why it's been suppressed from slavery. Because if you're a country of laws, and you can vote, then you have the power to change a lot of things socially, economically, whatever. So TIS/CEP gave us that opportunity to get out into the communities. As you can remember, one of our students, Sammy White, got killed, just blown away at the local bus station by some white dude—

[28:41] Calvin Austin: Sammy Younge.

[28:41] Walter Bowers: —with a shotgun.

[28:42] Calvin Austin: Sammy Younge.

[28:43] Walter Bowers: Yes, Sammy. What'd I say, Sammy?

[28:45] Calvin Austin: You said Sammy White.

[28:45] Walter Bowers: Did I say Sammy Younge? Okay. Well, Sam White was a classmate of ours.

[28:52] Calvin Austin: I know, I know.



[28:53] Walter Bowers: So, Sammy Younge, I'm sorry. Yes. Sammy Younge. And that. I mean, that whole student body was wrecked by that. And we all became empowered because of that situation. We all knew how vulnerable we all were in this South, and we had to do something in order to address this. And not saying, and I'm thinking his death was not in vain. I mean, it just galvanized us. The whole student body marched downtown. The whole student body got engaged in the community and what [unclear]. That Sammy had been a naval veteran, fought for this country, and came home and got shot in his home, his own hometown, it was a tragedy. A tragedy. But from that tragedy, it gave us as students a reason to carry on his legacy of being involved in the community.

[29:57] Calvin Austin: Okay, so, are you? So, what do you think the impact of the TIS/CEP program was overall in Alabama? Did we do a good job? Great job? Did we stimulate the people to do the things that we wanted them to do? Or was it just a small step?

[30:19] Walter Bowers: I think, for the time and the resources that we had, I mean, we extended throughout a large part of Alabama. And I think we touched a lot of people in the state of Alabama. You know, from Birmingham, Montgomery, down Hayneville, all those counties down south of Tuskegee, [unclear] over to Phoenix City, all those places there was a presence, and there was a known presence. I think there's some good. I just hate that the program, had to be dissolved for something. I had to leave when I went off, when I graduated. But it still maintained itself. But I think it had a great impact. Had it not been for TIS/CEP, then people that we know would not have been where they are now. Think we're also in a risky . . . you know, we had, we all were involved in the Selma march. And, and that was an impactful situation to all of us. So, we were right there where when things were happening. We were right there. I mean, you know, Malcolm X came to the campus and talked about, you know, the inequities. Martin Luther King, our fraternity brother, came and talked about the inequities. We had James Foreman, Stokely Carmichael, John Lewis, you know, all those folks came, interacted with the students to engage us in in doing something other than sitting in an ivory tower studying, like getting out and utilizing our talents to affect some change. And I think we did do some, we did do some great things. I think if I had it on a report card, I give us an eight, because we did what we wanted to do, and what we set out to do.

[32:14] Calvin Austin: Okay, yes. Malcolm came two weeks before he got killed.

[32:19] Walter Bowers: Exactly. It's like he prophesied his death. I think in his speech, he said that there are the getting, and I remember he was there like two weeks before he got killed up in New York.

[32:34] Calvin Austin: Okay, so in summary, is there some philosophy or something that you would like people to know about your experience and where we are that could show a little bit more about you or show a little bit more about the program, or Tuskegee? I know, you've said a lot of things, and all of them have been positive about the program. But—

[33:08] Walter Bowers: Well, I would only hope that another similar program can be started at Tuskegee. I think that the youth today, some take a lot for granted, that things have always been



nice. And there's still pockets in Alabama, that can utilize their input and their services. We need to get more involved politically. I don't know what the voting situation on the campus is. But if you're 18, you can vote in Alabama. So, there should be at least 3,000 votes there for something. And, you know, to engage ourselves politically, and, you know, I just think we've lost and I'm not talking fifty years ago, and things have gotten somewhat better, but things are not altogether. So, what I think that we should start a similar program. The impact of this project that we're putting together here, hopefully somebody they will read it and glean from it, you know, take recommendations that we were making in order to facilitate a better environment of activism at the university.

[34:51] Calvin Austin: Okay, Dr. Bowers, I guess I really appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to do this for us. To give us your insight. This has been enlightening to me. As long as I've known you, I found a few things out about you that I didn't know. And I really appreciate your work after Tuskegee, and on the project, so thank you for your service. You did your job in the military. You did your job professionally. And you did that job socially. You've been a major contributor to society everywhere you've gone so I'm really proud of you. So, thank you for consenting to do this interview. And I'll give you back your time. Thank you.

[35:53] Walter Bowers: Well, thank you for having me and best of luck in the project. And as I say again: just got to empower some more people to do some good things.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Narrator: Joan Hamby Burroughs/Birmingham AL

Interviewer: Mike Fitzgerald/Northfield MN

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Date: June 25, 2021

Tuskegee Institute (B.S), Indiana University (M.S.), New York University (Ph.D.) Joan Burroughs is an artist, educator, administrator, and anthropologist of dance and human movement who champions the value that the arts have for humanity and the world that we inhabit. That sentiment, supported by proficiency in dance/human movement performance and studies, powered her career as an artist/educator that spans high school through university learning experiences. In 1965, Joan was a TISEP tutor in Hayneville and continued, with TIS/CEP, in a clerical position during her tenure as a student at Tuskegee Institute (now university).



Joan Hamby Burroughs

[12:59] Mike Fitzgerald: It is now, almost one o'clock on June 25, 2021. So, noon. I'm Michael Fitzgerald in Northfield, Minnesota. And I'm here to interview Joan Burroughs, who is the head of, or the administrator of the grant for documenting the TIS/CEP students. Who is in Birmingham, Alabama?

[1:05] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[1:06] Michael Fitzgerald: Okay. Um, this interview is part of the TIS/CEP, T-I-C-E-P, Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant by the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of Interior's National Park Service. Good to know. Now, I—give me a second and pull up the rest of—pull up the questions here. Are you doing well?

[1:41] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I'm doing fine.



[1:43] **Michael Fitzgerald:** It's nice meeting you after all this time? I had no idea how far out Birmingham extended.

[1:51] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, it's pretty big.

[1:53] **Michael Fitzgerald:** It's a big city. And it goes on?

[1:55] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. It was larger than this. Some of the smaller communities or townships seceded.

[2:07] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And you were born, you were born I think, just outside of Birmingham.

[2:13] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[2:14] **Michael Fitzgerald:** I think I saw the name of your town as I drove north and—

[2:17] **Joan Burroughs:** You did, yes.

[2:19] **Michael Fitzgerald:** —East, right.

[2:21] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, let me just say my little script. Today is June 25, 2021. I'm Joan Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama, and I'm being interviewed by Mike Fitzgerald.

[2:32] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. So, talk a bit about your family, your background, where you grew up, that kind of stuff.

[2:39] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay. I was born in my grandmother's house in Village Springs, which is also called Pinson, Alabama. In 1947. My parents: Maudetta Griffith Hamby and Thurston Edison Hamby II. My father was also born in that same little town. My mother was born in Birmingham. My mother was a schoolteacher. She was like maybe a fourth, third or fourth generation teacher. And my father was a laborer, he worked with the—in, I guess, the steel industry. U.S. Pipe. He was also a minister. He became a minister in 1955. And our little community was racially black, with surrounding communities. They were just like little, little communities here and there, rural communities in—right on the edge of Jefferson County. I grew up attending schools in Birmingham, Alabama, even though we lived in the county. I was able to do that because my mother taught in the city, and she could take me to school with her. I graduated from Hayes High School, and then I began studying at Tuskegee Institute in 1964 during the fall of 1964 semester. In 1965, I began working with TIS/CEP.

[4:40] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. So, how far out of Birmingham is Pinson? Maybe, was it like maybe five, ten miles?

[4:53] **Joan Burroughs:** No, it's more. It's more like fifteen. Maybe fifteen because at one point the line, the city line expanded. It was closer to Birmingham, then it receded because the



towns that had been part of Birmingham left the city. So, it's like between, I'd say, ten or fifteen miles.

[5:21] **Michael Fitzgerald:** When did that happen, by the way?

[5:22] **Joan Burroughs:** What? What do you mean then?

[5:23] **Michael Fitzgerald:** When did when did this city recede? Back away?

[5:27] **Joan Burroughs:** I think that that was, I'm trying to remember the dates. I'm not sure if I was even in the city at that point. I don't think that when Mayor Arrington became the mayor of Birmingham, some of the outlying suburbs that were part of Birmingham, kind of—

[5:49] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Seceded and the legislature let them do that out.

[5:52] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, they did it [laughter]. They became their own little towns. Yes.

[5:57] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Is that—is the surrounding area, mostly white?

[6:01] **Joan Burroughs:** It was at that time, but you know, things have changed now. A lot of things have changed. They were white communities at that point.

[6:09] **Michael Fitzgerald:** That's interesting. That's the kind of—that sounds kind of like a familiar story that happened some other places. That's interesting. Well, let's, let's talk about that a little bit. So, um, did you say schoolteacher? Your mother was one of several generations of schoolteachers? Is that the case?

[6:26] **Joan Burroughs:** Her mother, her mother was a teacher, her grandmother. And her great grandmother was not officially, but she taught people you know, like, I guess in her house, little things. She wasn't a certified teacher or anything [unclear].

[6:48] **Michael Fitzgerald:** If I can follow up a little bit? At the time of emancipation, not very many people lived in the Birmingham vicinity. It's a new town coming in after the Civil War. Do you know where your people were from before that?

[7:00] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, my grandmother, my mother's mother, was from Walker County.

[7:11] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, that's right. That's right.

[7:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Her mother's mother was from Bibb County. Well, that was where they lived.

[7:22] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, just as a side note, the thing that you had me read from your family, which I guess is that that [lineage], that part of the family. Um, it's kind of unusual to have an African American slave memoir that is talking about being like, but having the owner be



a union guy in a union area. I mean, they're up in the hills where there's a lot of anti-Confederate sentiment. That's really unusual to have an African American account being owned by one of those people. So, I was just going to comment that I don't think I've seen very many things like your memoir, because, you know, very few of them are owned by anti-Confederates.

[8:08] Joan Burroughs: Yes, well, that. My great grandfather could read. He could write and the reason that he dictated that memoir was because he had failing eyesight. His health was poor at that point. But I think that theirs was a rather unusual situation.

[8:32] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes, I would think so. So, I take it education must be an unusual value in your family all [unclear].

[8:40] Joan Burroughs: It is.

[8:41] Michael Fitzgerald: Okay. Okay, that sounds—that sounds right. So, you—and we'll get to your list in a bit [laughter]—you would have to have known as a teenager, about [Theophilus Eugene] Bull Connor about the reputation of Birmingham? And you were going into a school, I assume somewhere to, I assume the school you were in was in the north and east section of Birmingham, I'm guessing. Is that not right?

[9:15] Joan Burroughs: Well, it was in the eastern section of Birmingham. And I guess that would be yes, the eastern area. And actually, I was still commuting. I commuted from Pinson to . . .

[9:32] Michael Fitzgerald: Right, with your mother?

[9:33] Joan Burroughs: With my mother, yes. I was in high school then. But we completed high school in the Birmingham school system, and not the county system. And so yes, I knew about all of that. I knew of many of the racial things that were happening then. I knew who was responsible for mistreatment, for example about Bull Connor. I knew about all the things that were happening. I remember the day of the students walk out. There were students in my school who were student leaders in the civil rights movement. They were the ones who organized the school and had students leave school for protests.

[10:15] Michael Fitzgerald: Because this was the high point of the Birmingham stuff, would have been your junior and senior years probably.

[10:21] Joan Burroughs: Yes. Yes, and I did not, I was not able to participate.

[10:26] Michael Fitzgerald: Just geographically, it was hard.

[[corrected narrative]]

[10:29] Joan Burroughs: Well not only geographically, but yes, because in the evenings after school, I returned home to Pinson. I wasn't in the city and able to work with the student



protesters. But the other part of it was that I would have walked out and did attempt to—and this is a story I've told over and over again—that me, my sister, my cousins, and a few other students whose parents were teachers, were stopped at the door. We were turned around at the door because while our principal opened the doors so that people could go, he didn't restrict anyone except us because he knew that teachers would be fired if they participated in any way.

[11:10] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, so wait a minute, let me see if I got this right. That the school didn't attempt to stop you from participating in the demonstrations in the spring of '63.

[11:21] **Joan Burroughs** No, they, the school did not. They did not. The schools, the doors were open.

[11:28] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[11:29] **Joan Burroughs:** But they were manned.

[11:31] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, so people were watching.

[11:32] **Joan Burroughs:** People were watching. People knew that we were leaving. And when I was going to walk through the door, I was turned back because—

[11:43] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Because your mother was a teacher?

[11:45] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[11:46] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Well, that's interesting. That's interesting. So, they were kind of figuring out who would be. That's really interesting. So, they're actually. . . think. . . trying to figure out who would be retaliated against or—

[11:54] **Joan Burroughs:** They knew who would be retaliated against. They knew.

[11:58] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And they were trying to prevent you from doing things. So, we get—

[12:03] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, Mike, you froze. It's frozen. Let's see.

[12:20] **Michael Fitzgerald:** That's not what they were saying.

[12:24] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, but the, you froze up for a minute.

[12:28] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, I heard. It told me that the meeting was being recorded. But the, what the, what the oral history was saying was that lots of parents knew that their kids were doing this and they sort of shrugged and said, yes.



[12:44] **Joan Burroughs:** Mmm-hmm [affirmative] Well, I don't know. Yes, I'm not sure. I don't know that. I mean, other people might have. . . that might have been some parts of stories. My parents had never said anything to us about participating or not participating. That was something that I was going to attempt on my own because I wanted to, and so were a few others, but we were discouraged from doing that and sent back to our classroom, because members of the faculty knew that people would be fired. And that's pretty well known.

[13:20] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And your mother was teaching at the high school you're in or another place?

[13:23] **Joan Burroughs:** She was teaching—

[13:24] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Elementary? Okay, that's interesting. That's interesting. Um,

[[corrected narrative]]

[13:30] **Joan Burroughs:** But there were, there were teachers who were very much involved. You know, they were really very central to a lot of things that were happening. They told us a lot of things about current events as well as history. But the reality was that they knew what was going to happen to people. I've heard stories of people being fired from other kinds of jobs once their children were identified as being a part of the demonstrations from some of the the steel industry jobs and others, you know, or other jobs where someone observing knew where the parents of demonstrators were employed. People were fired.

[14:16] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And this was common conversation in the school.

[14:18] **Joan Burroughs:** It wasn't common conversation, because you know, this was a new—this was new territory. This was not something that we discussed every day. These were things—these events occurred as the movement proceeded, as it moved forward, because this was unexplored territory. It's not like we had a plan for all of the things that occurred. We had to confront things as they occurred. And so people did. I think people tried to have foresight, but you couldn't always. Some things you might not have been able to know or predict.

[14:55] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, you would have gone had if it been more possible for you to do so. You would have demonstrated?

[15:02]**Joan Burroughs:** If I had not been told to go back to my classroom.

[15:07] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And your parents, as the—as we move through the late 50s and early 60s, what level of political engagement? I mean, were they politically interested, active? Were they? The stuff was talked about in your home a fair amount?

[15:28] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. And my mother, I mean, they were active in ways that I probably was unable to discern, and I did not even think about at the time. For example, my



mother formed a civic league—my mother, she and others. She, by herself, taught people and prepared people to register to vote, you know, by instructing them on questions.

[15:55] Michael Fitzgerald: And this is in Pinson?

[15:56] Joan Burroughs: Yes. She—

[15:58] Michael Fitzgerald: Like a Pinson voters league or Jefferson County voters league, something like that.

[16:02] Joan Burroughs: The Village Springs Civic League. I can remember people coming to her. . . . to learn, to prepare, for some questions that they—that she knew might have been on the exam.

[16:17] Michael Fitzgerald: Oh, and she was in a position to help people pass the test.

[16:21] Joan Burroughs: Yes, because she was, she was a registered voter. And actually, as far as I remember, almost everyone in my family was registered, my grandmother, they all went to vote when other people didn't. So, she knew what to expect. And she could coach people on what to expect and how to do some of the things that were necessary. Some people probably had problems writing and things like that, she helped. She helped at that level.

[16:48] Michael Fitzgerald: So just to do the background here. I assume you're sort of like a star student.

[16:53] Joan Burroughs: Me?

[16:54] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes.

[16:55] Joan Burroughs: Yes. I was an honors student in high school. Not in college but in high school [laughter].

[17:02] Michael Fitzgerald: Okay, okay. And when we, one other thing that occurs to me is that Birmingham had a history going back to the 30s, and even before, of lots of labor union activity. You know, back during the 30s, and 40s, Popular Front stuff like that. Did your Dad have union involvement? Or was that part of the package?

[17:33] Joan Burroughs: Yes, he was a union member. I think that . . . I'm not sure when that happened.

[17:37] Michael Fitzgerald: The 30s and 40s mostly.



[17:39] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. My father. I think that he might involved in that, I mean in a workplace where there might have been unions, although much, much, much later after that. Probably in the 50s, not the late 40s. [correction]

[17:59] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Huh.

[18:00] **Joan Burroughs:** Not during the '40, but later. Yes, maybe in the 50s or later. He was a veteran and left the military in 1946.

[18:10] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, okay.

[18:11] **Joan Burroughs:** He was [unclear], you know, but my grandfather did. My grandfather tried to help organize the union for coal miners.

[18:23] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Really?

[18:23] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[18:24] **Michael Fitzgerald:** What period are we talking? Like '20s? Teens?

[18:27] **Joan Burroughs:** That might have been in the '20s or '30s, I think.

[18:28] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes. Huh, well, you know, it's interesting that the United Mine Workers, which is the big mine workers union, was one of the first interracial unions, they made a real point of it. And so, in fact, you know, actually, there are books on this. You know, Birmingham's the only place in the south that had a significant Communist Party. You know, like left history, activist history. And so, if your folks, if your father's people are, have union connections—and the unions actually tried to get people registered to vote. That was one of their things.

[[[Correction: My mother's father was pro-union and attempted to cooperate with organizing unions among mine workers. My father's father was also a miner, however, I don't know of his union involvement.]]]

[19:00] **Joan Burroughs:** Unfortunately, he was run out of the coal mining camp, he was a foreman. One of his sons was murdered.

[19:13] **Michael Fitzgerald:** What?

[19:13] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, he was. And I do know that anyone who cooperated with the union. . . my mother told me that. . . you know, because the mining corporations owned everything, the house that they lived in, and all that, their electricity would get disconnected. They sent messages. My father was—my grandfather was trying to organize, his son was killed, so he packed up his family and left the mining camp. Even though he was a foreman, he moved.



[19:45] **Michael Fitzgerald:** I'm sorry to hear that.

[19:46] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, he moved to Village Springs.

[19:50] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Actually, there was a big mine strike in 1907. Like a bloody mine strike is my recollection. There probably were others but I don't know. Is there anything about your pre-college background that you want to throw in that you think is relevant?

[20:11] **Joan Burroughs:** Only that, you know, I strongly supported the idea of the civil rights movement. I knew that I was not able to participate in high school when I understood what was going on. And so the first thing that I did when I enrolled at Tuskegee was sign up.

[20:31] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, you're already eager?

[20:33] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[20:33] **Michael Fitzgerald:** When you got there in the fall of 64?

[20:35] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[20:36] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. And were you, among your friends back in high school? I imagine you're a little isolated because you're commuting, you're a commuting student.

[20:49] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[20:50] **Michael Fitzgerald:** But among your close friends, were you the big activist, or were all your friends feeling like you were?

[20:57] **Joan Burroughs:** No, I was rather quiet. I didn't really assume any leadership role. I don't consider myself an activist. I listened a lot. And was I made aware of what was going on around me on every front. I was interested in all aspects of the Civil Rights Movement. I was not an activist but would have gone out to help, to support. If I had been able to do so.

[21:26] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, I'm thinking, let's see the big events. At what point did you start tuning in? So, we have Reverend Shuttlesworth gets I think, beaten about the time of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, so, '56. You have Autherine Lucy down the road in Tuskegee, the other direction in like, '56.

[21:48] **Joan Burroughs:** I knew of all those things, Mike.

[21:54] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You were following them at the time closely?



[21:57] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I watched the news, read the newspapers. And I could sit and—I could sit and listen to my parents or to other adults talk about it. I enjoyed reading the newspaper when I was in high school. I kept up with how things were going and the things that I couldn't read about myself as well. I would listen to my parents' and other adults current event conversations. And I would know. I would share their sentiments about what was happening.

[22:23] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, you had a TV set setting in your home, you're watching the news. So, you have electricity going back away.

[22:31] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, yes. Yes.

[22:33] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[22:34] **Joan Burroughs:** Most people did. We were, however, the first family to have a television in that community.

[22:36] **Michael Fitzgerald:** When would you recall when that would have been?

[22:38] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, it was in the 50s— [crosstalk]

[22:40] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, 50s. Yes, yes, yes.

[22:43] **Joan Burroughs:** People, everybody would come to our house to watch important things.

[22:47] **Michael Fitzgerald:** What's your—what was your favorite show?

[22:51] **Joan Burroughs:** I liked Disney.

[22:53] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes. Yes. Yes. That's pretty funny. Okay, okay. So that's so um, and so you would have been following Freedom Ride beatings '61. The stuff happening in '63?

[23:11] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[23:11] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You would have been following everything.

[23:13] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. I saw it on the television, newspapers, yes.

[23:18] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Okay. So, um, and you get into Tuskegee, which is the best African American college anywhere around you.

[23:33] **Joan Burroughs:** Alabama for sure.

[23:35] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, for sure. Okay. Okay. And you were pleased. That—was that your first choice?



[23:40] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, it was my—that was the only school I ever considered. My mother says she took me there when I was like about two or three and I was ecstatic. I ran around the campus very happy. So, I never considered going any other place. I—my mother went there. It was a family.

[23:56] **Michael Fitzgerald:** I was going to ask. Yes, yes, that makes sense. Huh, this is quite a family. I mean, this is quite a, quite a legacy. Hmm. Okay, how did you hear about TIS/CEP?

[24:11] **Joan Burroughs:** I heard about it on campus, I'm sure. I can't remember exactly. But, I know that it was probably part of a discussion about a summer program, and about working, you know, out in the counties, and about being trained for it. We had to go to training sessions to learn what, you know, what to do and to also become fit. I was rather fit because I was a physical education major. So, I had an edge on a lot of the kids there, you know, who didn't want to get up at six o'clock in the morning and exercise with Dean Phillips. But yes, I probably heard about it just talking to other students (word of mouth). I'm not sure, but I can't remember seeing anything in print, per se. But you know Tuskegee. The campus, if somebody hears something, you can go and investigate, you go and ask, and then the next thing you know, you're involved. So that was how many things happened, word of mouth.

[25:08] **Michael Fitzgerald:** How many students at Tuskegee anyway?

[25:10] **Joan Burroughs:** Then?

[25:11] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes.

[25:12] **Joan Burroughs:** I'm not sure.

[25:14] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Probably two or three thousand, right?

[25:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Maybe. I think. Yes, the campus had many students at that time.
[maybe 3,000-3500]

[25:19] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Okay. And the grant that Dean Phillips got, you would have had probably six months or a year's notice that you had received a good grant. So if you arrive in the fall, they're already beginning to start to recruit that fall, I assume?

[25:35] **Joan Burroughs:** No. No, I don't. I don't think that it happened that way for me. I didn't hear about this until the summer. And you know, the thing is, is that I'm not really—

[25:41] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Early in the summer of '65?

[25:43] **Joan Burroughs:** In the spring, possibly in the spring.



[25:45] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Spring, oh.

[25:46] **Joan Burroughs:** I didn't hear about this during the winter months.

[25:49] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[25:50] **Joan Burroughs:** I think that I became aware of it in the spring. And, you know, at that point, it didn't even. . . there wasn't much talk about money, you know, about, you know, a lot of money or anything, at least, from my understanding. I knew that we would be paid, but I didn't really know how much. I knew we would be paid for working. And so, I just figured it would be more kind of like work-study. I was eager to do the work. I enjoyed going out into the counties. Actually, I didn't have any other plans for the summer. And so . . .

[26:36] **Michael Fitzgerald:** The St. Olaf students that I interviewed, they said that the pay was pretty good.

[[corrected narrative]] TISEP employees did receive remittances throughout the summer. On a couple of occasions, we returned to campus on weekends for training and or other business.]]

[26:42] **Joan Burroughs:** It turned out to be very good. I'm trying to remember. I'm not sure, because I don't think that we were paid throughout the summer. I think. I mean, like it seems as if the money came more towards the end of the program rather than throughout the summer. And for me I wasn't that worried about it because I knew that that I had—the year before, I think the year that I started in 1964, the National Defense Student Loan had—was announced. I applied for that and received it. That was how I paid my tuition. I also had a work-study job that paid room and board. So, I wasn't too worried about that part of it, you know. I was surprised when we were paid, and I was able to handle a lot of my expenses from the money that I made during the summer.

[27:54] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Over the next school year, you mean.

[27:55] **Joan Burroughs:** Over the next full year.

[27:56] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, the St. Olaf students thought that the money that they were getting was pretty generous. Enough for them to want to go to Alabama to get it, although clearly the kids that went down also had other motivations, you know? Well, and so you'd be a first year, you'd be a first-year student. And were you thinking of a career in education at this point?

[28:21] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. As a matter of fact, I was. I decided that I would go into education. I think that in my original application, I applied for something else. But when I got there, I became interested in physical education, because I had not been a prior career choice.

And I—and some of the other students, my friends were doing that and so I like the sound of it and decided to major in physical education as well. And I knew I that—teaching was fine with



me because there were several teachers in the family . So, yes, that was not a problem. That was a career choice.

[28:59] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. And did you wind up—was your career in physical ed? Phys Ed?

[29:06] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Actually. And until I it morphed into dance as well.

[29:13] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, okay. Okay.

[29:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[29:15] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, yes. Okay. Yes, that makes sense. So how much? Okay, the question I'm supposed to ask is, how, what did you know about the program? And I guess what I mean, is probably in '64, how much—when did you start figuring things out? And did you have much difficulty making up your mind what you were going to do?

[29:40] **Joan Burroughs:** No, actually in the program, one of the things that we were encouraged to do were the things that we were, that we felt not just comfortable with, but also—that we were prepared to do. And I had things that I'd learned in the physical education majors classes at Tuskegee, and also the health classes. And so, when we were just developing the curriculum for our center, that was the role that I assumed. That was my job. One of the other tutors, my freshman year roommate was an English major. She taught English and someone else taught history and science. Someone taught math, and I did health and physical education activities.

[30:29] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, the people that you would were going to, you taught in Lowndes County and somewhere else?

[30:36] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, we started in Troy, Alabama.

Note: [[[In 2021 while doing site documentation, it became apparent that our 1965 TISEP group did not begin its summer work in Troy, Alabama (Pike County). We thought we were in Troy. We were, in fact, in Montgomery County at Troy Chapel church. The Troy highway that connects Montgomery and Troy, Alabama is in close proximity (a couple of miles) to the Troy Chapel Church TISEP center.]]]

[30:38] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Okay.

[30:39] **Joan Burroughs:** And we—

[30:42] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Pike County, I guess. Yes.



[30:43] **Joan Burroughs:** Pike County, yes. So, we, and I don't know why we were moved. Something happened there. I not sure if we contributed to the reason for our departure. We tested one of the civil rights—

[30:55] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Law. So, you were integrating this right? You had—

[30:59] **Joan Burroughs:** A little restaurant, it seemed to be small diner—a rather isolated building. We decided to go there because we had not had lunch. We also wanted to know if we would receive service. The owner was really upset that we were there in his place of business but proceeded to serve us. Soon after that incident, we were sent to Lowndes County. I'm not sure that going into that diner was the cause of our removal. We might have been relocated for some other reason.

[31:34] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, they pulled you out of there and nobody picked it up after you left.

[31:39] **Joan Burroughs:** Not that I know of. I'm not sure if anyone did, but we weren't there. I don't know if a program took place in Troy. But we were sent to Lowndes County. We were in White Hall. I did not realize that we were sent to White Hall until 2018 when I returned there for the TIS/CEP 3Ts gathering. I recognized the house that we were taken to after leaving Troy [Troy Chapel Church in Montgomery County]. And it happens that the house—our first brief residence in Lowndes County—was what is now referred to as the SNCC house.

[32:13] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, so you stayed in the SNCC house?

[32:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[32:17] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And I understand from Dave Kjerland, who I knew here, was one of the white kids that was, you know, from Olaf. He said that the school that he was teaching in was like across the street or right nearby the SNCC house. Does that sound right?

[32:35] **Joan Burroughs:** No, I can't say because we never worked in White Hall. We slept there. At that time we were unfamiliar with the TISEP's geographic areas.

[32:39] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[32:39] **Joan Burroughs:** We were relocated to Hayneville. We never established a center at that point. This was like very early in the program. And so we eventually arrived in Hayneville. That's where we established a center at that point.

[33:00] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And by a center you mean a place where people are living and teaching?

[33:03] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes



[33:03] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Are they were living with people in the countryside?

[33:05] **Joan Burroughs:** And teaching, yes.

[33:07] **Michael Fitzgerald:** But are they, are they living with folks in the countryside?

[33:10] **Joan Burroughs:** We did. We lived with the people who were probably instrumental in assisting with establishing the center. Yes, we lived in the community.

[33:14] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, so the Civil Rights Act outlawing desegregation would have passed something like June of 1964. So legally, you were in the right, to insist on service anywhere. But I, but what was the, what was Dean Philips and the Tuskegee TIS/CEP people telling you about what you should do? I mean, were they discouraging that type of activity?

[33:43] **Joan Burroughs:** They didn't. We weren't told anything about that. I mean, I don't remember being told anything about that kind of activity. That was just something that we did on our own. And that most of us who were out there in Troy had been involved with the Tuskegee Institute Advancement League. So I think that it was just part of our understanding that anywhere we went, we were supposed to kind of reinforce the legislation, you know, like that.

[34:17] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Really? So, you were not being told to avoid conflict, to avoid—you were not being told to?

[34:33] **Joan Burroughs:** Maybe some groups were. But our group was pretty homogenous, you know, were all black. We didn't—I don't think that there was a presumed, there was any presumption of threat.

[34:48] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[34:49] **Joan Burroughs:** As we were all out there together. I think that there that might have been more of a concern with groups that we're integrated—and I'm just speaking from my, from what I think.

[34:57] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes.

[34:58] **Joan Burroughs:** I don't know. I don't know this. But I'm just thinking that it might have come up in groups that were integrated.

[35:06] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes. So that's actually probably right. The integrated groups might well be seen as more provocative anyway, A, and B, the kids from Minnesota, I could imagine Dean Phillips, sort of looking at these kids and saying, well, what can I do to keep them out of trouble? Because they don't really know.



[35:23] **Joan Burroughs:** Keep them safe. Yes. Because with us, I mean, part of what we had done was to test civil rights legislation, you know, in different places. And I don't know we just felt that one day, we felt compelled to go and just see if we could get served. And I don't even know if Dean Phillips ever knew about that. I don't know. But I do know that we were aware that something happened at Troy and that center did not take off with us in it. It might have taken off after we left, that maybe someone else brought in.

[36:03] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And perhaps there have been threats or something.

[36:07] **Joan Burroughs:** I don't know. Yes, I can't say.

[36:09] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Okay. Okay. By the way, I get the impression that John Lewis was actually from Troy or thereabouts.

[36:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, yes. And I did hear his name quite a bit. And I heard, I knew that he had he and I knew that he was associated with the SNCC movement and group. And I heard his name a lot. And people would say, you know, John Lewis is from here, this is his hometown, and he wants to go to Troy State. And that's what they call it at the time.

[36:38] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Right, right.

[36:39] **Joan Burroughs:** I don't remember ever meeting him there. But I do know, we knew that. We knew that.

[36:45] **Michael Fitzgerald:** He's a busy guy. Okay.

[36:45] **Joan Burroughs:** It was an inspiration.

[36:49] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, well, I'll bet. That's interesting. That's actually this is kind of intriguing, because I suspect that, I wonder—what it sort of suggests is that what they were telling the white kids from Olaf in Michigan, or wherever else, was a little different from what they're telling African American kids. So, they probably were trying to keep them out of trouble. They probably were.

[37:16] **Joan Burroughs:** And I say keep them safe. Because—

[37:18] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, right.

[37:20] **Joan Burroughs:** Because with us, I think it was just a little bit different. We had been out there, we knew where we were, we knew the political landscape. And so, I . . . even if the original intent was not to warn them, I guess it would have—it kind of demanded that. You know, you have to let people who are not from a place know some of the dangers.

[37:47] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Right. Right. The people headed out to Troy and then Lowndes County. Were they campus friends already of yours?



[37:57] **Joan Burroughs:** Two. One of the students, I think, were from—, a couple of the students were from Tuskegee, but they were not all Tuskegee students. They were from the Tuskegee community, but were attending Hampton.

[[For the sake of clarity, the following response was re-stated]]

[[[During the summer of 1965, I was a tutor in Lowndes County. There were four female tutors living with Ms. Ethel McCall and her two daughters. The college students were Patti Jones, Nancy Hooten and Sylvia Pettus. The male students assigned to Hayneville were Julius Robinson, Gregory Pender and the son of a Hayneville cooperating community member, Scott Billingsley. A student from another college worked with us at Troy Chapel. That student was not reassigned to Hayneville.]]]

[38:13] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, I didn't know that.

[38:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. And I think one of them might have been from Talladega College.

[38:20] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay,

[[corrected narrative]]

[38:20] **Joan Burroughs:** They weren't all Tuskegee students. My college roommate, Patti Jones, was also a Tuskegee resident. And I'm trying to think, and one other person was a Tuskegee student, it was a mixed group. The Hayneville tutors were (except me) predominantly Tuskegee residents who were either attending Tuskegee or Hampton with possibly one exception. Early on, one student was from one of the black Alabama colleges, possibly Talladega College.

[38:43] **Michael Fitzgerald:** That's interesting. That's interesting. Okay, okay. So, we've sort of, well, I guess, we've sort of been talking about what influenced your decision to join TISEP? And I imagine it's, it sounds like you weren't thinking in terms of the money that much. That you just sort of generally thought this would be a good thing to do, that you wanted to be participating in. Partly because you didn't, it wasn't clear how much money you were going you get paid until after you made the decision.

[39:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I wasn't really. I don't remember ever thinking about the money. The most that we ever got paid during work-study was like, 15 hours a week or so. And that would have been fine. You know, with me. It was the idea of going out and seeing the bigger picture. I really wanted to know what else was out there. And it was, it was eye opening for me, you know. I wanted to see how it felt to teach someone because that's what I thought I was going to end up doing. And I don't know, being with people my own age, taking on something, to me, that was that significant and that big.

[40:13] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Had you ever—I imagine you were seeing things in terms of poverty, that you probably hadn't seen quite that same way before?



[[corrected narrative]]

[40:26] **Joan Burroughs:** No, I had. I've seen. I'd seen things before, you know. One of the things about growing up in a black community in the 60s and before—I'm sure that there were some neighborhoods that were more economically homogenous—however, I lived in a community that I think I first read about in Christine Bennett's book on multicultural education. In it she describes neighborhoods that contained wide-ranging household incomes. In my community, there were the people who maybe didn't have a job and who had to do small, odd jobs around the community to make money. There were people who were janitors and custodians in schools. There were people who worked in the steel mills or factories, people who might have had a little more money than the majority. There were also professional people: teachers, doctors, clerical, and nurses. That was my community. We didn't have a doctor in the community, but we did have a nurse. I mean, so you're in and out of those homes. Familiarity with communities in other counties—my father was a pastor in North Alabama—provided me with insights about the diverse range of economies and conditions in black communities. We often traveled to the churches in that area with him. I saw people living in a variety of conditions (poverty to well off). So, I was not shocked.

[42:04] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Well, the, okay. The Olaf students I talked to, they were shocked.

[42:12] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Yes.

[42:13] **Michael Fitzgerald:** They had never seen anything like this. And, you know, because they were living in homes, too. And what David used to tell me was sort of like, well, really poor house really well maintained. I mean, you know, good housekeeping [laughter], no money.

[42:37] **Joan Burroughs:** And I'll tell you and the lady that I lived with, was a very, her house was spic and span. But she had an outhouse.

[42:45] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes.

[[corrected narrative]]

[42:45] **Joan Burroughs:** We had to go outside to use the bathroom. That was something that I had experienced very early in my childhood. I did know I what an outhouse was, you know. So, I was not shocked. The thing that struck me though, the only thing, I had never seen was people in the cotton fields picking cotton.

[43:12] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[43:12] **Joan Burroughs:** I hadn't seen that in my life. Never seen little children out in the cotton field picking cotton.

[43:17] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So literally in 1965, you're still seeing people physically picking cotton. Did you see people, probably not during the summer, but people with mules still or is it tractors by this point entirely?



[43:29] **Joan Burroughs:** You'd see mules. I mean, in that area (as well as others) people used mules to plow fields.

[43:39] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, right. Right.

[43:40] **Joan Burroughs:** But yes, that was common.

[43:42] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Huh. That's interesting.

[43:44] **Joan Burroughs:** I saw that growing up also.

[43:48] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, okay. So, I guess the question here is what—did, I ask what you remember most about TISEP?

[43:58] **Joan Burroughs:** No.

[43:59] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Probably quite a lot at this point, I would think.

[44:01] **Joan Burroughs:** I don't know if a lot but, yes. I remember one of the stories that I, you know, I remember us talking about. Planning what we're going to do for the next day. We didn't coordinate our lessons a lot because we each taught different subjects. When I say coordinate the day, I mean, arrange for a play period. I was in charge of teaching physical activities and health. I taught a little social dancing. I also tried to teach the children square dancing. And I don't remember that we had actual musical accompaniment, but I taught them how to do the square dance calls. For example, like grand, right, and left etc.

[44:45] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, yes, yes.

[44:46] **Joan Burroughs:** We could call it out from a script that I prepared, and we would dance without music, keeping time by clapping.

[44:54] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Actually, something occurs to me: none of these rooms would have been air conditioned, right?

[44:58] **Joan Burroughs:** No. No.

[45:00] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, you're teaching a summer school with no air conditioning in Alabama?

[45:04] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, we were outside a lot.

[45:06] **Michael Fitzgerald:** I guess you would be. So, what hours did you teach? Did you? Did you, I mean, teach early in the morning, and then knock off?

[45:15] **Joan Burroughs:** We'd finish at around two or three.



[45:20] Michael Fitzgerald: Wow, that would be really physically difficult. And did you have, did you have trouble? You have any trouble recruiting people? I'm assuming not. I mean, students, kids.

[45:30] Joan Burroughs: Doing what now?

[45:31] Michael Fitzgerald: Did you have trouble recruiting kids, because sitting around in a hot room in 90 degrees.

[45:36] Joan Burroughs: Well, you know, back then people weren't as accustomed to air conditioning.

[45:42] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes, okay, that's interesting.

[45:44] Joan Burroughs: I don't think that it was as hot as it is now. I was young then. You know, we walked a few miles to the church (TISEP center) and back everyday. And so it didn't bother us. And we, like I said, we were young. I think that the climate was a little bit different. And when I taught, like kickball, or volleyball or something like that, we would go outside.

Clarification:

[[Part of my teaching day was inside (during the morning). I taught health classes before lunch. After lunch, we often participated in other activities that usually occurred outside]]

[46:17] Michael Fitzgerald: Well, okay, um, you've talked about the center a couple times, can you define that. So, essentially, what you have is a place where most people are meeting and then are there are like outlying smaller schoolhouses, is that it? How's this work?

[46:32] Joan Burroughs: Yes, our center was a church. We divided the church up into sections where each tutor taught. We coordinated in a way that caused the least amount of disturbance possible for other classes. With mine, after lunch, sometimes I would have sessions outside, and we would do some kind of ballgame or maybe a dance activity. That was fun. One of the funny things about the outside activity was that the church's neighbor owned a goat. The goat would sometimes join the sports activity and go after the ball. We would have stay alert in preparation for what the goat was going to do next.

[47:23] Michael Fitzgerald: But how old were the kids who were teaching?

[47:29] Joan Burroughs: They ranged in age. They weren't extremely young, they weren't. I think they weren't young, like six early elementary school. They might have been a little bit older than that on up into maybe high school. So, you know, they were different ages, maybe beginning at 12?

[47:48] Michael Fitzgerald: And why do you? Why do you think they attended? I mean, what was their motivation?



[47:54] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, I think they were encouraged to attend for one thing. And I know that each, each center, each county, each town, that housed the TISEP program had an advisory board. So, I'm sure that in Hayneville, there was an advisory board that encouraged the activity. I don't know how they wound up getting students there; we didn't have to recruit as much in Hayneville. We did try to recruit in White Hall (I think that it was White Hall). We were out in the cotton fields, talking to parents and trying to get people to attend TISEP. But it seems that in Hayneville things were already arranged. When we arrived, there were people who were ready to participate. That's my memory anyway. Yes.

[49:01] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Let's see. And you were saying that. Did you, the places you worked, did you work in Troy itself?

[49:12] **Joan Burroughs:** Did I do what?

[49:13] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Your first, your first, your first placement? Was it in Troy itself?

[49:17] **Joan Burroughs:** It was in Troy.

[[[Clarification]]] During the site documentation phase of the project, I realized that we were not in Troy, Alabama. We were in Montgomery County at Troy Chapel (a church a bit off of the main highway that connects Montgomery and Troy)]]]

[49:19] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. And how long were you there?

[49:21] **Joan Burroughs:** We were only there a few days, I think, before we were moved.

[49:29] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Well, actually, you know, one of the things we could ask Dean Phillips is just why they pulled people out of Troy. [[[Troy Chapel Church, Montgomery AL]]]

[49:36] **Joan Burroughs:** I think that there might have been something with the organization that they couldn't quite pull together.

[49:44] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Sponsors, you mean. The local sponsors?

[49:46] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[49:46] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[49:47] **Joan Burroughs:** I mean, but that's still a question that could be clarified when in an interview with him.

[49:52] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And then you, and then you wind up in? Did you say Hayneville?

[49:58] **Joan Burroughs:** No, we were in White Hall.



[49:59] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You were in White Hall. Okay, so, you're in White Hall. Okay, so. So, you went to White Hall and then you went, was it Hayneville?

[50:07] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, yes. Hayneville.

[50:09] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And how long were you in White Hall? How long were you in Hayneville?

[50:13] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, White Hall, we were only there, like for a couple of days. A day or so because I don't remember staying there much longer than a couple of days before we were taken to Hayneville.

'Mike, can you lift your screen up a little bit? There you go, there. It's cutting your face off.'

[50:35] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Sorry about that.

[50:37] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, so we didn't stay in Whitehall, very long. As a matter of fact, we never opened the center there. I think the center was opened after we left. We went on into Hayneville. When we got there, seemed like everything was arranged and ready. The church, the students and everything, and all we had to do was set up our classes and move into the houses of the families that we lived with during our stay.

[51:07] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, okay. How long? How long were you part of TIS/CEP? I imagine—how long was the school term, was it maybe two months? Was it more?

[51:19] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. The program ended in August, I think in late August, but—excuse me [cough]—our group left early. We left Hayneville the day that Jonathan Daniels was killed there.

[51:33] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, yes. Okay. And when would that have been? That would be?

[[[Clarification: Jonathan Daniels was murdered August 20, 1965]]]

[51:37] **Joan Burroughs:** It was in August. I have to look up to date might have been the sixth or something. But when that happened, we were hustled out of there, because we walked right up on the scene of where the murder took place. That was one of the, that was one of the last things that I saw in Hayneville

[51:58] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And that shooting, did it occur in Hayneville?

[52:00] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Right up the street from where the center was located. We passed by that, the church—

[52:06] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Like the grocery store?



[52:07] **Joan Burroughs:** We walked past the grocery store every day, every day. And that was—

[52:12] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And you mentioned some confrontation at a doctor's office as well, which had a line on it.

[52:18] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, that was during our stay in White Hall and I'm assuming we were in White Hall earlier. It was in an area with cotton fields. That was where we were taken after we—after our first day in that area. We were taken to what is now known as the SNCC house. And so I'm assuming that we were in White Hall earlier that day.

[52:37] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, it's nearby the SNCC house?

[52:38] **Joan Burroughs:** It wasn't nearby because we were driven to a place to start canvassing the community for students.

[52:45] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[52:45] **Joan Burroughs:** So that's why I say I'm assuming that that area was White Hall. And it was in cotton fields, there were cotton fields around, but we were supposed to knock on doors and talk to the families and encourage parents to let their student, their children attend the TISEP program. That was how we spent the day. There was a house, a huge tall house. The house was right in the middle of cotton fields . . . I think cotton fields were in the back and on the side of the house. Across the road was another kind of a field maybe a cornfield or something. The house was a doctor's office. We went inside—my partner and I—and there was a white line—

[53:35] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You're kind of frozen. Can you hear me?

[53:36] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, you're frozen. Yes, you're frozen.

[53:39] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Joan, I think there, I think it's going to like click us out because you're sort of frozen.

[53:44] **Joan Burroughs:** I'm frozen. You want me to stop and start again?

[53:47] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, Joan, the screen. The screen froze for a while. Can you go back about 30 seconds worth.

[53:54] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay. Yes. We were out canvassing for students. The house was on the road, but behind the house were cotton fields, and across the street was another kind of field, a cornfield or something. We went up the stairs and entered a huge room. There was just that huge room in the front of the house. Down the center of the room on the floor was a white line. I didn't pay attention to the white line. I was talking to the receptionist whose back was to the entrance. The receptionist was motioning me to move to the other side of the room.



[54:35] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, this was a white receptionist.

[54:36] **Joan Burroughs:** No, she was black.

[54:38] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, okay.

[54:38] **Joan Burroughs:** She motioned me to the other side. And I didn't understand what she meant. I continued to stand there and then I saw the white line and I realized that she wanted me to move to the other side of the line (obviously the colored side of the line because there were colored, black people, sitting on one side of the room). The other side of the room must have been reserved for white people, white patients. And so, I started talking about that, you know, about why there had to be a line. And why did people have to sit on black and white sides and that kind of thing. The doctor came out and told me to move. When I didn't move he returned with a gun. I assume that the man was a doctor. He looked as if he could have been the doctor. He returned from the back with a gun.

[55:31] **Michael Fitzgerald:** White coat?

[55:32] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, yes. He came out with a gun. We ran. My partner and I jumped to the ground from the high porch [[[the outside steps were too steep, had to take the quickest route (added for clarification)]], to the ground so that we could get away from him. He chased us through a cornfield. We got away. When we looked back, he was no longer behind us.

[55:52] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You went back?

[55:53] **Joan Burroughs:** We didn't go back, we just looked back to see if he was still behind us. He was not. So, we made our way back to the larger group.

[56:02] **Michael Fitzgerald:** The first time you told me that story, I missed a detail. The detail is that this business of having an actual line in an office is something you had never seen anybody do before.

[56:14] **Joan Burroughs:** No, I had never seen that before. As a matter of fact, I do know that when I was growing up, the doctors that were near black communities (the ones that we visited) were usually white. A few black communities did have black doctors.

[56:31] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Right, sure.

[56:32] **Joan Burroughs:** Where I lived did not have black doctors. The doctors that I saw might have had a different waiting room in a different area of the house. I don't know. But I had never seen a white line down the middle of—

[56:49] **Michael Fitzgerald:** If you think, I think, in terms of like big bus stations or big railroad stations.



[56:54] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[56:56] **Michael Fitzgerald:** But even there, I don't know that there's, like, a line.

[56:58] **Joan Burroughs:** No, it—

[56:59] **Michael Fitzgerald:** I think it's like this side and this side, with a sign up.

[57:02] **Joan Burroughs:** They had the sign that was colored and white in other places. But that was a line that I had never seen that before.

[57:09] **Michael Fitzgerald]:** And the fact that it was not just segregation, but it was also kind of weird and novel and like what the hell is this? Kind of explains your response a little bit. Like, you didn't even see what, didn't even realize what it was when you first came in.

[57:26] **Joan Burroughs:** And I was just standing there on the wrong side and the lady behind the desk tilting her head to the side, indicating that I was in the wrong area.

[57:31] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Right. So, you can stumble into a confrontation without realizing.

[57:36] **Joan Burroughs:** Without even knowing that you're doing it. Yes, that's it.

[57:39] **Michael Fitzgerald:** That's kind of interesting. That's kind of interesting.

[57:41] **Joan Burroughs:** With, when you do that, some people would probably have conceded. I'm not, I guess, I'm not a gracious person, you know, because I tend—I chose to be a bit more confrontational once I realized that that's what it was about.

[58:00] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, well, I mean, I think a lot of people might have responded the same way if they were 18.

[58:09] **Joan Burroughs:** I was 17 at the time.

[58:11] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You were just 17. Okay. Really?

[58:14] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[58:14] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Wait a minute. Wait a minute. So, you graduated early or?

[58:17] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, let me see. I turned 18. I was, yes. I went to Tuskegee at 17. I turned 18 that summer. I turned 18 later that summer.

[58:31] **Michael Fitzgerald:** The summer that you arrived.

[58:33] **Joan Burroughs:** No, I turned 18—



[58:35] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, you turned 18 in the summer of 1965.

[58:38] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[58:39] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Huh, so. So, did you skip a grade or something? You're there a year early?

[58:44] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I started school when I was like five and—

[58:47] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[58:48] **Joan Burroughs:** —I got skipped a couple of times. Yes.

[58:51] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, we really are talking about somebody, good student from a family of educators. Minister. Okay,

[59:00] **Joan Burroughs:** I didn't think that I was a good student. I think I tried hard, you know, but yes.

[59:06] **Michael Fitzgerald :** Well, trying hard is part of it [laughter], you know. I mean, having it be important to you. That's interesting. That's interesting. One detail just puzzles me. Why do you have a doctor's office in the middle? I mean, did you say it's outside of town? It's just in the middle of nowhere, like a planter's home.

[59:25] **Joan Burroughs:** It was out there. It was way out there in the country. And like I said, there were fields around it. But there were people there in the waiting room that I don't know know who they were.

[59:37] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Was there anybody white in that waiting room?

[59:42] **Joan Burroughs:** I don't recall anybody being white.

[59:43] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. I guess somebody from a planter, somebody, some guy from a planter family could have inherited a plantation home. And then you know, done his—did his doctor stuff in the countryside in that location, I guess that's possible. You sort of think of a doctor's office in town somewhere, you know.

[1:00:05] **Joan Burroughs:** That's what I, yes. And I actually talked to somebody about it and they—and this person who's from there—said he didn't remember there being a doctor's office anywhere there. The doctors that he knew was someplace else. So, I don't know if that doctor was there serving the people in that little area, maybe on certain days or what. I don't know —

[1:00:25] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Could be. That could be actually. Although if that was the case, you wouldn't have a, probably, have a painted line?



[1:00:31] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, if you've got, if you have both of, both races coming there. If you're a doctor, there for like a couple of days and—

[1:00:38] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Few days a week, maybe. Maybe. That's interesting. Did you hear anything afterwards about this guy?

[1:00:44] **Joan Burroughs:** No, because I didn't talk about it anymore to, I mean, you know, I only talked about it after we left there

[1:00:56] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You thought it was not going to help you.

[1:00:57] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, and besides that, you know, might have caused more conflict.

[1:01:01] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, yes. Okay. So, I was supposed to ask you talk about the community that you lived or worked in TIS/CEP, which we've kind of been doing. And we've also been kind of providing recollections of experience. What haven't I asked about that you think you want to put on the record? Do you think I'd be interested in? Or any things you want to talk about?

[1:01:23] **Joan Burroughs:** I've said this before in other interviews. We felt we were doing great there, in terms of mobility, getting back and forth to the place where we live--Ms. McCall's house, walking along that little dirt road. And then late in the summer, and this must have been close to the time that Jonathan Daniels was killed, white men came to get us out of Ms. McCall's house. They drove up to her house and told her to send 'those girls out'. And she says—

[1:02:07] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Wait, wait, wait. Who did this? People from Tuskegee or?

[1:02:12] **Joan Burroughs:** No.

[1:02:12] **Michael Fitzgerald:** No, white folks?

[1:02:13] **Joan Burroughs:** White people from Lowndes County (I suppose), in about two or three cars. They started—

[1:02:18] **Michael Fitzgerald:** They were ordering you out of her house?

[1:02:20] **Joan Burroughs:** They wanted us to come out. They told her to send us out. And she didn't. She had large gun, a double barrel shotgun or rifle, aimed in the direction of the cars. This was at night. The men had been driving back and forth in front of her house during the day. And we knew that they followed us from the center. We didn't think anything of it at first but kept seeing the car going back and forth along the dirt road. That night, that car and two or three others pulled up to the edge of Ms. McCall's yard—up a small embankment. They were shining the car lights on the house. She went to the door and asked them what they wanted. They told her that they wanted 'those girls out of there'. And she informed them that she would



shoot them if anyone stepped foot on her lawn. They saw the gun in her hand. They saw that—I guess it was a shotgun— I don't know. Might have been a rifle. But they got in the cars and left.

[1:03:28] Michael Fitzgerald: Were there neighbors, were there neighbors nearby? Was the house isolated?

[1:03:31] Joan Burroughs: The houses were not that close together. I mean, the house, the next house was probably a half a mile down the road.

[1:03:38] Michael Fitzgerald: Okay. Okay. So, she's on her own.

[1:03:40] Joan Burroughs: So yes, so she was out there alone. I mean, that's how houses were then. You didn't have houses . . .

[1:03:45] Michael Fitzgerald: Rural area.

[1:03:46] Joan Burroughs: It was rural, yes.

[1:03:50] Michael Fitzgerald: And so, she turned them away on her own.

[1:03:52] Joan Burroughs: Yes, she did. She and I guess she knew she had to do that. She was savvy. She knew what she had to have her own gun. Ms. McCall had daughters there also, you know. Her own daughters lived there.

[1:04:06] Michael Fitzgerald: How old was she?

1:04:07] Joan Burroughs: Oh, Ms. McCall? I have no idea. Maybe she was in her 50s? Maybe younger. I'm not sure.

[1:04:13] Michael Fitzgerald: Did she tell you afterwards who the men were?

[1:04:16] Joan Burroughs: No, she didn't. She didn't even try to see who they were. They were men that we had seen riding up and down the road. You know?

[1:04:24] Michael Fitzgerald: So, they're not, they're not law enforcement?

[1:04:26] Joan Burroughs: They weren't law enforcement. They were in regular civilians, everyday cars. They were everyday men. They weren't law enforcement. But several things were going on at the same time. The SNCC workers were in jail. We would talk to them on the way back home to her house from the center. We would see them through the jail's window. They would call us up to the window to talk and to ask us to let someone know that they were incarcerated, you know, that they were locked up. And they were in jail. And somewhere during that time—



[1:05:07] **Michael Fitzgerald:** They were in jail for leading demonstrations? For sit-ins and stuff?

[1:05:10] **Joan Burroughs:** I don't know the reason that they were there—they could have been there for various reasons. There were voter registration drives going on, things like that.

[1:05:17] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, yes, yes.

[1:05:18] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. And so, I guess for anything that was considered a violation, they were put in jail. Maybe just for walking—

[1:05:28] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Did you get your hands on that book on—like I guess it's Jeffries's book on Lowndesborough?

[1:05:32] **Joan Burroughs:** I have it. Yes [crosstalk]. Yes, *Bloody Lowndes*.

[1:05:36] **Michael Fitzgerald:** *Bloody Lowndes*. So, my recollection of it—it's been maybe five years since I've read it. My recollection of it is that he says that there was a lot of self-defense activity. That, you know, people were making clear that they had guns, and that people riding around in their neighborhoods are not welcome. I don't know what the geography is relative to you.

[1:06:03] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, in that area the area Ms. McCall lived up the road from one of the county agents, Scott Billingsley. [[[His son was a part of the TISEP project that summer]]]. He was, one of the primary forces that encouraged having TISEP in Hayneville. His son participated with us in the program. But like I said, people's houses were spread far apart. And so, things could happen, and no one would know. Miss McCall, like I said, was a very brave woman. She lived out there alone.

[1:06:39] **Michael Fitzgerald :** How old?

[1:06:40] **Joan Burroughs:** They were a little bit younger than us.

[1:06:45] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[1:06:45] **Joan Burroughs:** They were different ages; not sure of whether one was in elementary and the other high school.

[1:06:53] **Michael Fitzgerald:** How, how afraid were you?

[1:06:56] **Joan Burroughs:** I was not afraid. I was concerned but not afraid.

[1:07:00] **Michael Fitzgerald:** 'll tell you the Oleys were. The St. Olaf's kids were scared.



[1:07:06] **Joan Burroughs:** I wasn't. And, you know, I had been on several marches with the TIAL and SNCC and sitting down, you know, in front of the Capitol and doing things like that. And so, you know, having horses almost trample you, things like that. I just didn't. I didn't have a big fear factor.

[1:07:30] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, you were demonstrating in the march from Selma to Montgomery. Let's see the beating on the bridges in March, the march itself would have probably taken—so this would have happened that spring before you got there?

[1:07:47] **Joan Burroughs:** No, that was not the Selma. . . the Selma march happened after. Because no, because I didn't go with the group that got beat on the bridge with John Lewis [[[The Selma march occurred during Spring 1965. That was during my freshman year. The third attempt of the Selma march was successful and occurred over several days. TISEP began during the summer, 1965 after the Selma to Montgomery march.]]]

[1:07:57] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Right, right. Yes, this would be, this would be in March 8, 1965, before you went.

1:08:03 **Joan Burroughs:** I was there. I was there. But I was freshmen, I was a freshman that year.

[1:08:10] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You were in Tuskegee. Were you in Montgomery?

[1:08:13] **Joan Burroughs:** No, I didn't go. I went on the third march. Not the first march. But the big one that everybody turned out for.

NOTE[[[I did not participate in the attempted Bloody Sunday march. The second attempt was prevented, I participated in the third Selma to Montgomery march.]]]

[1:08:23] **Michael Fitzgerald:** One when they—the five-day march all the way.

[1:08:27] **Joan Burroughs:** I didn't go all the way, we met—

[1:08:29] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You showed up in Montgomery and you walk the last bit of it.

[1:08:31] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Yes. And I'm not sure where we met them. But we did. We walked quite a distance with them.

[1:08:37] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes.

[1:08:38] **Joan Burroughs:** Because we had, we were on buses that were sent to meet the marchers. And we met them and then joined.

[1:08:44] **Michael Fitzgerald:** So, Tuskegee kids are coming in by bus.

[1:08:47] **Joan Burroughs:** Some of them did.



[1:08:48] **Michael Fitzgerald:** In the last day's march, which I think is to the south and west of the city.

[1:08:52] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Some of them did. Some of them were out were in the full march. Some of them . . .

[1:08:57] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Some of the Tuskegee kids.

[1:08:58] **Joan Burroughs:** I was in the last leg of it.

[1:09:01] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And nobody in Tuskegee is trying to discourage you, nobody in the administration?

[1:09:07] **Joan Burroughs:** No.

[1:09:08] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, just asking.

[1:09:10] **Joan Burroughs:** Never, you know, that was one thing we knew we could do. We knew that we could protest. We knew that. We, I mean, there was never, ever anyone saying don't do that. As a matter of fact, I can remember a huge conference that was held at Tuskegee, and people came there from all over the country. And I think it was before the march. They congregated on our campus and held several symposiums and on all kinds of things . . . prior to the Selma march. And that was where I saw all the civil rights workers like and, you know, people whose names that I'd heard, you know, were there. Yes. Tuskegee never, not when I got there, never discouraged us from participating. As a matter of fact, you can use that as—that was an excuse. You know, if you went, if you had—

[1:10:08] **Michael Fitzgerald:** If you went to a demonstration, the prof would say, okay, you can have an extension on your paper type thing.

[1:10:12] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, no. Yes, I mean, I never got an extension, but you certainly didn't get penalized for it.

[1:10:17] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Okay. Okay.

[1:10:20] **Joan Burroughs:** As a matter of fact, that's why I didn't go on the first Selma march because I was writing a paper, I had to have it in that week. And so, I didn't, I didn't know about the first march. I

[1:10:33] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, so, summarize how the TIS/CEP experience influenced you then and possibly through your life.

[1:10:44] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, I want to tell you this. Part of my TIS/CEP experience, you know, is that, as I said, I saw Jonathan Daniels, dead on the street. I saw the other minister, Reeves?



[1:11:00] **Michael Fitzgerald:** You saw [James] Reeb?

[1:11:01] **Joan Burroughs:** Reeb. Yes, he was—

[1:11:02] **Michael Fitzgerald:** That the guy in Selma?

[1:11:03] **Joan Burroughs:** No, no, not the man in Selma. The other priest that was shot.

[1:11:07] **Michael Fitzgerald:** [Richard] Morrisroe was it Morrisroe?

[1:11:08] **Joan Burroughs:** Father Morrisroe. He was on the ground, injured. And we followed that ambulance back to Montgomery—

[1:11:17] **Michael Fitzgerald:** This happened right down the street from you, and you came out and saw this?

[1:11:20] **Joan Burroughs:** Right down the street. We saw them after we dismissed and were leaving the TISEP center.

[1:11:26] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And was it a gas station or grocery store and there was some kind of confrontation there? Did the guy just come out and shoot at them?

[1:11:33] **Joan Burroughs:** I didn't see that happen? The only thing that I saw was after the fact. I saw everybody there and I saw them on the ground, Jonathan Daniels was dead and—

[1:11:45] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Was the perpetrator punished?

[1:11:48] **Joan Burroughs:** No. No.

[1:11:56] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, then.

[1:11:57] **Joan Burroughs:** That was common during that time. People just, you know, did not receive punishment for killing people who were or believed to be civil rights activists.

[1:12:10] **Michael Fitzgerald:** But you weren't afraid?

[1:12:12] **Joan Burroughs:** No.

[1:12:15] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, alright, Alright you win. Boy. And I suppose we could say that as somebody who went into education, somebody who went into education with an activist inclination, that you could sort of say this was part of the trajectory of your life?

Joan Burroughs [1:12:36]: Yes, it has been. And one of the things that I did as an educator is always made sure that the students knew about the Selma march, about the things that happened, about Jonathan Daniels, about those things. Because, particularly in New York. When I taught in



New York— many people didn't have a clue about any of this. And I taught—there was a lot of resistance on the parts of most administrations to discussing these kinds of issues with students.

One of the things that the faculty members who didn't look like me would say is that 'you're teaching them hate', and I would think, teaching hate? I'm teaching them what happened. This happened, this is not in the name of hate, you know. So, I . . .

[1:13:35] Michael Fitzgerald: What period are we talking about? In what classes?

[1:13:37] Joan Burroughs: From the '80s through the '90s, I taught high school. I would always include, even though I taught dance, there were areas you know, especially when—

[1:13:48] Michael Fitzgerald: Well dance can be, dance can be kind of political.

[1:13:50] Joan Burroughs: It's very political. And I taught that, you know. I taught; I would teach the children that. And so that's been part of my narrative, including that in my work.

1:14:05 Michael Fitzgerald: Well, you're an eyewitness. Where you're, when you were teaching, the schools you're teaching in predominantly black?

[1:14:14] Joan Burroughs: Yes, yes. Yes.

[1:14:16] Michael Fitzgerald: And where exactly were you teaching?

[1:14:18] Joan Burroughs: Well, I taught here in Birmingham for a while, for 10 years. My first teaching assignment was during the years of forced integration. I started teaching in the early '70s. There was a lot of confrontation. I taught at Woodlawn High School, they made a movie about that. Yes, and so—

[1:14:38] Michael Fitzgerald: Really? What's the movie?

[1:14:39] Joan Burroughs: It's called *Woodlawn* [laughter].

[1:14:41] Michael Fitzgerald: I don't, didn't, have never encountered it. Actually, now that I think of it, that if we're talking school integration, I know this is bad form. But you know, what we really ought to ask about is that you would have been there for the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. Which grew out of Klan resistance to the beginnings of integration.

[1:15:04] Joan Burroughs: That was my senior year of high school. Yes, that happened in '63.

[1:15:09] Michael Fitzgerald: '63 probably, September '63.

[1:15:13] Joan Burroughs: Yes. And yes, I remember. That has always been part of my narrative also. That was one of the things that had a huge impact on me, my life, the way I think.



[1:15:36] **Michael Fitzgerald:** No, I think that's right. I think that's right. Given that this was happening, actually, were you ever tempted to think about trying to get into an integrated college?

[1:15:50] **Joan Burroughs:** You mean—

[1:15:51] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, I mean, you could've. Schools were opening up some.

[1:15:55] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, yes. I mean, but undergrad? No.

[1:15:57] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes.

[1:15:58] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, I, you know, I did go. . . .my graduate work was done in predominantly white schools, Indiana University and New York University. So yes, but I did teach during forced integration, and then I taught after that in predominantly black schools and in New York at Martin Luther King Jr. High School.

[1:16:22] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Which is where, by the way?

[1:16:23] **Joan Burroughs:** It's in Manhattan [crosstalk]. It's no longer a school, but yes.

[1:16:30] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Somewhere up towards Harlem, I'm guessing.

[1:16:33] **Joan Burroughs:** No, no, no, it's right there in the Lincoln Center area, in the 60s.

[1:16:36] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Oh, I did not know that. Okay. Mmm hmm. Okay. Did you know anything about the Southern Education Foundation report in the fall of 1965, listed TIS/CEP as Tuskegee another kind of demonstrations on the Black Belt?

[1:16:51] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I did. Yes, I—and I did know about that. And actually, for me, I do consider everything that TIS/CEP did as part of that movement, because to me, the civil rights movement entails more than just marching and singing. It entails other acts like educating, uplifting, getting people ready for, you know, a different kind of environment. Yes. So, for me, it was.

[1:17:21] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And when I talked about this with Dean Philips, it was sort of like, he was thinking that this was like, another way of being active on the issue. Rather than being, you know, confrontational --demonstrations-- that this was actually a supplement.

[1:17:43] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, yes.

[1:17:44] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Was that the way you were thinking?



[1:17:45] Joan Burroughs: I, yes, because I have to tell you that a part of what we did with those children . . . was political education. You know, teaching them about the need to vote, having the right to vote. We didn't know how much their parents were involved. We, you know, we talked to them about their parents' need to vote need to understand the importance. These were things that we included in our lessons also, in the history part of our lessons. So, that's another part of it. The total picture, the total package is also always more, I think. Education has to be a strong component of any struggle.

[1:18:32] Michael Fitzgerald: Any struggle.

[1:18:33] Joan Burroughs: Any struggle, yes.

[1:18:34] Michael Fitzgerald: You know, actually, I'm thinking about it. You know, one of the benefits of the program that I never really thought about very much, but you go into small, rural schools, and you have these young, idealistic 18-year-olds who are in college, talking about what makes them tick and what they care about. That's kind of a teaching thing in and of itself. I mean, just seeing up close, I'm sure that there's some folks that sort of glommed on it, like I could go to college. You know, just the example of you being out there is probably important along the lines of what you actually teach. And the fact that the, and probably for the few white kids that they encounter that are that they find, okay, that's kind of a teaching thing to.

[1:19:20] Joan Burroughs: It is. I consider the whole thing educational, and I thought that, you know, being encouraged to bring yourself to the program, you know, your interest. I mean, there were people who brought music, because that was their interest. I don't think that it was just a one directional kind of a thing. They were also learning other people's music and introducing those kinds of things. And to me, that's a culturally rich experience.

[1:20:03] Michael Fitzgerald: Okay, okay. So, we've sort of been talking but the official question here is, did you participate in any of the activities of civil rights movement? And it sounds like your participation before and after, was reasonably extensive?

[1:20:18] Joan Burroughs: It was, yes. Yes.

[1:20:22] Michael Fitzgerald: Did you go out and try and register voters at some point afterwards?

[1:20:26] Joan Burroughs: Yes, later in life. I've done all that. I've done political campaigns. I've worked with community groups, not as much as I'd like though. And now not as much as I would like to. Only because of differences, I mean, trying to find common ground. Because to me now, too much is at stake. And for a lot of people, self-interest is more important than a common goal, and I can't work with self-interest alone. I have to work from a broader perspective. So yes, I've been a part of a lot of things, voter registration to name one. And like I said, not as much as I'd like. I think that I'd like to get going again in that direction with helping because the need is so great. Yes.



[1:21:29] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes, I got it. I got to say, as a historian, I'm just dumbfounded. The idea that people would be so eager to strip away people's voting rights. I mean, it's just astonishing to me. I mean, I, I never thought I'd live to see the day where disfranchisement would come back. I'm just flabbergasted. Alright, let's see, jeez. So let's see the activities, you've described the activities. What did you do? Sounds like a fair amount. And it sounds like your knowledge of the specific events are fairly extensive that's you because a lot of them are happening locally. I mean, if you want to talk civil rights, it's to Alabama, and Mississippi, but Alabama in particular, is where all the big confrontations mostly happen. So, you would be, these would be areas that you'd be intimately familiar with. Well, Birmingham.

[1:22:26] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[1:22:28] Michael Fitzgerald: My mother is a southern white, born in the early '30s. And whenever I told her—so she's from the south, she moved out to LA and became a nurse. And whenever I'd tell her to, that I was going to Alabama to do my research, she'd start denouncing the bombing. You know, she started. I mean, ma. I know, Ma, you know, that's enough. But I mean, every time she would go off on it, because, you know, there were a lot of people that were horrified. You know, there really were,

[1:23:09] Joan Burroughs: Yes, with good reason.

[1:23:11] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes. Well, yes. And your friends were involved as well.

[1:23:20] Joan Burroughs: You mean, in civil rights?

[1:23:21] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes, yes.

[1:23:22] Joan Burroughs: You know, a lot, a lot of things that I've done, I've kind of like struck out on my own.

[1:23:27] Michael Fitzgerald: Okay.

[1:23:29] Joan Burroughs: And I don't have a big crew. So, I just kind of go for it.

1:23:34] Michael Fitzgerald: That's interesting.

[1:23:35] Joan Burroughs: A lot of my friends were, especially in the dance world, were not activists in that way.

[1:23:45] Michael Fitzgerald: That's interesting, because it's, it's sort of the opposite for me. I was organizing tenant unions in grad school, that was sort of my things, rent control and stuff like that in LA, or Santa Monica. And the buddy that I went and visited on the bicycle trip. He and I were organizing tenant unions together in 1979, 1980, 1981, while I was a grad student. So, you know, I think that a lot of people it's sort of like, 'Who are you dating?' 'Who are you hanging out with?' This is, you make up your mind where you want to go partially because you



have friends that will get there with you, that are pushing you in that direction. So, if you're not like that, that's kind of interesting.

[1:24:29] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I've never had that. I've never had a posse like that.

[1:24:33] **Michael Fitzgerald:** But you're picking your friends partly because they are activists.

[1:24:36] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I do. I mean, I, you know, I meet them in the process of activist activity kind of thing. Yes.

[1:24:48] **Michael Fitzgerald:** That's interesting. That's interesting. So, let me, let me make sure I got this right. So, how typical do you think that experience is? Were most people, were most people getting involved based on their own sort of solitary reflection or most people dragged into it by their friends?

[1:25:06] **Joan Burroughs:** I have no idea, I've never thought about it. I never . . . I just never thought about that. I usually seek out the things that I've wanted to support. And I go for it.

[1:25:19] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Okay. That's interesting. That's interesting, especially because if you read about SNCC, these are the people they're dating. These, you know, you stand with somebody who's risking their lives and they're just like bonded to them. And their politics are quite personal. It's involved in personal loyalty to somebody who you think of as admirable. You know, somebody who you trust. And, you know, that's what gets people to risk their lives, is love.

[1:25:50] **Joan Burroughs:** For me, it's ideals.

[1:25:53] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes.

[1:25:53] **Joan Burroughs:** Ideals that I embrace and the ones that I think are or that I can support. And somebody said to me once, 'Oh, you must be an idealist'. I replied 'No, I'm not'. But I guess, in reality, maybe I am. You know, it's usually an ideal that's motivational. And usually, when I get there, there are other people who support them also. So, it's not like I've got to take a crew with me. There are other people with similar thought patterns. And you find a way to make it work.

[1:26:20] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Did you read that book on Tuskegee I tried to talk you into? I guess this is a week ago, a two weeks. We saw each other two weeks ago so I guess not. But it's called *Reaping the Whirlwind*. You'd find it interesting. And that gets me back to the, to the question that we talked about the last time I saw you or some time or other. So, one of the things that a historian sort of notices is that Freedom Summer and even before, the sort of sense of having all these white folks participate, of having a movement that is largely directed towards how this looks on the media, and how Washington is going to respond. And how Lyndon Johnson is going to respond, you know, there's a certain sense of, you know, whose movement is this? And so, what were you thinking as black? The black first slogan, kind of comes from



Lowndes County? Well, Black Panthers name comes from black Lowndes County, and it comes from Stokely Carmichael, as the promoter of it in Lowndes County, or, you know, that's where he's out of, or partly. So, what were you thinking as that stuff began to evolve?

[1:27:39] Joan Burroughs: Well, I don't know, I can tell you my reflections on it. I think that we really don't know a lot of times where the seeds, from where the seeds are derived. We don't know their derivation. But somehow, it permeates the social plan. You're going to always have these people who want to be seen. And they might be able to support an idea for a week and go home, or maybe one day. And that might be the level from where they operate. But if you're talking about, if we're talk about right now, I think that that whole picture has changed. And we must become more in tune and understand, in tune with our social, cultural, and political environment. Because like Stokely down there in Lowndes County, and like those people who were sleeping in the ditches in Lowndes County during the summer of 1965, so that they could stay alive you know, that happened too.

People don't know that, but the people who get recognized are the ones who have access, like you said, to the television, to media, and they get to tell another story. And so, the other story, the stories that people like me, and other people that I know have, they just don't get heard. And when people hear them sometimes, they're shocked, because they don't know, because you aren't the one that's featured. So, you, to me, I just have to go without even thinking about having that kind of notoriety, because that ground level activity still has to happen. People still have to be informed and our level of ignorance, even during this time in history, our level of ignorance is stupefying. It is low. You know, we just don't know. We don't know enough. We don't know enough.

[1:30:00] Michael Fitzgerald: Well, I think young people are kind of dismissive of history, you know. Young people, they don't really see the relevance, but you get to be older, and you live through a fair amount of it and you realize what's changed, and you realize that the events around you, the bigger events around you, like, just lately. You know, I've been there.

[1:30:20] Joan Burroughs: I wonder if that's the way it's supposed—I mean, think about it. Because if people don't speak out about it, then the other, the people younger won't know and they'll just keep repeating these cycles. That I don't know, I don't know, when improvement happens. I don't know when we ameliorate. I don't know when we solve things because people aren't interested at the same time.

[1:30:47] Michael Fitzgerald: They will get there, though. I mean, just life teaches you when big things happen. I mean, we all know that we just lived through the COVID thing. And—

[1:30:58] Joan Burroughs: Maybe, maybe.

[1:31:00] Michael Fitzgerald: Hopefully, hopefully live through it. But yes, I was sort of noticing Alabama's like 49 and 50. You know, we haven't had a case. You know, the cases are down to zero here in Minnesota. We're almost at 70% vaccination, it's just not spreading. So,



we're not even that worried about the 'whatever' virus coming. Because we're done. Unless something new comes around.

[1:31:25] Joan Burroughs: Yes, like this new one that's coming out.

[1:31:27] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes, yes. Yes.

[1:31:29] Joan Burroughs: But you know, we can't know all the things all of the times, but then part of it too, you know, has to do with wanting to know, and being accessible to knowing.

[1:31:41] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes. Let's see, I'm supposed to ask you. Well, so when? So, did you encounter? So, you would have had? So, the Tuskegee program, it's like 800 African American, or kids from historically black colleges, and maybe 60 white kids, mostly from St. Olaf. Sixty, seventy, something like that.

[1:32:03] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I thought that it was more than that. But it might have been.

[1:32:08] Michael Fitzgerald: Maybe I'm wrong. I think it's 60 something from St. Olaf and there might be another dozen or two from Michigan. And then, and then scattered. So maybe it's a little more than that. Did you have any? Did you have much exposure to them? Did you talk to them much?

[1:32:22] Joan Burroughs: No, not much. I didn't talk to them very much at all. Actually, the only exposure that I had was when we were at the six o'clock trainings, physical training.

[1:32:33] Michael Fitzgerald: So, you when you're out in the morning and doing your calisthenics.

[1:32:35] Joan Burroughs: You're doing the calisthenics and then you're going into groups to do different things. And we, I didn't have, we didn't have many of the white kids in our groups, in the group the I was in. You know, we didn't have any.

[1:32:47] Michael Fitzgerald: There were a couple, I think in White Hall.

[1:32:50] Joan Burroughs: And I didn't know that they were there.

[1:32:52] Michael Fitzgerald: Okay, that's interesting.

[1:32:53] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I didn't know that they were there. I only found that out this summer that they, that they were there, in Whitehall.

[1:32:58] Michael Fitzgerald: That's interesting. That's interesting. And I got the impression from talking to some of them. Have they sent anything to you yet? Because they were—the library—has as the stuff come in from the library.



[1:33:12] **Joan Burroughs:** The library is there. I have the password and everything.

[1:33:16] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay.

[1:33:16] **Joan Burroughs:** But I'm trying to hold off on that a bit.. When I start that I don't want to have to do anything else.

[1:33:23] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Okay. Well, what some of them said was that, that I think that a fair number of them wound up doing the TISEP reporter. You know that [unclear] wound up writing about their experience. It's one of the things that they were doing.

[1:33:40] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[1:33:43] **Michael Fitzgerald:** That's interesting. That's interesting. I heard a rumor from somebody that one of the girls here came back with an African American boyfriend probably from the program. And that wakened some discussion [laughter]

[1:34:03] **Joan Burroughs:** I don't know. I heard one person in one of the reunions say something about that, but I didn't know how it had fared there at St. Olaf.

[1:34:14] **Michael Fitzgerald:** I, well they, it's not quite clear to me what really happened but . . . it didn't the summer program didn't continue in 1966, did it?

[1:34:22] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, no. Yes. Our program continued. Actually TIS/CEP lasted on through 1968, I think.

[1:34:33] **Michael Fitzgerald:** And in terms of funding people in the countryside.

[1:34:35] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, yes. Now I have to backtrack. I do know that people went back out into the counties in '66. I did not. I was in, I stayed for summer school, and I was also working in a TIS/CEP office.

[1:34:47] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. On campus?

[1:34:51] **Joan Burroughs:** On campus.

[1:34:52] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. So, I think that, I think that St. Olaf—the rumor I heard was that St. Olaf didn't send students back for the next summer, partially based on that episode.

[1:35:02] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, I didn't know that.

[1:35:03] **Michael Fitzgerald:** I heard a rumor to that effect. I don't know if it's true.

[1:35:07] **Joan Burroughs:** I had no idea.



[1:35:09] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Um, well, it would, it would make an impression in 1966.

[1:35:13] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[1:35:14] **Michael Fitzgerald:** All right. Okay, so overall, what do you think of the work of the civil rights movement? Well, duh, okay, we got that one. All right. Well, um, so can you think of anything else you want to add? Or want me to know or anything I should have asked that I didn't have brains enough to?

[52:00] **Joan Burroughs:** No, I think, I think it's pretty been comprehensive. I think that the TIS/CEP program was something that was a phenomenon that was, obviously, of that time. But, that it was also in preparation for another time, I think that it has potential for even now. You know, I learned a lot. And I was able to work with TIS/CEP, without even going to the counties. I could work in an office and do some other things. So, it was good life experience for me. Very good.

[1:36:23] **Michael Fitzgerald:** What was your sense of the of the local whites? Universally hostile, neutral, and hostile? What was your sense of them, did you have any interaction with them at all?

[1:36:37] **Joan Burroughs;** The interactions that I experienced were hostile.

[1:36:41] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Literally.

[1:36:42] **Joan Burroughs:** Literally. Yes. You know, doctor chasing us through the cornfield. Man loading our food up with hot sauce, because we asked to be served in his [unclear].

[1:36:55] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Really?

[1:36:56] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. They were hostile and so, I mean, but I knew that. To me that was a way of life. And I didn't see any positive flow you know, with white people, back then.

[1:37:21] **Michael Fitzgerald.** Anybody African American critical of you being down there?

[1:37:27] **Joan Burroughs:** Critical of me (us) being?

[1:37:28] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Yes, was there any sense that you were causing trouble locally?

[1:37:34] **Joan Burroughs:** No. No. Not from the African American community? No.

[1:37:39] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay. Okay. Okay. Anything you want to tell us now? Did you have much interaction with Dean Phillips?

[1:37:45] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, no, not during the program. No, you know, only when we were in meetings or something like that. Because, there was quite a, quite a crew that helped him run



the program. . . traveling out and meeting us in the counties. He would speak to us, but I didn't have much interaction, not with him.

[1:38:12] Michael Fitzgerald: Okay. Well, in terms of the future, Bert and his—what's his wife's name?

[1:38:22] Joan Burroughs: Judith.

1:38:23] Michael Fitzgerald: Judy, did she have? She would have been married to him at that time.

[1:38:27] Joan Burroughs: Oh, they were married, yes.

[1:38:27] Michael Fitzgerald: Did she? You suggested I interview her as well? Did she have much involvement with the program?

[1:38:34] Joan Burroughs: I thought of involving her because she was there for all of these things that happened. She might be able to give some insight on things because she was a major support, you know, and everybody knew her. It wasn't that she was intrusive or anything. She was there also, you know.

[1:38:56] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes. Okay. That's a good answer. Should I say? Should I interview them separately?

[1:39:01] Joan Burroughs: Well, you know what, let them decide. But I, it would be a good thing to do, I think.

[1:39:06] Michael Fitzgerald: Yes, I think so. I think so. I did his. I did interview him here. I don't know where the tapes are but I did. I did interview him here a couple times. When, next time you get in contact with him ask. Tell him, tell him.

[1:39:17] Joan Burroughs: I'll inquire. I'll inquire. I'll let you know what they say.

[1:39:20] Michael Fitzgerald : And I would record it on zoom or whatever and try and forward it. Okay.

[1:39:25] Joan Burroughs: If you want I can set it up so that you can be the host.

[1:39:30] Michael Fitzgerald: That'd be fine. That'd be fine actually. Summers better because in the fall, I'm going to be busy.

[1:39:36] Joan Burroughs: Okay. Yes.

[1:39:37] Michael Fitzgerald: But, um, well, this is very instructive. I thank you for the opportunity to do this. This is great.



[1:39:43] **Joan Burroughs:** I thank you; this has been an awesome interview. Really great.

[1:39:47] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Well, yes, but by just coincidence, I know Alabama pretty well. And so, it kind of, there's a good document, you know, there's a good documentary that doesn't do teaching but is about Freedom Summer. I think it's called *Freedom On My Mind*.

[1:40:06] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay.

[1:40:07] **Michael Fitzgerald:** It was done like 20 years ago on PBS. I think, but it's actually good because some of the things you're talking about, the people that were teaching in the freedom schools in '64 have some analogous experiences. Alright, well, I should probably quit. So, you have a nice day. Nice talking to you. Enjoy Alabama in the summer.

[1:40:28] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay. Thank you, Mike.

[1:40:29] **Michael Fitzgerald:** Okay, bye-bye. Have a good day.

[1:40:52:] **Joan Burroughs:** You too.

[End of Session}



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: David Coar/Chicago, IL

Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham, AL

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David H. Coar was born in Birmingham, AL on August 11, 1943 and grew up in the well-known civil rights era neighborhood, “Dynamite Hill”. He served in the United States Marine Corps Reserves. David earned a bachelor’s degree from Syracuse University in 1964. He attended law school at Loyola University in 1966 and a year later he received a LL.M. degree from Harvard University Law School. After employment at the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund, Coar taught, until 1974, at DePaul University. He was later employed by the United States Justice Department as a U.S. trustee. In 1986, Coar was appointed judge of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, and in 1994, judge of the U.S. District Court of Illinois, retiring from that position in 2010.



David Coar

[00:00] Joan Burroughs: Today is December 14, 2022. It's two o'clock pm. I am Joan Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama. And here to interview David Coar who is in Chicago, Illinois.

[01:09] David Coar: Okay. Today is December 14th. I am David Coar in Chicago, Illinois.

[01:12] Joan Burroughs: This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee’s TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. Okay, David.

[01:37] David Coar: Okay. Today is December 14, 2022. I am David Coar. I'm in Chicago, Illinois. And I'm being interviewed by Joan Burroughs.

[01:51] Joan Burroughs: Thank you. Okay, so I'd like, before we start with a lot of questions, I'd just like for you to tell us a little bit about yourself and your life.



[02:00] David Coar: Well, let's see. I'm originally from Birmingham, Alabama. I've been in Chicago since well, I've been in Chicago twice. I came here to go to law school in 1966. I left when I finished law school and came back in 1974. And I've been here since then. I came back to teach law at DePaul University Law School. From there, I became a judge of the United States bankruptcy court for eight years. And then I was a judge of the United States District Court for 16 years until I retired at the end of 2010.

[03:04] Joan Burroughs: So, you've had a busy, busy time there in Chicago [both laugh]. Okay, so you're from Birmingham. And so, you attended school here and everything before college. All right. Okay, so how did you hear about the TIS/CEP program?

[03:24] David Coar: My best friend in high school had been a student at Tuskegee. And he graduated, I believe in 1965. But he was working with TIS/CEP. And I had just gotten off active duty with the United States Marine Corps Reserves. I had applied to law school, but I got off active duty in November, and I couldn't start law school until the following September. So, I was sort of at loose ends. And he suggested that I come down to Tuskegee for a while and when we were there, he said, "Why don't you apply for a job with TIS/CEP?" And I did.

[04:18] Joan Burroughs: Did you know anything about TIS/CEP or what it was?

[04:23] David Coar: I did not.

[04:25] Joan Burroughs: I see. Okay, so you had graduated college and you were in between college and law school, and you didn't know anything about the program. So now just tell us a little bit about your memories of what you remember about TIS/CEP that while you were there.

[04:44] David Coar: Well, when I got there, everybody I knew who worked for Tyson was working on tearing down the old barracks and so I helped out on that, not as an employee, just as a volunteer. And from there, I started to learn a little bit about what TIS/CEP was doing. And TIS/CEP was such a broad-based program, and trying to get your arms around all the various programs they were doing was, was a little hard. But I knew they were working in the Black Belt counties in Alabama. I knew they were doing some tutoring. I knew they were doing other activities in those counties. And that's basically [it]. I met Dean Phillips, and his wife and some of the other people who are involved. And that's sort of how I got started.

[05:47] Joan Burroughs: Okay, and so in. So, you worked mainly in Tuskegee, or did you ever go out into the counties?

[05:56] David Coar: Yes, when I started. I don't remember how this came about. But I wrote a series of letters to various corporations around the country, soliciting donations of money and goods that could be used in the program. And there was no storage area. The goods started coming in, but there was really no storage area there. So, I worked to set up a storage room to house all of the things we got. And then from there—let's see, I got down there in November, so sometime in late winter or early spring—



[06:56] Joan Burroughs: November '65. Right?

[06:58] David Coar: This is now late winter of '65. Spring of '66. A fellow who was a native of Tuskegee, Sam Thompson, and I were assigned to find housing for students who would be working in the counties that summer, the summer of '66. And so, once I got that assignment, I was in the counties every day, knocking on doors and looking for or trying to get places, people to agree to board students for the summer.

[07:47] Joan Burroughs: And so, were their initial contacts made? I mean that you could refer to while you're out there looking or would you refer to certain people, or did you just go door to door without any prompting?

[08:01] David Coar: No, we were provided with contact information. And sometimes the contact information was just a name of somebody to talk to who would refer us, who would identify people who might be interested and give us their addresses. Sometimes the contact was somebody who they thought would actually take students in. So, it was a mixed bag, but we didn't know. We didn't do cold calling.

[08:32] Joan Burroughs: I see, I see. Yes, so you did have a little bit of a lead to go.

[08:44] David Coar: Yes.

[08:44] Joan Burroughs: Because I think during that time, it would have been a little bit dicey in some of those counties, trying to, you know, make contact.

[08:56] David Coar: Well, you know, it was before my time, but apparently, the summer before and even into the winter, I think there had been incidents where students and others working for TIS/CEP had been threatened and actually run off the road going into the counties. And so they had a system, as I recall, for a while I'm not sure it was there the whole time, whereby you would notify the—if you if you went out and encountered you'd notified the FBI that you were going and what time you were leaving and the license plate information and make and model the car you were driving. And when you came back, you had to notify them that you were back.

[09:54] Joan Burroughs: Really?

[09:55] David Coar: Yes.

[09:56] Joan Burroughs: I had no idea.

[09:58] David Coar: Yes.

[09:58] Joan Burroughs: I didn't know about that but that makes sense there was a safety measure that should have been in place that was crucial at that time. Yes. Oh, my goodness. Okay, so you got a chance to see what the counties looked like and then and yes. Many of us did not, we only knew the places that we worked, you know, so. And just as an aside, last year, I did



site documentation and saw some of the sites for the first time. You know, the actual places and how far and how remote some of them were. Even now, you know, even today!

[10:41] David Coar: Yes, yes, yes. Well, you know, I grew up in Birmingham. I had, I guess, I had been on, on a farm a couple of times. But I had never spent any real time in a rural area. And there was a, and I didn't know anything about tenant farming. And this was not long after the Selma march.

[11:18] Joan Burroughs: Mmhmm.

[11:18] David Coar: So, I saw some of the tents, where people had been kicked as a result of offering aid to the marches. They'd gotten kicked off the land where they were tenants. And they were, you know, several months later, they're still living in tents—

[11:45] Joan Burroughs: In tents!

[11:45] David Coar: —on the side of the road. So, I had no idea. I had no idea. I saw people, matter of fact, I had to wait a few hours to talk to a gentleman who was plowing with a mule. And I guess I knew that people did that. But I'd never seen it before. It's probably 100 degrees out there. And he's out in the middle of this field with no trees and no shade. And he's plowing a field and it was an eye opener for me.

[12:28] Joan Burroughs: Yes. And that's in Alabama. And so, you were in, you grew up in an urban area, and had no idea about the rural. Right? Like, yes, a lot of us love people found that to be true for themselves as well. Okay, so now. Are there any other recollections that you have about your experiences with TIS/CEP? Me, I just want to hear them all.

[12:57] David Coar: Well, SNCC was operating in some of those counties, and SNCC had established what they call freedom houses in some of the counties. And so we worked, you know, we were generally doing the same kind of work, trying to improve conditions in those areas. So we would frequently, if you were in the counties and you had a minute, you'd stop by the Freedom House, you got to know a lot of the people who were involved in SNCC down there. And I remember that. I remember that. I remember several people who were, who were involved at SNCC and when they were in Tuskegee, they would, you know, they'd stop by, and we'd renew our acquaintances. I guess one of the things that struck me was that, you know, people look back now and say, "Well, this was, this was a period of solidarity where everybody was rowing in the same direction." But you know, I was not long out of college, and so my hair was long. I wore wire rimmed glasses. I didn't have a beard then because once a month, I had to go in for a weekend with the Marine Corps. So, I couldn't grow, grow a beard, but there were a lot of people in Tuskegee who were not receptive to what they called the civil rights workers. There were places where you would clearly name if they were identified as a civil rights worker, you were not welcome at a time, and that surprised me too.

[15:06] Joan Burroughs: In all communities or just in the dominant culture?



[15:12] **David Coar:** No, no, in the black community.

[15:14] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay.

[15:18] **David Coar:** There were restaurants where you were not really welcome. Some of the social events. There were parties where, if you were perceived to be a Civil Rights worker, you really weren't welcome.

[15:39] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[15:42] **David Coar:** Again, I had a lot of surprises when I was down there. That was one of them.

[15:50] **Joan Burroughs:** I'm sure. And that's a good point that you raised because people don't know that there was a lot of that diversity regarding the positions taken by people of color, like, yes. So, and white people too, because I did meet people who had traveled to the south during the time of that Selma march. So, you had I mean, you have people on both sides with different and similar takes on that time on that era.

[16:33] **David Coar:** Yes.

[16:34] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay. And so then how long did you work with TIS/CEP?

[16:40] **David Coar:** From November of '65, until August of '66.

[16:48] **Joan Burroughs:** I see. Do you think that that experience, did it have any influence on your life? On the kinds of, or on the direction that your life took? Or the, the way that you feel about things?

[17:12] **David Coar:** Oh, yes, yes, yes. For one thing, when I got out of law school, my first job was with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in a program, then it was called the Carnegie Foundation internship. But in those days, there were no civil rights courses taught in law school. So it was, you know, pretty much on the job training. So, this program, I had just spent a year in New York doing civil rights work mostly on appeals, handling appeals from the south. And then three years in the south actually practicing. And your commitment was to do a substantial amount of civil rights work. And so, I really viewed that as an extension of the kinds of things that I was doing with TIS/CEP. So, I spent my time in New York and then I did a year and a half in Mobile and then a year and a half in Birmingham.

[18:33] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, wow. So, you really were in.

[18:39] **David Coar:** Oh, yes.



[18:41] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so what did you know when you –Well, I guess, your time there would have got gone before TIS/CEP and Tuskegee– but while you were a student, and I suppose in undergrad before TIS/CEP, what did you know about civil rights in the Civil Rights movement?

[19:07] David Coar: Well, you know, growing up in Birmingham, in that time period, you know, race relations were front and center. You had to live it every day. And so, I was aware that in, I was in high school in the 50s, late 50s. I graduated from high school in 1960. I was aware that King had organized the bus boycott in Montgomery. I was aware, I was not there when they had the demonstrations in Birmingham. But my brother was in high school then and so he participated in the demonstrations. And, you know, I was vicariously aware of what was going on around the country. And I think I only came home one summer. I was in school in upstate New York. So, I was pretty far removed from what was going on, although there were demonstrations there too in support of Civil Rights in the South, and in upstate New York. So, I was aware of what was going on. My mother had gone to Tuskegee. She graduated from Wiley, but she went to Tuskegee for two or three years; matter of fact, that's where she and my father met. My father went to Miles College. But he was doing public health lectures in the Black Belt areas, and one of his neighbors from Birmingham was a student at Tuskegee and it turned out she was my mother's roommate. And that's how my mother and father met. So, you know, I had some historical knowledge about what was going on too.

[21:37] Joan Burroughs: So, did you—there was an article, well it was a report, the Southern Education Foundation Report of the fall of 1965. And of TIS/CEP. It said "Tuskegee: another kind of demonstration in the Black Belt, a new kind of civil rights demonstration?" And there's a question mark, you know. They were talking about TIS/CEP. Can you kind of think on that, and maybe give me your thoughts on that.

[22:18] David Coar: My understanding is that there had been demonstrations and Civil Rights activity before TIS/CEP and I met some of the people who had been involved with that. TIS/CEP was sort of an institutional attack on a basis for discrimination. Macon County was a predominantly black county. And, and yet, in '65, blacks had no formal political positions in Macon County. And it was rigidly segregated. I didn't know until I got to law school about the voting rights, things that were going on. But you had the school, you had the VA hospital there. And so you had, I tell you this, I remember when we first got a television set in the '50s and the Civil Rights Commission, the US Civil Rights Commission was holding hearings in Alabama, on voting rights. And I remember that the registrars. Here you had black doctors and professors there who were denied the right to vote. And under the, the literacy tests, and so, you know, they were said to be illiterate, they failed the test, and the registrars, who were administering a test, were on a stand during the hearings and they were put under oath. And so they're testifying and a number of them took the Fifth Amendment. And they couldn't remember what the Fifth Amendment was. So they would say they'd have to stop so they could talk to the lawyers to remind them what to say, to invoke the Fifth Amendment. And I remember how stupid that whole process was.



The year I finished college was a presidential—let me get this right now. Yes, the presidential election. And so, I was in Birmingham for a few months after I finished. And my father said, told me to go down to register. So, I went down to register to vote. And you sat across a desk from the registrar. And after you'd fill out the paperwork, he administered the literacy test. And the test was that he had a Rolodex on his desk. And he would flip the Rolodex and on, on the cards was a provision from the US Constitution. And so, he would hand you to card, and then you had to orally explain what it meant. And the card I drew was the War Powers Act. Now, I had no I idea what the War Powers Act [was]. I don't know that I'd ever read the Constitution cover to cover. But it wasn't hard to figure out what the War Powers provision in the constitution meant. So I got home, they didn't tell you right away whether or not you passed. So I got home that evening, and my father said, "Did you did you register?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Did you pass a test?" I said, "I don't know." He said, he said, "You don't know?" He said, "I just spent my life savings to send you to college. And you don't know whether you literate or not?" And so I can see, I can see—I mean it was so subjective. The process, that literacy test process, and I can see how they could deny people the vote, but it was just a stupid situation.

[27:28] Joan Burroughs: Yes. That and at the heart of that statement, is something that some of the other people who were tutoring in the counties come in about, because a lot of them were trying to improve literacy among people, and some of them actually had to read for people on the stand in one county, for sure. Adults came to the TIS/CEP centers, so that they could become literate. So we had a couple of instances of those also. So the demonstration that that happened, was directly related to that, you know, trying to, to,, to improve literacy, among not just the younger people in the community, but the adults who were interested in that that happened some of the times, you know—

[28:30] David Coar: Yes, it was it was different. I guess, in every county. Oh, I don't know if it was different in a particular county from, from register office to register office. Because I remember during the hearings, the Civil Rights Commission hearings, they were and as it related to Macon County, you know, one of the questions that they asked people was, how many nines and a bunch of nines. Now, can you answer that question? And so they would,

29:12] Joan Burroughs: —visual or anything, just stand what bunch, man.

[29:19] David Coar: And so they would take questions like that and ask them to these, these doctors and nurses at the VA hospital, and these professors at Tuskegee, and there's no answer to the question. So even if you literate, there's no way that you can answer it with any certainty. Just totally subject.

[29:46] Joan Burroughs: Yes. Nothing, nothing on the planet could answer that. Yes. So what did you participate at? I think I'm hit on it some but in civil rights, movement activities, did you? Were you?

[30:09] David Coar: I don't mean when it was hard. I don't know whether this was the way it was supposed to happen. But it was hard to distinguish between some of the things that Tyson was doing. And, and you know, what you'd call the Civil Rights Act? One in the same?



[30:34] Joan Burroughs: Yes. Well, many of us were tutoring in the communities. Some people were—I think that there were things, you'd be surprised at what I found out, because I was so focused in the area that that I did the work that I didn't know if some of the other things that were happening. There were music groups who went out. Music students who had a van, and they would go out and teach music, or perform for the students in the TIS/CEP centers. Because basically, the centers that existed in the counties were comprised of the young people in the community, school aged children, and then the tutors who were us, college students trying to help them. And so that kind of activity happened. There was some overlap, I think sometimes, because some of the people, some of the Tuskegee students would also work alongside some of the SNCC workers and trying to get people registered to vote and learning how to pass that test. That you can't pass [laughs]

[31:50] David Coar: Well, yes, my view of the real value TIS/CEP is less about the substantive information that we're providing to people; you know, how to play an instrument, how to cook, even the tutoring. It was taking students who were not from that area and exposing the people in Lowndes and some of the other counties to the students who didn't play by the same rules. It was, you know, the term I would use is, it was an acculturation process.

[32:49] Joan Burroughs: Okay.

[32:50] David Coar: And so when the question always comes up. And I studied history a little bit. And I was surprised to learn that there is a debate among historians about how bad slavery was. And part of that debate arises out of the fact that during the Civil War, most of them white males, from the south, were all fighting a war. And so they said, "Well, if it was so bad" this is what some historians say "if it was so bad, why didn't the slave just run away?" Because the slave catchers weren't there in great numbers. And, you know, part of, I think, of the system of slavery, is that you were taught a way of doing things. And even if there wasn't somebody standing over you, that's how you acted. And so by bringing these students in, some, not only from urban areas, some of them even weren't, a lot of students weren't even from the south. If these students came in, and they did things a different way, they didn't shy away from asserting themselves there. And so I always thought that that was the reason why—I came to believe that that was the real value of TIS/CEP. I mean, it's like the soldiers from the South who were sent over to Europe during WWI and WWII. And they saw that things weren't like what happened in Lowndes County. That there was a different way. That people didn't live the way they had to live in some of these rural counties. And so I thought that was the most important aspect of TIS/CEP in my point of view.

[35:04] Joan Burroughs: Yes, exposure. Yes.

[35:06] David Coar: Yes.

[35:14] Joan Burroughs: Do you remember any of the civil rights activists who were on campus at Tuskegee during that time?



[35:21] David Coar: Oh, I do. I Remember, Glenn Patton, George Ware was there. Stokely Carmichael was there so much you might as well have thought of him as a student. I remember telling somebody I said, you know, the first time I heard Stokely speak, I think at a TIS/CEP program in Tuskegee.

[35:56] Joan Burroughs: Well there were two groups: one was TIAL, which was the Tuskegee Institute Advancement League. And that was the Civil Rights student component on campus, who worked a lot along with the major organizations like the SCLC and NAACP and CORE. So they were like the people who was a group that went out to march and do all those things. So that was TIAL that was, it was created specifically for that. But TIS/CEP was an education, supporting program. So sometimes it might have been difficult to distinguish, because a lot of the TIAL people were also TIS/CEP people, and they worked in TIS/CEP in the education program. As part of that, you know.

[36:50] David Coar: Don't tell Dean Phillips, I said this. But he wasn't real particular about those lines.

[37:01] Joan Burroughs: Most of them were students, you know, and a lot of them were working with TIAL, they were the ones who went out and demonstrated or went to Montgomery if there was a need to demonstrate. And so they also, a lot of them, worked in TIS/CEP doing different things tutoring, working in the office that created educational materials, the newspaper. There was, there was crossover there. And so you know, the TIS/CEP program, from my perspective enabled their sustenance, you know, because they were able to sustain themselves financially, while they were students and Civil Rights workers.

[37:55] David Coar: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. There was a lot of cooperation with SNCC. I spent a lot of time in Lowndes County, so I was especially aware of what was going on in Lowndes County. And there were SNCC workers who were on a TIS/CEP payroll. And you know, you didn't draw a real fine line between what was a TIS/CEP activity and what was what SNCC was doing. A lot of coordination.

[38:27] Joan Burroughs: Yes, it was difficult. The actors were in both camps. It wasn't a camp, they were working. And they were also doing Civil Rights work. And so, you know, you had that and a lot of the students were deeply aligned with SNCC. You know, even though it's some of them didn't drop out of school, they like they had TIAL which was like a component or an aspect of it.

[38:59] David Coar: There were a couple of people. I didn't know very much about the Nation of Islam then. I had listened to some of their broad- when I was in college, I had listened to some of their broadcasts. And I had read a little bit about I didn't know a lot about it, but there was some people who were involved in the nation, were also involved with TIS/CEP. And, you know, again, nobody, I don't know how much religious activity they were doing, but you know, everybody was trying to, trying to help and change things.



[39:43] **Joan Burroughs:** It was all about changing. You know, the thing about the—we were so kind of not aware of the Islamic part, you know, the Nation of Islam. I didn't know a lot about that as a student, although, no, in my early years, the first year or so that I was a student, because it seems that there were people on the campus starting probably around 1966 who were members of the nation, and I think that there was some activity on that front as well.

[40:32] **David Coar:** Yes.

[40:33] **Joan Burroughs:** But I think at the time, we were all kind of looking towards the same kinds of goals in terms of Civil Rights, you know? Yes. So overall, now, what do you think of the work of the Civil Rights Movement?

[40:53] **David Coar:** Here's the way I explain it. Back in the '40s, and '50s there was a consensus about what we should do. And that was, "Let's end segregation. Let's end discrimination." By time I got out of law school, it had gotten a little more complicated. People were saying, well, you know, down in Mobile, we had a case where the way the law had developed was that the school systems were obligated to desegregate. But what did that mean? And the way it was being implemented was they were closing in black schools and building—either transferring the students to what were formerly white schools or build a new school that will between black neighborhoods and white neighborhoods. And there were almost no black principals, all the black principals just sort of disappeared. And so the question was, is a black school in a black neighborhood a resource that we don't want to get rid of? And that's what's happening. And so the consensus really started to fall apart. What does it mean to have a just system? Does it mean that we have to mix everybody up together at whatever cost? Does it mean that there just has to be recognition? You know, that things are equal, equal resources and the like? And so I think that's what happened to the Civil Rights Movement. If there's a room with twenty people in it, and you walked around, and you ask each person separately, "What would a just society look like?" you're likely to get 20 different answers today. Back in the '50s in the south the answer would have been "End segregation." But, you know, once we got past that, it started to get complicated. And people started going off in different directions.

[43:19] **Joan Burroughs:** You know, and sometimes I think that ending segregation meant so many different things to everybody who might have been asked that question. So, we didn't have a clear path—

[43:33] **David Coar:** Right.

[43:33] **Joan Burroughs:** —on what was necessary because we thought that if you changed the laws that everything was going to fall in place, but you know [laugh].

[43:41] **David Coar:** Right. Right. Right. And so, I think that's probably why they tackled segregation in the South, was the, was the low hanging fruit. Once you once you started to move north it really started to get complicated.

[44:01] **Joan Burroughs:** Complicated! [laugh]



[44:03] **David Coar:** So, and I think that's pretty much—I mean, there's still some old school type issues still out there. But for the most part, it's just gotten complicated. And there's nobody out there trying to build a consensus around any approach.

[44:05] **Joan Burroughs:** It's hard.

[44:20] **David Coar:** Yes.

[44:21] **Joan Burroughs:** You don't have the same kind of communities anymore.

[44:30] **David Coar:** Right.

[44:30] **Joan Burroughs:** So, we're approaching the end. And I just looked so if you had to say in just a few words or sentences, your sentiments on the value of a program like TISEP, how would you?

[44:50] **David Coar:** I thought because it was people-to-people. It was exposure new ideas, new ways of doing things. And it wasn't done by somebody standing on a stage and preaching to somebody, it was it was day to day. I had a case once involved in one of the biggest projects, housing projects in Chicago. And it was more economic integration, and it was anything else. They wanted to go from housing, poor people, to having mixed income people living in this area. And I said, you know, "That's, that's really tough. That's, that's hand-to-hand combat."

[45:47] **Joan Burroughs:** Might not be a good idea! [laughs]

[45:50] **David Coar:** You know, when the kids out there bouncing a basketball on the steps at 11 o'clock at night, and they're living next to somebody who paid, you know, \$400,000 or \$500,000 for the unit, and they want to go to sleep, that's not something you can just pass a law to deal with. People got to sit down and talk through that one. And so, it's tough. It is really tough. And, you know, I think that's, probably where we are right now. We have to rewrite, not the law. We have to rewrite how people deal with each other. And that's hard.

[46:45] **Joan Burroughs:** Because that requires certain individual commitments, it's discipline on people's parts—

[46:54] **David Coar:** Right.

[46:54] **Joan Burroughs:** —the way that they think about things, I mean, there's just a lot, a lot that has to be dealt with.

[47:00] **David Coar:** Yes, I mean, and I didn't understand why the students had to—living in a community I could understand but, but Dean Phillips was insistent that not only did they live with a family in the local community, but they also had to eat their meals there. And that was for Sam and I, that was a tough one, because they were people who were willing to take in a



boarder. But they didn't want to have to be responsible for feeding people every day. And I, you know, it made my life harder when I was there. But in retrospect, that made a lot of sense. Because, you know, having a conversation over dinner is really the way you get things done. You know, "why did you—why are you doing this? This this way? Why don't you do that?" I mean, now, those conversations were essential. And so, it took me a long time to come around on that. Because I guess like everything else, I don't want to hear anything that's gonna make it hard on me. But he was right. He was he was prescient about the importance of having people not just be landlord and tenant, but also be part of the family and talk about day-to-day stuff.

[48:39] Joan Burroughs: That's true. Nobody's ever pointed that out. I haven't heard that in anything before. That's a good point. And I guess in relation to how we are today and might help some things if people would sit down, and really, you know, kind of like, in an environment where they could do that; just talk, have meals together and interact in that way. Well, so David, this has been an interesting interview. And I thank you so much for taking part in this project.

[49:19] David Coar: My pleasure. My pleasure. It made me think about some things I haven't thought about in a long time.

[49:24] Joan Burroughs: [Laughs] Yes. Well, we might need to be thinking about these things now [both laugh]. So, I'm gonna stop the recording. This will conclude the interview, but I will talk to you after that to tell you about what to expect. Okay?

[49:37] David Coar: Okay.

[49:37] Joan Burroughs: I'll shut down the recording.

[49:38] David Coar: Okay.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Linda Coleman-Madison/Birmingham AL

Interviewer: Calvin Austin/ Millersville MD

Date: May 13, 2021

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Linda Coleman-Madison was born in Birmingham AL and was a tutee in the TISEP program as a sophomore at Westfield High School. After high school, she received a bachelor's degree from Alabama A&M College (now university), and later, a Masters Degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She taught twelve years in Birmingham's public school system. Linda Coleman-Madison (Democrat) is a member of the Alabama Senate, representing Alabama's 20th District since 2006. She served one term in the Alabama House of Representatives (2002-2006). Additionally, Senator Coleman-Madison's public service extends to community support that is reflected in membership and volunteer work with myriad community and civic as well as national service organizations.



Linda Coleman-Madison

[00:00] Calvin Austin: Good afternoon. It's 4:26 pm on May 13, 2021. I'm Calvin Austin, in Millersville, Maryland, here to interview the honorable Linda Coleman-Madison, Alabama State Senator, district 20, who's in Birmingham, Alabama. The interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committees TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights division of the Department of Interior National Park services.

[00:44] Linda Coleman-Madison: And I am Linda Coleman-Madison from Birmingham, Alabama, I am being interviewed by Calvin Austin, and today is May 13, 2021.

[00:58] Calvin Austin: Okay, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. And the purpose of the interview is to get some information regarding to the impact of the TISEP program, which occurred back in the '65, '66 timeframe. And you were a participant back in those days. So, I'd like to take you back to that period of time so that you can tell me what was going on in your life back in '65, '66. And also, tell me a little bit about how you got to that point, you know, where



are you from? Who, you know, the community, you grew up in? Some things along those lines. So?

[01:49] Linda Coleman-Madison: Well, I grew up in Hueytown, Alabama, which is not very far from where the school is. The program was held at Westfield High School, which is a part of the Jefferson County school system. And I found out about the program from our school. It was kind of like a summer program. I didn't really have anything special to do that summer. And so, I enjoyed school and learning and it was an opportunity to meet new people. So, that's about how I got there, from a flyer or something that the school had passed out and made the announcement. And there were a number of us from Westfield that did attend that program.

[02:33] Calvin Austin: So, in the Westfield area back in the 50's, describe what was going on, there. How was the community? What was the, I guess, some of the demographics of the community? Who were you? Who did you grow up with? What type people were there? And who were your role models?

[02:53] Linda Coleman-Madison: Well, the community was still pretty much segregated. Westville was an all-black high school in what is called a dolomite area. It is now a part of Birmingham. And although I was, geographically, I was closer to Hueytown High School. We did not attend Hueytown. Although about a year later it was integrated. And really, about by senior year there abouts going into my senior year. I remember Mr. Blevin Stout got his daughter and a couple of other students and Hueytown High School was integrated. I was approached and asked about being a part of that group. But at that stage in my life, I felt like I really didn't want to start over with them. We knew what was going on. And the kids that integrated were not accepted. And it was a year that I was already involved with a lot of extracurricular activities at my school. Band, choir, horticulture club, Student Council, school newspaper, yearbook. So, I knew going there I would not be accepted, and I would have to start over. So, separate but unequal. But we had dedicated, committed teachers that made a difference in our lives. So, that was—those were some of the people that made a difference in my life. But I think the biggest person I had the impact on me was my grandmother, who reared me.

[04:36] Calvin Austin: Tell me about your grandmother, you know, and her involvement with the community and in your life and things along those lines. I know grandmothers are special, so. And I saw your face light up when you said tell me about my grandmother so, I'm sure.

[04:54] Linda Coleman-Madison: She's still a part of me and I tell people often when on the Senate floor, I often quote, things my grandmother would tell me. And of course, I would have to explain it to them because they will be these old sayings like, you know, I don't believe in fattening frogs or snakes. But over time when something happens on the Senate floor, it fits right in. My grandmother was a person that had a lot of wisdom. She was not a formally educated person, both she and my grandfather. My grandmother was a domestic worker and my grandfather worked in the mines. And it was before they started paying pension so, really, his benefits came through applying for black lung.



But I tell young people, as I speak to them, I said, you know, my grandparents reared me, you all look at me, and maybe you think I came from this, well to do middle class family or whatever. But I look at myself as being a kid from Hueytown that grew up from the outhouse to the State

House. And between the two of them, they did not have a fifth-grade education. They actually went to summer school, a night school, rather, after they became adults, to learn to read and write. My grandfather was always good at numbers. And he taught himself how to lay bricks and blocks. But playing dominoes was something that, you know, counting the spots and knowing about it is a game of strategy. And, and you couldn't beat him playing. But my grandmother had a lot of wisdom. She was a great influence in my life. She encouraged me to be all that I could. She believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. She was, I will say, my, the number one person that always in my corner. And if I came to her and said that I wanted to do something she never told me I couldn't. She always said if you believe you can do it, go at it.

And I think when I ran for city council in Birmingham in 1985, when the city council was at large, we didn't have districts, I was the first person of color to be elected without first having been appointed. The only other person of color as far as women that served there was Bessie Sears Estell. She was appointed to that position before she ran. But I don't think I had any idea what I was getting myself into. But again, going back to my grandmother who said, if there's something that you want to do, if you believe that you can do it, you know, go at it. So, this—one never knows what one can do until one tries. So, that was a situation there. But she passed before I was elected. And I can remember a program that they were honoring me, and I just had—I broke down because I had memories of her. And really her having a lot to do with me being where I was at that time and really where I am now.

My grandfather was always a civic minded person, so both of them had a lot of influence. Growing up in Hueytown, we shared what we had with our neighbors. It was the kind of neighborhood where you borrowed a cup of sugar, and nobody thought about it. If you didn't have a lawnmower and somebody else did, it was okay because if your grass needed cutting, you could always borrow. Same way with tools and things like that. But we grew up in a community where we believed in giving back and I think that's where my civic involvement started. I remember uncle telling me, you know, you got to pay your dues. You got to give back and I was always saying, How long do you have to pay your dues? And I'm realizing now that that never stops till they roll you out.

[09:00] Calvin Austin: Okay. So, you went from, I guess, Westfield to Alabama A&M. How did you get to A&M? Why A&M?

[09:18] Linda Coleman-Madison: I always wanted to go to A&M and people don't realize and maybe they do. The Magic City classic and A&M and State coming to Birmingham, and the parade and everything, the whole majesty of all of that had a great impression on me. And I was in the band at Westfield and so we would go to A&M for band concerts. Westfield's colors were maroon and white and so was A&M. And so, I didn't change colors, I just changed schools. And I didn't know how I was going to get to school because I really didn't have any college money. I entered what was called then a platter Queen contest, they used to hold those, I won a set of



luggage. And I entered an oratorical contest that was the Birmingham news used to host. And I won a scholarship. I chose Alabama A&M, and I think it was like \$500 or \$1,000 scholarship at that time, it wasn't a lot of money. But it was enough to build my hope and I was accepted to A&M. I had applied for A&M, and I was accepted.

So, there I am off to college with a \$1,000 scholarship, or 500 to \$1,000 scholarship, and a set of luggage, not knowing where I was gonna get the rest of the money. I was offered a student work program, I had a scholarship from A&M, by the way, I did have one from A&M. So, I use that and that was my first year. And then my years after that, I asked my parents if they would help me get a student loan, and I got a student loan from the Birmingham teachers credit union at that time, they have changed names over several periods of years. And they look at my number, which I'm still a member of their credit union, they look at my number, because everything is changed. Mine is just a four-digit number. And I look at some of the people behind the desk, I say, Yep, that number is older than you.

And so, when I finished college, I went to them. And I was first offered a job with the US Army Material Command in Missouri. And I went to school to become a teacher. They were looking for people with a certain average, if you had a certain average, they didn't care what your major was. So, I was offered that job, but I got married at the end of my junior year. So, I was a young bride, and I didn't want to leave home and go so far away. And I felt that my marriage wouldn't survive, you know, if I just went away and had just got married. And so, I decided to wait, and I was later offered a job by the Birmingham Board of Education, teaching special education, which was my minor. So, that's how I went from there to teaching in Birmingham school system.

[12:36] Calvin Austin: Okay, and I guess, if you look at teaching in the Birmingham school system, you use that as a starting point. And what was your next job experience? What did you do next?

[12:53] Linda Coleman-Madison: Well, I taught school for twelve years at Barrett Elementary School out in the eastern area. Special Ed is—it can be very taxing. I had kind of like the one room schoolhouse from ages six to fifteen in one classroom. And so, you're teaching all different levels. I didn't have a separation because it was—there were two special ed teachers there and one teacher had [pause] she had the primary class. But then, at one point, when we lost that unit, I acquired her class as well. I had an intermediate, and the students that were above that level. So, I acquired the primary class. So, I'm going from teaching colors to ABCs and teaching fractions or what have you. But I taught there for twelve years, and I was offered a job by the National Federation of Teachers—AFT, American Federation of Teachers to be a field rep. And I really needed a break at that time, I asked for to take a sabbatical. But the board. That was something that board obviously didn't believe in because they didn't grant it.

So, the question was, well, while you're out are you going to be working? And I said, Well, I'll probably do something because I've still got bills to pay. But they didn't grant the sabbatical, but I left teaching and I worked there for a year. That put me in a different environment. It broadened my knowledge. I had to travel sometimes to different states. We work with Birmingham and Jefferson County Schools in particular. But we work with certified and classified employees,



teachers, as well as those were bus drivers or what have you. I had to do a little lobbying in Montgomery, and we would do press conferences. From and you know, you get on a plane, you hop on a plane, you go from Montgomery to Birmingham to Mobile, that kind of thing. It kind of put me in the fast lane. And I can remember when Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro was on the democratic ticket, they had one of their platform committees here in Birmingham, and our chapter of American Federation of Teachers was asked to present, and I was chosen to do that presentation. And so, it was a great experience that I only worked there a year.

And when I left there, I decided to run for the city council. It really wasn't my decision. My community encouraged and pushed me because I was already neighborhood president, had been neighborhood president for about 16 years. Again, that came from my parents of being civically involved in giving back. And so, my neighbors encouraged me to run for city council. And I'm really didn't want to run. And they said, Yes, you know, I was already involved in the political process, because I was a part of the citizens coalition and electing people. Electing the first black mayor in the city. And I was actively involved with that, but I didn't see myself as being a leader. But they did. And it was always somebody seeing something in me that probably I didn't see in myself. But long story short, they pushed me to run after Miss Nina retired. And remember, this is a large, and there were 23 people in that race for five seats.

I was one of the top vote getters, because the fifth person that has the lowest vote, they only got two years. The terms are four years and elections were every four years. So, the person that get the lowest vote, the fifth vote getter, they only got a two-year term. And so, which meant that they ran with the next wave of elected officials. I was determined that I didn't want to go through that again. So, I worked very hard, so I wouldn't have to get that two-year term. And I served in the Birmingham City Council for twelve years. And just a long story short, I had worked for Birmingham, Jefferson County Transit Authority as a marketing director. And during that period of time, I also ran for the State House. And so, I served for four years Alabama State House, representing House District 60. I worked for the American Red Cross for seven years. And that was great experience. I learned a lot got, you know, travel, served in several national disasters. But after serving one term in the house, I decided I wanted to run for Senate. A hundred and five people in the house is only 35 in the Senate. Like in the fishbowl down there.

[18:26] Calvin Austin: Yep. So, okay. So, during all this, what was the climate in Alabama? You've gone from high school, college, to teacher, to neighborhood and, I guess, leader, to city council, to those. What was the environment in Alabama? Back in the day when I left it was awful. So, it was, you know. What was going on?

[19:00] Linda Coleman-Madison: Well, it—the racism. You still had the racism that was there. It wasn't as overt. But you had young people, young leaders who wanted to make a difference. Who have a desire to make a difference. To make a difference where they were. A lot of my friends left Alabama; they left Birmingham like you did. But there are a number of us that stayed because we wanted to make our community better where we were. There are a number of us, like myself, we chose to live in the community or near where we grew up. Doing integration was beginning to happen in housing. It had already started in schools. But I look at our community and it's still a struggle even today, where we are still working to try to build up historically black



communities. And so, there's still a need for, you know. Birmingham had a lot of schools at that time because we had separate schools. So, you had schools for blacks and whites. And in the black communities you have schools that were still not up to par.

Fortunately, we've been able to work on that and we've got new schools and everything now. But the segregation is still there, separation of the races, even though in communities where people have moved, where people of color have moved into other communities. You don't have so much of the gentrification of them moving into our communities, however, it is beginning to happen, like in areas like Norwood community, where you have whites that are moving into those areas. Believe it or not West End, Princeton, they're moving into those areas. And of course, it's been more the other way where you've had black people moving into the predominantly white, or what were, what was white communities at that particular time. And so, right here, where I am is a school down the street, Jefferson County, I used to be able to sell to people and I sold real estate for about 16 years. So, I'm a licensed Realtor, have my broker's license, and people would want to know, you know, well, what's the makeup of the neighborhood. Of course, there are some things that, you know, you just can't touch, you don't want to get into this thing of steering people. And I will tell people, if you want to know the makeup of the neighborhood, just wait until school is out and just sit there and watch.

The school down the street was predominantly white, and you had a handful of blacks. And I mean, a handful of blacks, like you could really count them. Now, you—it's the other way around. The area (unclear) has basically, almost completely changed. You have them as the majority of blacks that are in that community, although you still have some whites that are there. And I would say for the most part, as people get along as they live next to each other as neighbors, you can see a change there. We've even had a few white people move into our neighborhood and Hispanic folks. So, things are beginning to change, or have changed, but you still have that in some neighborhoods, especially in traditionally, older black neighborhoods, you know, you're not going to find a lot of people. I'm in Pratt City so, you're not going to find an influx of whites moving into this neighborhood. It's an older neighborhood, same way with Ensley. But Birmingham used to have a saying for their neighborhood programs, you don't have to move to live in a better place. And I just want to build pride and redevelop, and my interest is housing and economic development in our communities where we are.

[23:07] Calvin Austin: Okay. So, you were probably a freshman, sophomore in high school when you came in contact with the TISEP program.

[23:21] Linda Coleman-Madison: Right, I was a sophomore.

[23:22] Calvin Austin: Okay, so, tell me, you know, [crosstalk]. What did the TISEP program do for you? You've done all these things. Did you take anything away from the TISEP program or what? I think when we interview, you also said there was another program that you were involved with that you got some experience dealing with people, but how did the TISEP program help you? Or did it give you any insight? Or was it just something to do that summer?



[23:52] **Linda Coleman-Madison:** Well, I think it gave me some insight, because there were people there that were the instructors that were younger people, you know. They were teachers, and they came from different walks of life and different professions. To see somebody in that role was a motivator for me. Just listening to them and a lot of us did not have probably a thought about going to college or career opportunities. And talking with them gave us that, that motivation to go beyond where we are to at least to believe that we could go beyond that it didn't just have to end right there. But I think the most important thing was the fact that we had students there from several of the surrounding high schools in Jefferson County. The opportunity to network and interface with those students meant a lot. And just to listen to their dreams and aspirations. Some of them had siblings that had gone on to college and myself, I'm first generation. So, but again, that was a motivation for me. I remember telling you about one family, the Fagans where they lived in Bessemer. Everybody in that family had gone to college.

[25:28] **Calvin Austin:** Tuskegee.

[25:29] **Linda Coleman-Madison:** But they were, they encouraged each other, and one would reach back and help the other. That still made an impression on me because it was something that I encouraged my siblings and other people in my family that I have tried to help to go on to college. And I could remember I had a cousin who was had twin boys, well she had three boys, but she had twins. And oh, you think about the things that I've done. So, an insurance policy at one time that was tied to a college fund. And I encouraged her, my cousin, to get this college one. And it was like \$12,000. And so, she said she, her boys named Anthony and Tony which is the same thing. It's so funny. They're identical twins. But she was a single mom living in housing project. And she said, I think it was like twelve dollars a month. She said, Well, they can work and earn that money and pay for the college fund themselves. That was a motivation for them.

Long story short, those young men went on to Morehouse College, they both got scholarships, they are both doing well. That was first generation in that section, that set of family members, and they are doing the same thing that I am continually trying to do reach back at family members on that side and helping and encourage them. And you can see the difference from the younger ones that have come up and they are always encouraging the little ones. They get together, you know, bring me your report card, let me see what you got, you know. And encouraging the I mean, the small ones. And well, what are you going to do? You know, you thought about what college? So, it's becoming something that has become something that is being instilled. But I think that program had a lot to do with changing mentalities of those of us that attended.

[27:42] **Calvin Austin:** Let's see. So, what are the plans for the future for you? What do you got to do? When are you going to run for governor?

[27:55] **Linda Coleman-Madison:** I have no plans of running for governor. I'm really quite happy where I am. Although there are a number of people, on more than one occasions have tried to get me to run for mayor. I don't really think I have. You know, sometimes you can do more in another position, you don't have to be in that position. My word has always been if someone



once asked me said, you know, what is the one thing that you feel in your political career that you did not achieve? And my word is empowerment. I feel that if we could empower our people to go beyond where they are, to be able to be in a position to make their decisions and be in charge of their lives. You know, is one thing to bring the problem but be involved with solving the problems. How do you think, you know? Don't just warm the bench but get in the game. And I have found that is the hardest task, is to empower our people to understand that you do have the power to change. You have the power to change things. But it starts with one person. And so, I'm still working on that. And every chance I get you know, it says leaders don't build followers, they build other leaders. And so, I guess that's what I'm still trying to do.

[29:39] Calvin Austin: Okay. Let's see. So, I guess one of the things that from the standpoint of this oral history project that we're working on, we want to try and correlate or get this to talk to, you know, the civil rights structure. And I think you've done that, in your inclusiveness, power, empowerment. But from the standpoint of TISEP, did you see TISEP doing anything from the civil—in the civil rights movement, back in those days, to help your community or to empower your community to do anything? Because there were a lot of, other than tutoring, there were a lot of other things that were going on with TISEP back in those days, did you experience?

[30:39] Linda Coleman-Madison: You know, I wish. That was such a long time. I remember when you called me, I had to really think about it. I wish that before now, maybe a year, year or two later, that there was a coming together of everybody in that program to find out where they were to talk about those kinds of things. Because I don't remember so much as it being a civil rights issue of getting involved with that as an overt kind of thing. It might have been more subtle, in the fact that it was a mental thing where young people were instilled with the knowledge that you can be more than you are. You know, you see what is going on right now. Things don't have to be that way. And it doesn't matter where you came from, but it's where you're going.

So, we think of civil rights. You know, we think of getting involved with the marches, we think of doing those kinds of things. I think intellectually, it was a movement of an educational movement of knowledge. So, that we began to realize that things are going to happen, but education is number one, you know. You hear this saying that education is the great equalizer. And for many of those kids, they probably had no inkling of going any further. So, whether it was to a four-year college, or and at that particular time, we offered a lot of trades at our schools and high schools. But a lot of those kids went on and they went to community college, they took further education in the trade that they were in, maybe it was auto mechanics on whether it was tailoring or barbering, and things like that.

But they went out, some of them went on to community college got further education, got certification or degrees in it. Others went to work for someone else and gained more experience. But a lot of those people became their own businesspeople. And so, for many of them, they are the businesspeople of today. So, I would think that in the sense of the civil rights, of being able to be more empowered of understanding generational wealth, of making something of yourself so that it's something that you can pass on to the next generation or being an inspiration to the next generation. I think programs like that made a difference in that way.



[33:48] Calvin Austin: Okay. Well, I'm trying, I want to make sure I get all your thoughts and so. So, to inspire any young person that's looking at this that wants to reflect back on the TISEP history. What would you say? I guess you just said it, and I don't want to be redundant about what you got out of the program. But the future of these type programs, do you think they have a future or anything along those lines with something like this? Or has it seen its time?

[34:33] Linda Coleman-Madison: No, as a matter of fact. I think now more than ever, we need programs like this. We need programs like this during the summer, when young minds get into a whole lot of things. But we need programs like this to channel all of that energy and thinking of what now, what was your next step. Right now, kids have the opportunity to take college courses while they're in high school. We did not have that opportunity at that particular time, but it is offered now. There are so much that we didn't have, technology, computers, and everything else. So, there's so much more that the programs can offer now to young people. And there's so many opportunities and advantages and things that young people and resources that they can take advantage of, that probably would have been able to help us tie into, had there been programs for us to tie into.

And so, you have a lot of young people, that every day they go to homes where they don't get that encouragement at home. They don't see that role model. And sad to say we still have families where our young men go home, and they don't see that male role model. Or they may not see that female role model that really would be the kind that would encourage them to go out and do more. That's why I say now we need those kinds of programs more than ever, because when I came up, you asked me about where I came from, and my grandparents. My grandparents were not educated people, they had a lot of common sense. They encouraged and they supported me. They were always there; I never came home that we didn't have a hot meal. I don't ever remember going dirty or anything like that. We might not have had what we wanted, but we definitely had what we needed. And we knew that we had love and that family in our community. I tell people, I'm the community kid because everybody raised me. And it was the kind of community you well know that you did something at a time you get home, your folks, we're going to know it, if the person that you left didn't give you a whipping you damn near were gonna get one when you got home.

[37:07] Calvin Austin: Tell me about it. Tell me about it.

[37:09] Linda Coleman-Madison: Exactly. So, we don't have that now. You know, your next-door neighbor barely knows your kids. And they definitely don't say anything to them. So, kids don't get that kind of encouragement. That problem is there's a need for the program now. There's a need now more than ever, kids are into all the technology, they don't really have the people skills that we had. But we had to develop those skills because we grew up in church, we grew up around people, we grew up around, and in every house that was a senior citizen somewhere, either your grandma, your grandfather, your uncle, or aunt, there was somebody that the family was taking care of. Young people learn respect from that. We learn to respect authority. Kids don't have that now. And in return, that knowledge that they gave us is priceless. I grew up with my grandmother, my great grandmother, my great-great grandmother, who lived to get 106.



[38:14] Calvin Austin: Wow.

[38:15] Linda Coleman-Madison: I am blessed. Our young people don't have that now. So, yes, there's a need for the program.

[38:25] Calvin Austin: Okay. Okay, well, I guess, if you have any closing remarks, or anything you want to say or anything along those lines, because I think we've covered it.

[38:41] Linda Coleman-Madison: Well, the only thing I just want, I want to thank you, Calvin, for the opportunity to participate in this. And I want to thank Tuskegee Institute for bringing that program to Jefferson County and Birmingham in Westville High School, and all those who participated. Again, some of those students that I don't remember the name, but every once in a while, when I see them, I remember that they were part of that project. And many of those students have gone on to be leaders. That just didn't happen. So, I can only imagine the lives that would have been changed had it continued.

[39:22] Calvin Austin: Yes, okay. Well, thank you. And I say this jokingly, even though you didn't remember me as being involved with the program at Westville.

[39:33] Linda Coleman-Madison: You must have been quiet.

[39:37] Calvin Austin: I was. I was more quiet then than I am now I should say. I grew out of my quietness as my friends would say. But no, I really appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to do this, have this conversation with me about your Tuskegee TISEP experience, you know. There are a few things that you did in your life that probably turned out okay, but you would have been better if you had come to Tuskegee and been a part of the Tuskegee family. But since you participated in this program, we will consider you as a part of the Tuskegee family also.

[40:23] Linda Coleman-Madison: Great, I'll take that.

[40:24] Calvin Austin: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And I hope our paths cross again soon. And stay in touch and if you run into any of your friends that were part of the program, get their names and get me in touch with them because I'd like to talk to them also.

[40:41] Linda Coleman-Madison: Okay, I sure will. Thank you so much.

[40:43] Calvin Austin: Okay. Take care and thank you. And this is Calvin Austin concluding the interview with the Honorable Linda Foster, Coleman-Madison, Alabama State Senate. Thank you.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Janice Crump/Alexandria, VA

Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham, AL

Date: June 30, 2021

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Janice Crump, a Tuskegee AL native, received a Bachelor of Science degree from Tuskegee Institute (now university). She married fellow Tuskegeean, Maurice Crump, on Sept. 14, 1968, and is the mother of three children. She enjoyed a career as Communications Director for the Committee on House Administration for the United States Congress. Janice also owns and operates a public relations company a public relations company.



Janice Crump

Note: A portion of the interview is unavailable. Janice Crump is responding to the question—How and when did you learn about TISEP/TICEP?

[00:00] Janice Crump: I was a senior in high school. My mother was working on campus as a dorm mother, and I enrolled as a freshman at Tuskegee. Dean Phillips was the dean at the time. And he is the one who inspired us to work with a TISEP program. I started working with TISEP the summer of my sophomore year. I worked during the school year. They would take us by bus to Montgomery three days a week. We would leave around five o'clock. And we would always be back home between 8:30 and 9:00. So, I did that until my junior year.

[00:51] Joan Burroughs: You said you began working with TISEP in 1966.

[00:58] Janice Crump: Yes, the summer of '66. I was stationed in Montgomery as a tutor. There were five of us in that same community. I was the youngest, but Dean Phillips made me the supervisor. And so, we all worked every day in a community center, tutoring the kids who lived around that community center. And at the end of the summer, we had a special graduation program for them. And some of the supervisors in the TISEP program came to evaluate our success as a team. It was a great summer. When I actually left the community that I was working in, I met some amazing friends who I'm still in touch with today. We had a great supervisor; his name was Jesse Pendarvis and he would come to check on us a couple of times a week.



[02:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, and now. So that was in the summer of '66. What did you say the name of that, your site you had? Before you said that it was called something.

[02:29] **Janice Crump:** It was south of Montgomery and the locals called it Pumpkin Town.

[02:35] **Joan Burroughs:** Pumpkin Town. Okay, but it, was it in Montgomery County?

[02:39] **Janice Crump:** It was in the county, yes. It was just south of Montgomery. Actually, between Montgomery, Alabama and Prattville, Alabama.

[02:52] **Joan Burroughs:** I see, yes. Okay. Okay. I remember, I know. Yes. Okay. And so that's, what year were you in college at that time? You were a freshman?

[03:02] **Janice Crump:** That was my, that was the summer of '66 and I was going into my sophomore year.

[03:11] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, alright.

[03:11] **Janice Crump:** So, when school started, we continued to work in Pumpkin Town. I had my same crew, they would pick us up on campus in a bus, drive us to Montgomery, wait until we finished our program with the children, then take us back home.

[03:32] **Joan Burroughs:** Did the people who drove you there, were they tutors also? Or were they just the drivers?

[03:41] **Janice Crump:** The people who worked with me were also students at Tuskegee. And while I was entering my sophomore year, most of them were juniors and seniors.

[03:55] **Joan Burroughs:** I see. And so how did—

[03:57] **Janice Crump:** I think Dean Philips put me in charge of the center because he knew me personally.

[04:02] **Joan Burroughs:** Probably.

[04:02] **Janice Crump:** He probably knew me because my mother worked on campus.

[04:06] **Joan Burroughs:** So, he had a lot of faith in you.

[04:10] **Janice Crump:** Well, in addition to that, I think he knew that I had seven brothers and sisters and as the oldest girl I was accustomed to telling people what to do [laughter].

[04:23] **Joan Burroughs:** And so, did you hear about the Tuskegee—that program after you came to Tuskegee, entered as a freshman or did you hear about it before? Because it started like in '65. And so, it was going into a second year when you got there, I think.



[04:48] Janice Crump: I continued to work with the program until the end of my junior year. And at that time, I had actually met a guy and was focused on getting married. So, I did not work in Tuskegee that summer, I worked in Nashville, Tennessee. And I did that until my junior year started. During my junior year I was focused on graduating, so I came out of the TISEP program, because I was actually taking more than 20 hours each semester; which was really heavy load. In addition to taking 20 hours, I was working on campus at the Carver Museum. So, the most time that I spent with TICEP, was the second semester of my freshman year, all of my sophomore year, and the summer after my sophomore year. So, it was a good long time. And it was a very valuable experience for me.

[06:13] Joan Burroughs: What did you tutor Janice? What subjects did you tutor?

[06:19] Janice Crump: I actually did the basics as the site supervisor. I thought the children we were working with needed reading, they needed math skills, and they needed public speaking skills. I was an English major as well. Well, actually, English was my minor. So, those are the three things that we concentrated on as tutors. And I wanted to make sure that the people who were working with me were able to be successful with the children in those categories. I've also always believed that art was important, so I ordered a special supply of artwork that I thought we could use in our program in Pumpkin Town and found that some of the students were very creative. So, in addition to having a program where they spoke at the end of the summer, we also had a small art exhibit to show what the children had done that summer.

[07:48] Joan Burroughs: So, how many people were at the center with you?

[07:52] Janice Crump: There were five, there were six of us all together. And we've lived with members of the community. Two of us lived in the house that I was assigned to. And I think what happened was, Mr. Pendarvis actually did the background work to try to locate people who lived in Pumpkin Town that it was safe for us to live with. And so that's what we did.

[08:28] Joan Burroughs: Do you remember the names of the other tutors?

[08:34] Janice Crump: I don't remember all of them, no. I remember Dolores because she had a twin and my roommate—let's see what was her name? I cannot remember her name. She was also a senior though.

[08:59] Joan Burroughs: Dolores. What was her last name?

[09:06] Janice Crump: I think her last name was Thompson.

[09:10] Joan Burroughs: Johnson? Okay.

[09:13] Janice Crump: Yes, I believe that was her last name. She had a twin who didn't work in the program. But they were identical twins and she worked with TISEP.



[09:27] Joan Burroughs: So, as a program, what do you remember most about the focus of the TISEP program? How did you see its purpose overall?

[09:45] Janice Crump: What was the question?

[09:46] Joan Burroughs: Yes, what do you remember most about TISEP? About the entire program?

[09:53] Janice Crump: I remember the camaraderie between all of the peoples who worked in the program. Whenever we were on campus, Dean Phillips got us all together and we had little pep rallies, that he would lead to make sure that we didn't drop out, to make sure that we were doing what we were supposed to do when we went to those sites. He did not want us to embarrass him. And so, he would have, he would call us over to Logan Hall and he would have pep rallies, and cheering sessions, and he would tell us what a good job we were doing, and the impact that we were making in the community.

[10:45] Joan Burroughs: Well did I know, I remember that you were a cheerleader?

[10:50] Janice Crump: Yes, absolutely.

[10:57] Joan Burroughs: I'm sure you helped out with that. Cheers. Okay.

[11:01] Janice Crump: Dean Phillips was a great cheerleader. He was a great motivator. When he told you something was going to happen, you believed him. And when he tried to inspire you, you were actually inspired.

[11:18] Joan Burroughs: Exactly. Well so, now can you talk a little bit about the community, what it looked like the Pumpkin Town? Do you remember?

[11:26] Janice Crump: Yes, it was a typical Southern black community. Most of the roads were not paved during that time. The houses were very close together and the people were very private. Being placed where we worked, was not an actual community center, it was a church. And it was right there in the middle of the community. So, when we went from house to house, to let people know we were starting a summer program, it would be free, and the children would be fed twice a day. They were actually excited about joining and the parents were excited about letting their children come to the church. Those arrangements were made by Mr. Pendarvis, who was our site supervisor. He had already talked with the minister of the church and the other deacons who would let us into the church every day. And he promised them we would only be there Monday through Friday. So, we were free to use whatever was there. But our supervisor, Mr. Pendarvis had made arrangements for a local delivery service to bring us lunch and to bring us snacks. So, we fed the children every day, in addition to teaching them basics and having them participate in art classes.



[13:24] **Joan Burroughs:** I see, let me ask you something. Can you tilt your screen just a little bit forward so I can see your face all the way? I'm just seeing part of it.

[13:32] **Janice Crump:** Okay, okay.

[13:40] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, they're okay. Oh, yes. Okay. That's good. Okay, cuz you're kinda like in an angle [laughter]. Okay, you can see yourself, right?

[13:53] **Janice Crump:** Yes.

[13:54] **Joan Burroughs:** Alright, good. Okay. Now, well, Mr. Pendarvis, was he a community member or was he affiliated with Tuskegee?

[14:09] **Janice Crump:** Mr. Pendarvis? He was actually, he was more of a county employee who worked with Tuskegee to arrange the sites that were used for tutoring and to supervise students who were placed on those sites. As you can imagine, we were kids basically, and he took a bunch of kids from a school like Tuskegee, and dropped them off in the hood in the summertime. He was concerned about us, and he wanted to make sure we would be safe. So, he put a great deal of work into identifying those sites where we were sleeping every night, and making sure we had enough food to eat while we were there. He wanted to make sure we were safe when we were working with the children.

[15:20] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay. Wow, that was a lot.

[15:24] **Janice Crump:** It was. It was a completely unique kind of activity to be sponsored by a college campus. But then, Dean Phillips was—there was never anything ordinary about him.

[15:44] **Joan Burroughs:** No [laughter].

[15:44] **Janice Crump:** He thought that was a good idea. He thought that we would gain from it, and that the young people we were facing every day would also gain from it.

[15:57] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Okay. Do you remember anything outstanding happening while you were there? Anything come to mind? Any particular experience?

[16:12] **Janice Crump:** Well, I had one group of teenagers who were growing up, let me just put it that way [laughter]. So, they were a little bit belligerent when I first met them. But because I was the oldest girl in a family of ten, that was not unusual for me. So, I just figured out what they were really interested in, made sure that they had access to those things, those activities, and all of a sudden I became their favorite person. They, you know, I gave them responsibility. And I went beyond reading, writing, arithmetic. We talked about what was going on in their lives, and what they should do about it, and character. We wanted to—I wanted, when I spoke with them, I wanted to make sure that they understood they were responsible for their own behavior. And in order to be responsible adults, they needed to behave a certain way while they were young. And they listened.



[17:46] **Jan Burroughs:** Well, that's a good thing.

[17:47] **Janice Crump:** It was a great experience.

[17:51] **Joan Burroughs:** And then to bring the character part into it too, particularly during those times. Let's see. I'm going to read something to you. And then I'll, we'll talk we'll discuss that a little bit. So were you aware that the Southern Education Foundation report of the fall of 1965 listed the TICEP program as Tuskegee. They said this about it: "Tuskegee, another kind of demonstration in the Black Belt, a new kind of civil rights demonstration." And that was how they describe the Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program. Had you ever heard that?

[18:39] **Janice Crump:** Yes, I was aware of that. Tuskegee, where I grew up, was not a typical southern town. We learned every day what was going on all around us. It was one of the few counties in the entire state where everything that was important to us, was controlled by black people. Living on, in, and around campus, actually placed us in a cocoon so that we were brave and bold, when we stepped out of that cocoon. It's why every civil rights leader of the time came to Tuskegee, Dr. King, Stokely Carmichael, many, many others. They would come, they would stay for days. We would have meetings with them. They would strategize with us. We marched in Montgomery. We marched in Selma. We marched in Opelika. We marched in Tuskegee. So, it was a very, very active time for civil rights and Dean Phillips saw as an extension of what the rest of the state of Alabama could be, if we were to influence them.

[20:29] **Joan Burroughs:** So, do you think the TISEP program was like another arm? Did it play into that vision for Tuskegee, as far as you're concerned?

[20:41] **Janice Crump:** The TISEP program played an instrumental role in the development of that entire region, because Montgomery was just one of the communities where we worked. And so, as we spread our influence during that summer and during the school year, seeds were planted, and good things came of it. So, I would not give up that experience for any other time during my four years at Tuskegee. They were very formative months. And those couple of years where I worked with TISEP made a big difference in my life.

[21:37] **Joan Burroughs:** Can you think of, can you just give an example of how it might have influenced your thinking? Or your, the role, the things that you did in your life later on?

[21:51] **Janice Crump:** One of the ways that I was influenced was living in a community where everybody was either on public assistance or needed help in some way. I grew up in Tuskegee. It's probably one of, the most wealthy communities and well-educated communities in Alabama. That's why so many national leaders came to Tuskegee, not Montgomery, not Birmingham, not Mobile, but Tuskegee. With the legacy of Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and so many other influential Black Americans, Americans in Tuskegee, it already had a reputation all around the country, and also around the world. Growing up in an environment like that shapes you.



And even to this day, I recently worked on Capitol Hill with The Committee on House Administration. That's one of the committees that's—it's like the mayor's office for the entire members of the House of Representatives. And I had a supervisor who said to me one day after he had known me for a while, he made this big flourishing gesture with his arm. And he said to me, where does all this come from? And he was talking about my carriage, my attitude, the way I treated people. And I told him, I grew up around people who always expected the best from me. And so, it just became a part of who I am, and the way I carry myself.

[24:19] Joan Burroughs: Exactly. And so, you, when you went out into the into Pumpkin Town, that was a whole different experience for you.

[24:28] Janice Crump: It absolutely was [laughter]. I was now in the hood and needed to understand that. So, I was constantly being warned about walking out by myself at night, and just watching my back, but that was not a part of who I was. And so, I think that's how I connected with the kids that we supervised. Because to me, they were like my little brothers and sisters that I had always taken care of.

[25:08] Joan Burroughs: And did they know anything about Tuskegee? Had they heard of Tuskegee, the children out there?

[25:16] Janice Crump: They had not. But you know what? I made sure that all of my tutors on that site talked about Tuskegee, talked about the importance of self-determination, and tried to inspire those young people to leave Pumpkin Town and do some other things.

[25:40] Joan Burroughs: Yes. I know it's probably impossible, but do you remember anybody from Pumpkin? From that town after you left?

[25:54] Janice Crump: I do not because we were really not allowed to socialize. But while we were there during the day, we tried to have as much influence on the young people who came to the center as we can. And like I said, we actually met friends who lived in downtown Montgomery, or in one of the communities in downtown Montgomery. We actually met them at Burger King. Mr. Pendarvis came and picked up a couple of us and told us that he would take us to Burger King, because we were eating whatever was in Pumpkin Town [laughter]. So, we wanted something different. And we met a server there who invited us to his home on the weekend. He came to pick us up. We enjoyed spending time with his parents, his two sisters, his brother and him. They adopted us for the summer. So, they would come pick us up on the weekend and we would just have such a good time with his family. We would have cookouts. We would have dances in the basement, we would have dinner, we would watch TV. So, they were our home away from home. And they kept us safe.

[27:31] Joan Burroughs: That's good. All right, now. So, you said that you participated in the civil rights activities during that time, during your stay at Tuskegee? You participated in civil rights in the movement?



[27:48] **Janice Crump:** Oh, it was part of our everyday living. Something very crucial happened when we were between our freshman and sophomore year, one of the young men who was a student on campus was shot at a local Tuskegee gas station for using the bathroom. The campus erupted. Dean Phillips was there, he tried very hard to calm us down, but they eventually had to close the campus. And they basically sent everyone home and said, we will send you a letter to let you know if you can come back. That was one of the most traumatizing things that happened while I was working with TISEP. It was not related to TISEP, but Tuskegee was TISEP. So, anything that happened on campus happened in the program. Happened in the program.

[29:03] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, remember that. Were any of your friends, did you know any of these civil rights activists who were, you know, on campus so much?

[29:16] **Janice Crump:** Absolutely.

[29:18] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. And let's see.

[29:25] **Janice Crump:** So, do you think you have enough?

[29:27] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I'm just looking. I'm looking down now, seeing. I think that you've pretty much covered things that I hadn't even—questions that I hadn't even gotten to yet. Because you were, your answers were very comprehensive. Yes. So.

[29:45] **Janice Crump:** Okay.

[29:47] **Joan Burroughs:** All right, then I think that, let me just look, let me just look back, make sure.

[29:55] **Janice Crump:** Thank you very much for assisting with this very important project.

[30:01] **Joan Burroughs:** Trying to keep this. Keep the oral history so that people can look at it, you know, in the future and maybe be inspired by what happened at Tuskegee. Janice, tell me one more thing. The name of the town that you were born in, in Utah was?

[30:19] **Janice Crump:** Dragaton. D-R-A-G-A-T-O-N. It was a suburb of Salt Lake City. It's kinda like, Eastpoint is a suburb of Atlanta.

[30:33] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay.

[30:33] **Janice Crump:** Yes, yes.

[30:34] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, now, I sent again, the, your biographical data form. It didn't come back with your, with the other one that you, with your consent form. There was only one.

[30:48] **Janice Crump:** I can email you a bio, if that's helpful.



[30:52] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, I sent a form you to fill out, it's attached to the email. I sent it. I sent it again today. And so, if you'll do that, and send it back to me. And the other thing that I'm going to do is, once that once I have this in, I'm going to quick create a transcript, based on the interview, on the audio. And I'm gonna sent the transcript back to you to look over.

[31:16] **Janice Crump:** Okay.

[31:16] **Joan Burroughs:** If you want to add anything, you can just take another sheet of paper and add it at the end, and I'll put it on as an addition to your interview. And if you remember anything you think is significant you can put it in at the same time. And so—

[31:32] **Janice Crump:** Absolutely.

[31:33] **Joan Burroughs:** When I send you that, I'm going to also send the final release form, so that if it's okay, if the interview looks okay—

[31:40] **Janice Crump:** Sure.

[31:40] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, so if you send the biographical thing back to me now, you know, but when you fill that out. And I'll get this in probably in another week or so—[cough] excuse me—when I get the transcript.

[31:55] **Janice Crump:** Okay.

[31:57] **Joan Burroughs:** Janice, thank you so much. And it's so good to see you. So good to see you.

[32:02] **Janice Crump:** You are absolutely welcome. And thank you so much for working on this very important project.

[32:10] **Joan Burroughs:** Very important.

[32:10] **Joan Crump:** Take care. Bye-bye.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Narrator: Lucenia Williams Dunn/Tuskegee, AL

Interviewer: Guy Trammell/Tuskegee, AL

Date: April 11, 2021

Transcriptionist: Joan Burroughs

Lucenia Dunn moved to the city with her family at the age of four. She attended the Chambliss Children's House school and eventually graduated from Fisk University in 1965. Dunn received a Master of Science Degree in education from Tuskegee University and PhD in Program Development and Administration from the University of Pittsburg in 1983. Lucenia was Executive Director of the Tuskegee Macon County Head Start Program and in 2012, she became the President and CEO of the Tuskegee Macon County Community Foundation. Lucenia Williams Dunn was elected, in 2000, as the first woman to serve as mayor of Tuskegee.



Lucenia Williams Dunn

[00:00:00] Guy Trammell: It is 12:14pm on Sunday April 11, 2021. I am Guy Trammell in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. here to interview the Honorable Mayor Dr. Lucenia Williams Dunn, who was in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committees, TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of Interior's National Park Service.

[00:00:52] Lucenia Dunn: I am Lucenia Williams-Dunn located in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, and I am being interviewed by Guy tremble. Today is Sunday, April the 11th 2021.

[00:01:09] Guy Trammell: Okay, Dr. Dunn to start out, you have a very unique background. And I'd like you to talk about your background, and especially how you originally got to Tuskegee, because that's a very good story.

[00:01:30] Lucenia Dunn: My, my father decided that he wanted to live in Tuskegee, Alabama. He was a World War II Veteran, and psychiatric social worker, who was over the boy's home in New Orleans, Louisiana. And so he packed up this family, and I was at the age of four, when I



arrived in Tuskegee, Alabama. At that time, it was a very vital, and vivacious if you will, if I can use that word. community called Greenwood.

[00:02:15] Guy Trammell: Okay, now, could you kind of talk a little bit about that Greenwood and also my talk about where your father was working, because that had something to do with the uniqueness of where you were in because it's what you're talking about in Tuskegee, Alabama, but a little bit more specific.

[00:02:36] Lucenia Dunn: Well, Greenwood, was the community that was founded by Booker T. Washington and his roommate, Mr. Green, and I can't remember his first name right now. But he was originally brought here. He was a roommate of Booker T. Washington. And he was originally brought here to run the farm, the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School's Farm. And Booker T. Washington decided that in order to make his village complete, he needed to have a place where his faculty staff, and in some cases, students could live. They developed a piece of property that was right across the street from the normal school. And I'm going to cut it short link because just like Normal Industrial school, I'm going to just say, the Normal school, and they laid out the property, the end and sold the property. And I wish we could get property for this amount of money at this at that time, but I believe it was \$50 for a regular lot. And \$75 for a corner lot. But they laid it out in the in the way that Benjamin Banneker laid out Washington, DC, a lot of people don't know that a black man laid out how roads would go and streets would be in Washington, and it was by Banneker Douglas. The they included how to finance houses. It was not just I can go over and buy a lot because everybody understood that they needed to buy, you know, the property on time, as we say today. So that's one of the reasons that the Tuskegee develop a financial institution that would enable people to buy a thing about the lay of the land on credit. And with that, that man I think was really the beginning of the Tuskegee Credit Union.

And so, the community grew. And in fact, when I was a little girl, we never had a need to go downtown because everything was right at your disposal, at in Greenwood, right on the black across the street, which is where some of the people would remember was the bookstore, where the bookstore was a remnant of a hotel, which was one of the first hotels developed by a black person in the state of Alabama, and probably in the south eastern region. And that hotel also had a, a drugstore pharmacy. And it was a place where we had little kids could go in and get sodas, and milkshakes and all kinds of goodies. Later it included a shoe store and going down further where Carter's grocery store was located and petite bazaar. We had grocery stores, we had restaurants, we had almost everything that you want to have.

I want to just focus a minute on Petite Bazaar, because Petite Bazaar, the owner was the wife of William L. Dawson. And her name was Cecil Dawson. And she went all over the world choosing clothes to bring back to Tuskegee. And when I say all over the world, we had dresses from Paris and Italy, New York, Los Angeles. So we really didn't have to go downtown to deal with white people. We had a place where you could buy your car, all you needed to do was to go and sit down and say this is kind of car that I want and Mr. Frazier would order it for you no matter what, what kind what little was a Chevrolet or Cadillac or for whatever it was that you decided that you wanted to pay for.



Later on, we had Alan's store where we as teenagers would go on dates, because then you could take a date out to Alan's store. And you could do two things. You could sit and have a hot dog and, and Coca Cola, which was 25 cents at that time. You could take your date, when you finished, we're at Allen's and go to the drive-in, we had the Lincoln drive in at the time. And I'm not going to tell you the stories about what went on there. But needless to say, we were typical teenagers when we went there. But in order to get all of this stuff, including to do all of these things, including paying for it because you know you couldn't always go and ask your parents for the nickel, the dam and other charges that you wanted to pay for. So we used to collect hangers and go and sell them back to the cleaners. We had about three cleaners at the time and Tuskegee, and you had your choice. The one that I my family use with the Hampton cleaners right there on Franklin Road. And right at the back gate of what is now Tuskegee University.

It was probably the safest neighborhood that you could ever live in. You could go on vacation, you leave your house open, the neighbors knew you were gone. And you could be gone a week, but nobody came into your house and stole not one thing. And beside that we knew who all the criminals were and they were really petty. They were serious criminals. And some of them went to, to the to Mount Meigs. And when they got out they were you know, they were okay. They came on back to school. And many of them as grown-ups lead very, very, very, very productive lives. Not just in Tuskegee, but in other places like Washington and New York.

I went to Tuskegee school, elementary school, it was the Practice School it was the school where it was originally developed by Booker T. Washington as well, because he realized that the children needed to have some place to go to school. Now you have to remember that this was deeply segregated in terms of black white relationships. And so you know, you couldn't go to any of the schools down to And Tuskegee, so they created their own. And it was called Chambliss Children's House and it went from kindergarten to the eighth grade. That school, I think, closed about 25 years ago. And maybe a little off on that number, but they it close. But it was the lab school for Tuskegee University, or Tuskegee Institute by that time. And so we had a very interesting time there. And I say that from this perspective, our education was very unique for that time, and probably even for this time, because our teachers had a lot of faith in and who we were and how we could conduct ourselves. And I'm not talking about behavioral problems. Now, I'm talking about your gift from God.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. Mrs. Sprague was my first-grade teacher. And one day she walked into the room. And she said, "You know, we're having our annual science fair. And this is the theme." and she wrote the theme on the board. And we went over it as you do in the first grade. And then she said, 'Well, you all need to get ready to participate.' And she walked out of the room. Well, to do that, for a first-grade teacher, and a first-grade class, as you can imagine, it's very, very unique. Well, then that left us to our own devices around making sure that we had a good product for exhibition at the science fair. And what did that mean? That meant Doris Jones was an artist, and we knew it, she could draw really, really good. William Winston was interested in science, and he was always doing science. He and Bobby Owens were always doing scientific experiments. Because they would go and get the books from the library, and they would have, you know, the coke cola bottles and put the soda in it and watch



it explode. So we knew that they did all of that. So, everybody had a role. And we knew now, I think I have been an organizer all of my life. And I, when I'm thinking about it now, that was my job at in the first grade, to help organize everybody, and get everybody on track and move people forward. And so that's what I did. At that age.

[00:12:41] Guy Trammell: Clear clarify, too, because often about the I know, you mentioned the businesses, and now you're talking about the teachers with the school. What percentage was at White versus Black? Was it part of like a public school system? How, how was it?

[00:12:59] Lucenia Dunn: It was a, it was a private school that was associated and funded by Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, normally an industrial school because I believe it was started in 1913, or something like that. Maybe a little older than that. I'm not sure about the, the time but somebody could do the research. I wasn't prepared to do this quite in an historic way. But around 1913 actually was a little bit before that, because they built a school that was located right off of Clark Avenue and Green Street, and it was a big yellow building that lasted until Dr. Peyton made the decision to tear it down. He was the president at the time of Tuskegee Institute, and he was one of the ones to make it into a university. So that building and then they built the brick building that is still being used in Tuskegee University's campus. And that is the building in which I went to school. Now let me share this is this is important because to show you the vision that they had, at that time, the school was designed for children. When you go into that school, right To this day, you will find the doorknobs down low so that children can turn that door knob and go into their classroom. We had a stage we had an assembly room. That assembly room had also a basketball court coat court. We had the only indoor basketball court in the county. I just have to say that that those kids that live in the county and went to the rural schools used to come and beat our butts. Heck because they knew how to play on the on this Then in the end, the end the clay. And so when they got into the on the on the wood, wooden court, wooden floor, then you know, they were really very, very skilled didn't mean that we were not skilled but they, had a hustle and part of that thing was they needed to beat Chambliss Children's House, it was very competitive at that stage, but friendly, it was not a negative process at all.

But the other thing I want to say about that the school is that every teacher had a master's degree in education, all of them not one person that did not have the only person that did not have a master's degree or a BS degree for that matter was the Potts. Mrs. Potts was the was the was the chef or the cook, and her husband was the janitor. The other thing that you have to understand is that everybody was involved in the educational process, everybody. So Mrs. Potts taught me how to, like liver for an example. Everybody had to go when you got to like, I think it was about the seventh grade, you had to go and work in the, the lunchroom, and we had full meals, I mean, it would be lever and rice, and gravy and, and, and English peas, and bread. And that was the kind of meal we had every day. Secondly, we had a place. We had another building that was called the arts and crafts building, that arts and crafts building also had a little area that had a window, and another room and I had that that room had a window. And you can see right now those steps that went up to the window. That's where at the recess, we went and bought our cookies and our ice cream cones and, and other stuff that we probably had no business at. But what's important about that it was student run. The kids ran that store. So we got a lot of experience around how to count



money and how to make reports and very practical experiences around organizing, how you order and that sort of thing. Our parents were very deeply involved in the education of the students at Chambliss Children's House. The PTA meetings were always full out when the parents realized that we did not have a skating rink and it was, you know, a little dangerous for us to skate in the streets. The fathers got together, and they made us a skating rink. And that skating rink stayed there for many, many years. And it was the only skating rink in the county as well. We had music lessons.

[00:18:09] Guy Trammell: There was one more time again, just give us the like percentage of the teachers, staff. White versus Black.

[00:18:18] Lucenia Dunn: Yes, I'm getting there. We had music lessons. And we had arts and crafts lessons we learned to do ceramics and basket weaving and leather craft all of that stuff. Now, we had no white teachers. As a matter of fact, I had no white teacher until I got to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Our teachers were they were dedicated to what it was the day had decided to make their careers. And so it wasn't about well, I'm doing this so that I can now get myself ready to go to do something else. That's what they did. And we had student teachers that came from the university in the School of Education and other areas, and they were all black as well. So it was predominantly, it wasn't even predominantly really, it was all black, all African American. And we learn our history. We learn the Black National Anthem, I thought every black person knew it. And it wasn't till later that I found out that we were probably one of the few who not only knew the first verse, but we also knew all of the verses by heart. We learn music from all parts of the world, and we had celebrations in May where we were at Logan Hall, dressed as people from South America. And, and Europe and Africa and all of that. So we got some real experiences. The other thing that I think is important is that people came from all over the world. Now this is where you had other races. People came from all over the world to see our school, because it was such a phenomena. And those people ranged from folks from Europe from Africa. from the Caribbean. It was a very diverse group of people who came to observe to see how they could design their educational system. And so, Chambliss Children's House serves as a model. I left and graduated from Chambliss Children's House and went to Tuskegee Institute High School.

[00:20:50] Guy Trammell: We could you know, well, your parents mainly working for the campus there. Or you mentioned all the different businesses there, too.

[00:21:00] Lucenia Dunn: My father worked at the VA hospital, he was an administrator in the in the Social Services Division, because he was a psychiatric social worker. And my mother started teaching at Chambliss children's house. And vaccines had two famous people in her class at the time. And that was Lionel Richie, and Tom Joyner. They were they were little children in her class in her class, but she spent the majority of her career as a third-grade teacher at Lewis Adams School, which was the other Elementary School in Tuskegee. So my parents were professional people. And we live that kind of life, we, you know, we were, they were professional black people who insisted that we go to college and finish high school. And I, in fact, did not know you could do anything else. But go to college, I didn't know you could get a job. After high school, I thought you had to get a college degree, and then you got a job.



And that's, that was that was my family, I had a brother, and a sister. And they were three of us. And they went through the same process of Chambliss Children's House and Tuskegee Institute High School. While I was at Tuskegee Institute, high school, my thing about organizing continued, I was a major at, and from the ninth grade to the 12th grade, I was editor of the yearbook, I was chairman of the junior prom, because the juniors always gave the seniors the prom. And I think the thing that that strikes me as I'm talking about our This is the Chambliss Children's House taught us how to work in groups. And to some degree, that was an advantage and a disadvantage, because the majority of the philosophical process for dealing with people is individualized, you know, you got to be an individual and you got to do these things by yourself and all of that. But we will learn to work as a group, a team, and that is part of my DNA right now. Everywhere I go, that's what I aim to do. And that is to form a team of people who will reach a goal through their combined efforts.

[00:23:38] Guy Trammell: Okay, and just give me just a brief thing about the VA hospital was that Montgomery or where was that?

[00: 23:44] Lucenia Dunn: The VA hospital was at Tuskegee. It was developed and encouraged the development of it up through Dr. Robert R. Moulton, who was the second president of Tuskegee Normal Industrial School, and he later made it into Tuskegee Institute. And, and eventually that became a college because if you if you know anything about the history of, of Tuskegee University, you know, it started out not as a college, but really as what we would call a high school, because it was developed for people who were just out of slavery by Louis out Adams. Lewis Adams is one of my favorite people. And the reason that Lewis Adams is one of my favorite people, is because when the white folks came and asked him to, to gather up the black folks because he was kind of like the mayor of Tuskegee black community at that time and ask him to please get your folks to vote for me. And then when they ask him when the two White man asked him, What do you want for you bring in this vote to us. He said, I want you to make sure I have a teacher.

Now what is so significant about that, it's significant because he could have said, I want land, I want money, I want a horse, I want a buggy, he could have asked for a whole lot of material things. But he didn't, he didn't do that. He and his wife had been working with people out of slavery. And it grew so big that he knew that it was really a little bit beyond what he could really do. He was a tradesman, while he, you know, spoke four languages. Nobody knows how he really learned that except to say that he said, at the window of the master, and listen to the tutors, that the Masters children were in engaged with any learned all of those things. So that means he was a very smart man. He had lots of different skills, and he was teaching them not only how to read and write he and his wife, but what kind of skills they have. So, he asked or a teacher, that's a fundamental piece for the development of any community, how do you educate your people. And so he asked for a teacher, the miracle was that the Alabama legislature decided to grant that wish. And so the Tuskegee Normal School for teachers started out and, you know, they're all kinds of different names for what eventually became Tuskegee University. But it developed in that way.



So I wanted to give you that background, because every president of Tuskegee University made a significant contribution towards the development of the black community, Robert R. Moton made it possible for the VA hospital at Tuskegee, to be realized he suffered because of it, because he ended up having to hire folks to protect his family and the university. And I mean, people with guns. So it's not new for, you know, just geeky people that have guts, for the protection of their community. So he arranged for the donation of about 300 acres of land. When I was doing my research around all of this, and this was in 98, he started out in 1990, and the NAACP, they had a fit. What do you mean putting an institution like that for World War One black veterans down there in that rule, country environment, How shameful that is. Awful, it needs to be in another place. But Robert R. Moton fought, and he won. And so the VA hospital, under the auspices of the United States government, built the first VA hospital, specifically for World War One black veterans. And he also is me, he also made it possible for blacks to be in charge.

Because of course, racism is very, very much alive at that time. And they just felt like if you're going to have an institution like that, that's very important and why people ought to be the ones to, to run it. And they started out that way. And the only jobs that were available for black people was as assistant nursing assistants, because, of course, the white nurses could not put their hands on a black body. But Robert R. Moton persisted, and eventually the n double A CP got involved. And they all work together, so that they eventually hired a black man as the head of the VA hospital. And from that point on, there were only Well, at that time, at that time, especially when my father came to work there, there were no white people. They were all black people who were professionals, who were there because of their own credentials, and were hired to help veterans. And by that time, it was World War Two veterans as well. You didn't see white people out at the VA hospital in jobs until around the 60s.

And so, in fact, President Clinton was probably more responsible for that than any President at The United States because he wanted to consolidate and do all of those things that he felt would save money. And so, he insisted that two things happen. One, they needed to have integration in all of the other VA hospitals throughout the country. And guess where they pulled the people from? Well, Tuskegee VA hospital. And, you know, these were the people who were qualified, who had experience in running things. And so they then shipped people all across the country, I lost many friends, because their, their, their parents had to move and, and go to other places, New York, Connecticut, California, Michigan, all across the country. So, the test, I'm not going to go into the whole history of the VA hospital, but it is, and still is. Here, we're operating in Tuskegee, not at the full service that it had when I was growing up. But it is still in existence. And we are now trying to revitalize that whole process and bring a lot of those services back. So, there I am, again, organizing.

[00:31:22] Guy Trammell: Now, so when you left off, you were going to college, and you gave a reason why. So now, in college, how did you learn about the TIS/CEP program and my kind of tell us a little bit about how that took place?

[00:31:41] Lucenia Dunn: Well, I graduated from Fisk University in 1965, excuse me. And my original intention was to party with my friends during the summer. And just cool out. Well, on the way back from graduation, I was with my sibling in the back of my parents' car. And I said,



'Wow, I think we were in Montgomery. And we're coming from Nashville, of course. And I'm like, 'Oh, my goodness, we're almost home'. I can go to bed and I'm so tired. And I was just going on and on. And my mother turned around said, "No, you will not be going to bed. I have a job for you." I said "A job?" She said "Yes, I have a job for you. You are to report to Tuskegee Institute. Today at eight o'clock." This was about six o'clock in the morning. Today at eight o'clock, I was appalled. I just couldn't get over the fact that my mother did that to me, I just felt injured. You had not unpacked. I had not done anything. The only thing I did when I got home was take a shower and get myself together to come up to Logan Hall and register for this job that I had no idea what it was.

Well, I went and the lady asked me for my social security number. And I was like, social security number? I mean, only poor people get social security numbers. And I sounded like a real dorky, upper middle class that I really am not. I just want you all to know it's called inexperience. And so I came back home and I said " Mommy, they asked me for a social security card." I said 'I don't have one.' She said, "Hold on," reaching into her pocketbook, gave me my social security card. I said, "Oh, okay." So anyway, I went back up to the campus, and I registered, and we had our first meeting in Logan Hall. That's when I learned about the TIS/CEP Program. And I got really excited about it because I'm like, Okay, this sounds very interesting. And they told me where I was to go. And I've never been in Lee County, except for Auburn. And very rarely did we ever go to Auburn. I mean, if you wanted to just go and you know, see what white people look like, we went to Auburn. And that was not I mean, Auburn was a little bitty town you crossed the railroad track to get there. There was one building, really, that represented Auburn University and of course, I like to tell this to white people. And that 'did you know, Auburn started in Tuskegee and that is the fact'.

So, you know, it wasn't that we were mad with white people, just we weren't around white people. I mean, I had no relationships with white people at all. So when I got on the job, I noticed that there were white kids there from other colleges. And that's when I learned about St. Olaf College, and I can't remember the other one, because there were two of them. And so we were kind, we, we, we formed teams. And that was the first time I ever really worked with any white buddy. But it was a very good experience because I made good friends. And we worked together to do these various programs. Now, what I did was, I was a teacher. I taught from fifth grade to 12th grade English and Social Studies. And that was all basically in one room. And that called for me to really organize the curriculum, and all that. And while I was at the school, which as I stated was in rural, what was at that time rural, Lee County, I realized these children didn't know anything about Black History.

That's when I got involved with writing curriculum for a Black History class. And I integrated it into the English and the social studies, curriculum. And I'm using curriculum very loosely, because it was really just classes that I organized for fifth graders through 12th graders. Eventually, somebody realized that I could drive well. And then I began to, in fact, I was the only woman driver, because we had all of these cars. And the cars took students out to where they worked, as well take people that we were working with in the community to do some of the things that they needed to do. Now, not necessarily talking about shopping. But some people can probably have stories like that. My job was to pick up the students. And that's how I learned



about all of the rural roads in that that area of Lee County. Because I had to pick children up. Now let me just say this, I taught fifth and the 12th grade in the daytime. In the evening, I taught grownups. And I was teaching them how to read and write.

[00:38:23] Guy Trammell: Was this in the same location?

[00:38:24] Lucenia Dunn: This is in the same location.

[00:38:27] Guy Trammell: Do you remember the name of the High School?

[00:38:29] Lucenia Dunn: The name of the high school? You know what I cannot remember the name of the high school. I was sitting here trying to think I saw it, and I wrote it down. When everybody was here, this this was two years or so ago. And I don't remember the name of the school. I was in. No, it was in Lee County. It was not in a hopper. It was on a dirt road. Okay, it was not on a paved road. It was a dirt road. When they did the slide show, they showed where our assignments were, so you can get the name of the school from that. But I never really focused on the name of the school. My focus was on the students. And I saw how bright they were. But I also saw how they needed so much. I also picked up adults at night and took them home when it was necessary to take them home.

[00:39:30] Guy Trammell: So really, adults? Like parents are related to the students do you know?

[00:39:36] Lucenia Dunn: Yes, some of them were and but most of them were not. These were people who were interested in going back to school to learn how to read and write. I mean, seriously did not know they were making x's instead of writing their names. I have to tell you this story. We had gotten you know . . . you know that we were dealing with straight "ABC", this is "ABC", this is "CDEFG". I mean, it's basic alphabet. So I was . . . it was almost like teaching a kindergarten class. But we were we focused on it and they were interested and they were anxious to learn how to read and write. So, one day, this man, this older gentleman in the back of the room said: "Lord Have mercy Lord have mercy, I can write my name." And everybody in the class, you know, went over to him and they were hugging him and people were crying, I was crying, we were all crying. And his, his whole thing was, I don't have to ask anybody else to co-sign for me. Because I can write my own name. That was really phenomenal.

All of these experiences in TIS/CEP helped to fashion, how I view the world now. How I see what deprivation does to people, how we, as a group of African Americans must come together to make sure that our people are taken care of. Because they were telling me stories about what was happening to them on their jobs, because they were black, because they were uneducated. And, you know, it opened my eyes too. There was so much that I didn't know anything about. It made me become far more mature in a few short weeks than I would have had I not had the TIS/CEP experience.

The other thing was that Dr. Phillips, and by this time, you know, we knew who he was, and, and he was, he really was so inspiring for us. You know, he wasn't, he wasn't intrusive in that way.



He was gentle in how he, he helped to open our eyes about the world around us. He created a program at the end of the TIS/CEP experience at the end of the summer. He called me into his office, and he said, I want you to see how many of those folks that you were dealing with were would be interested in going to Tuskegee Institute.

I was so excited. I was like, okay. I had been teaching this group of ladies who were really smart, and they were like, so energetic. And I said, I know them. There was four of them. I know they want to go to college. So I went out to their house because I knew where they lived. I said, "Listen, are you all interested in going to Tuskegee Institute? You can get a scholarship and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And they looked at me and said, "Well, we'll have to ask our husbands." Ask your husbands? So they had a little meeting at one of their houses, because they were related in some way. They were like, cousins or something. So I went to the meeting at their house. We had a little dinner and all that stuff. And so when it came my time did you know share with where they live, and I was going to talk to them about and, and so I, when I finished talking about it, the men had their heads kind of dropped. And it was like, you know, I didn't get good vibes. I didn't get good vibes. I was like, oh, and so the spokesperson said, Well, we think it's a very nice thing that you want to send our wives off to Tuskegee Institute. But we're not going to let them go." I was like, What? I didn't say that to them. But it bothered me so badly. It was like, why wouldn't they want their wives to go back to school that they could get a better job and I had all of these logical things in my mind about them wanting to go to college.

And I came back and I reported to Dean Phillips, that they wouldn't be coming. Now I'm sure there's some other stuff in there that I can't remember at this stage of my life, but That's when I learned about women, and the need for our liberation. And at but, you know, my father was not one to dictate to my mom, what it was that she wanted to do. But you know, that was that respect, and so forth and so on. But I had never run across men who decided for their women, that they couldn't do something. I just, it was just untenable to me. Well, that led me to be involved in later in my life, in the women's movement. Because after, you know, after, after thinking about it, and talking to people, and reading and research and all that other stuff, I began to understand what it was that the men were saying. what they were saying is, if we let them go to that university, they will get beyond us. And we can't have that. We are the head of our homes. And as such, we cannot allow them to get ahead of us. Well, I disagree with that premise. I understand what they were saying. So TIS/CEP really introduced me to almost every aspect of what I'm involved with, even today, because it was my first exposure to a lot of issues that are prominent in our communities, and our nation and in for that matter, the world.

[00:46:54] Guy Trammell: And you and you the way you related it, it was like the exposure was both with your fellow students, college students work in the intensive, along with also the culture that's out in the community today. It's like a double exposure TIS/CEP.

[00:47:15] Dunn: Because, you know, TIS/CEP introduced me to the world. TIS/CEP introduced me to the world. I said that twice on purpose, because I want to make that very clear. You see, you know, like I know, growing up in Tuskegee was a very protective environment, very protective environment. We were protected from all of this business about white people get medicine into your house, and dragging you out and lynching you, we didn't have that. As a



matter of fact, when the Ku Klux Klan decided that they will go come and teach these Negroes a lesson. Our parents, the men, folks, our fathers, went and got their guns, and they put barricades up until the way people know you're not coming in Tuskegee, I'm sorry. So when you grow up that way, and we had our battles, but they were battles that were insignificant. When you think about what other people were going through. I cannot recall anybody abusing their kids. Anyway, in any fashion. There was very little sadness around issues like that. Now you might be jealous because somebody had a yellow dress instead of and you didn't have one or somebody could play baseball better than you and you know, kids stuff.

But the serious issues that we have come to associate with our community did not happen in Tuskegee at that particular time. We knew everybody and everybody knew everybody. I mean, that was that was how it was. I always tell the story that when I was about five years old, Tuskegee Institute had the library, Hollis Burke Frissell Library and inside of Hollis Burke Frissell Library was the children's library. And I had a little red wagon. And I was a ferocious reader. I just read like, you know, at going north, and so it every two weeks on Saturday, I loaded up the books that I had completed, walk up by myself to the Hollis Burke Frissell Library, sat down and said what are the books I wanted to read, put them in my little red wagon checked out collaborators at my library card, and walk right on back home and my mother never worried about what was going to happen to me on the way there on the way back. Now, when you put that kind of psychology together in your own head, and then you look out into the wider world, and you find out, whoa, everybody has not had that experience. And so you begin to have a different perspective on your own life, and much more conscious about the lessons that you had to learn in order to survive. So TIS/CEP didn't mean, to move us into that level of maturity, that level of insight, that level of experience. But that's what happened. And I am so grateful.

[00:50:44] Guy Trammell: Yes, and could you? Because I know, you know, you had involvement? Definitely, with the civil rights movement, which has taken place. Could you kind of talk about the interweaving there with TIS/CEP. At that time, I mean, because, again, the huge amount you're talking about, especially, like I said, even that meetings that you had, you know, with the wives and husbands, that's major, that's something that would not that wouldn't have taken place with that TISEP. Right? You know.

[00:51:17] Lucenia Dunn: It wouldn't have happened without TIS/CEP, let me tell you something else that happened, and that has a direct relation to my own environment, in the civil rights movement. I was coming, I picked up all of the children in the car, it with little children, you know, it must have been about 20 of them in the car, when that many, but it felt like, and the children would just sing in and having a good time. And all of a sudden, they stopped. Now I'm driving down this dirt road. And when I talk about dirt road, the sand is at least a foot high. You know, it was a sandy road. And so I looked in my rearview mirror, and this truck full of white men, were right on my tail. And they had their guns, you know, you could clearly see their guns. I said, Oh God, am I getting ready to die out here on this road with these white people. As it all No, I put my foot into that accelerator, I must have been going 90 miles an hour where the cars can go but at but I was going 80 miles an hour down that dirt road. And when I got to the school, I didn't put my brakes on, I just took my foot off the accelerator, and almost all four wheels went into the school yard. That was safety. Because they knew about TIS/CEP and TIS/CEP was



causing too much trouble. Because people were getting knowledge and learning about what was out in their other world. And that they could do some other things other than what work on their plantation, as a tenant farmer and in low-rate wage jobs in the manufacturing concerns that were available then. And you know, we were causing trouble. We would accept what's causing trouble, in addition to the fact that you had white and black people working together in the same environment on an equal basis. That was unacceptable. So that was my first real experience with what was possible to happen to me because of racism.

[00:53:58] Guy Trammell: And did you ever have to. . . because again, students coming from all over the country . . . had not been to Alabama. Some of them possibly had never been that far south, period. Did you have to ever be kind, of say, like a guide or the authority on kind of local things or whatever did that ever occur? How did how did? How did Dr. Phillips ever try to, you know, kind of acclimate? Because again, you know, people here for the first time.

[00:54:30] Lucenia Dunn: I don't recall any of that. Because see, I lived off-campus. And I lived in my parents' house. So my social interactions at that time were limited. I didn't have those kinds of conversations until I went to . . . until I got into the graduate intern program, which you know, was started by Dean Phillips. And that's how many of us got our master's degree because we worked in TIS/CEP. And then he made it possible for us to go to graduate school based on, you know, that, program. And so that's when, because they were black and white students who were in the graduate intern program. And that's when we had those kinds of discussions. I did not have that kind of discussion during the summer when I was working for TIS/CEP.

[00:55:31] Guy Trammell: Again, what summer was that? And which TIS/CEP were you in? Say the name, it was at the . . .

[00:55:41] Lucenia Dunn: Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program TICEP TICEP TICEP "T I C E P", TICEP. And we were, we were working that summer from in 1965. Now, **Note:** The correct abbreviated name of the Summer1965 program is TISEP

[00:56:02] Guy Trammell: Again, you've already kind of mentioned a couple of different things about how this, in a sense, prepared you and informed you for the your other work, any other specific memories or things about how directly, you know, related later on.

[00:56:23] Lucenia Dunn: Wow, that's that, that that might take you another three or four hours. Because when I got my When, when, because of my experience with test set, and the fact that I had a master's degree, when I graduated in 1968. My first job was in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And because I had had the experience with TIS/CEP I was far more able to, to understand diverse cultures. And that people, you know, let me see how to put this. I think Pittsburgh was my first real experience working in a predominantly white environment. But because of TIS/CEP, it made my entry into that particular cultural milieu much easier. I was not nearly as shocked about the things that I found out about what other cultures were doing, versus what I had experienced. Let me give you an example. I did not know. Well, let me let me do it this way. I found out that both white and black families out through both black and white families, that when you graduated from high school, you left home, you did not continue to live, you go out



and get a job at the steel mill or in the coal mines, or in some other industry. But the whole idea was you didn't go to college, you went to work. And if you continue to live at home, you paid rent. I mean, that was not my experience. Because my family was, you know, you didn't you didn't have to do that. You know, you had to go to college, that was your job. Your job was to go to college, your job was to graduate from college, your job was to get a job after you got a college degree. So just listening to that I did not get shocked because I had that experience with the those families who decided that they weren't going to have their wives to go to go to college. Now, it may not seem like a direct relationship. But if you think about it, it is because what you're talking about is how different people think about different subsidiaries. And so you need to understand that there are differences and that that you didn't understand that but it is in the frontal part of your brain as opposed to a reactionary process. And so you, you are far more accepting of differences.

[00:59:49] Guy Trammell: And okay, now I'd like you to transition a little bit into just with the concepts or the experience of TIS/CEP be applicable to young people, especially college students today? And this kind of, kind of in that general thought pattern? Give us your thoughts.

[01:00:15] Lucenia Dunn: TIS/CEP. And what's the other one test app and the other one?

[01:00:25] Guy Trammell: Yes, they're the core the summer core first. Yes.

[01:00:32] Lucenia Dunn: But asked me to test it first, I will speak only to TIS/CEP. TIS/CEP was so closely related to Booker T, Washington's educational concept. We learn by doing. We had debriefing sessions to talk about what it was that we experienced, not necessarily lessons learned. Because we were not that sophisticated in the process. But we had to talk about what we experienced and how we felt about those experiences, and then associate those experiences with any kind of redirecting of the programmatic aspects of whatever it was that you were involved with. I am just very sorry, that we don't continue to have a TIS/CEP program. I'm working now trying to get Tuskegee University to provide hands on experiences in the revitalization of Tuskegee, and Macon County. I would like for our students at Tuskegee University, to graduate with a real portfolio.

My job in Pittsburgh, I got not only because I was black, because I was the first black administrator for Allegheny Community College. But the thing that I described in my application for that job came directly out of my TIS/CEP experience. So they look at me, not as a fresh graduate, graduate with a with a master's degree, but one who graduated with a degree and had experience. I think that's important for all students, I can only talk about Tuskegee, because that's my heart. But I could also say that about every school, in the United States of America, every college, because you don't really discover who you are, until you have some real experiences. I have to use this as an example. When I was in high school, my father gave me my best girlfriend, Patty Walker and I jobs It was a summer job at VA has them. At the time, I wanted to be a social worker, just like my daddy, right. And my dream was that I was going to go to New York, and I was going to save all the DELINQUENTS. That was my fantasy. When I got through that summer, I realized I didn't want to be a social worker. That just did not. That was too, too tame



for me if it wasn't enough action, you know, and, and, and, and I realized that I didn't like being a counselor.

Because my whole deal at the time was, once I tell you what to do, then you need to go out there to it. And then that'll solve your problems. I was very naive on my part, of course. But I realized that that wasn't it. What I learned was out of my TIS/CEP I've experienced with it, I really do love program development. So that's what I got my PhD in program development and administration, because that fit my being and had I not had that TIS/CEP experience, I would not have had much to compare, to make that kind of decision and I might have been stuck in a job situation. That would not have been nearly as satisfying as the career that I've had. Because most of my career has been involved with some form of administration, some form of organizing. The other thing that TIS/CEP did that would help a lot of us Students today is that it, it made me brave enough to take a chance in experimenting. Now what do you mean by that Lucenia? Sometimes we are afraid to go out on a limb and try something different from what it is that we had put in our little heads, you know, or we say, I'm in this job because I think I don't have a choice, or I have a family to raise, and therefore, I'm not going to take a chance, but I'm going to stay in this job becomes a TIS/CEP will help me to understand that there are alternatives and you didn't have to be, you know, stuck doing the same thing. without it being something that's still fulfilling.

We didn't always talk about that, like that. We talk more about things like that when I was in the, the, the graduate intern program. Now, it's important to understand that the graduate intern program was very much like the tacit program. And that we got real experiences. We were put in charge of the dormitories, we were put in charge of all we were, we were we were located in various aspects of the university life, so that we would understand what a Dean did and what a Financial Aid Officer did, and, and what, how to organize programs for students in the dormitories and how to deal with people who had problems and how to help them resolve those problems. And so it was an extension of the test set program. And I'm curious, in my own mind, as to whether or not we would have been able to really go in? Well, what I guess I'm saying is, I wonder what would have happened had the TAs that program continue? And that we could have done it year-round, as opposed to just that summer? We learn a whole lot of things like that it during the program that develops, had the first video camera. And that's when I got excited about learning how to do videography and tell stories with a camera. You know, we had the newsletters and all of that. And so you got that experience. So while I knew I didn't want to be a journalist, I knew I like producing. And, and, and so I did, I had a television program in in Pittsburgh for five years. And I produced two specials as a result of two television specials, as a result of my interest in videography that started with my introduction to videography, through the TIS/CEP program have forgotten about that. So when you talk about the implications for your life's work in your profession, those kinds of programs, like tests that are very valuable to the maturation and education of students, and being really honest about who you are, and what kind of contribution you're making to society.

[01:08:51] Guy Trammell: And that now that last statement, that's perfect for, like, see if you can give a elevator speech, I know it's going to be impossible. elevator speech on what you're doing now because I happen to know you're not in a retirement mode, you're not sitting around



tiddling your thumbs. So maybe just give, you know, just a little bit of idea that what you're doing now?

[01:09:20] Lucenia Dunn: Well, as you know, and I just got through talking about the fact that TIS/CEP teaches you that you can take it, you can take a risk. And I did I took a risk with my classmates from high school called me and asked me to come home and run for mayor. I was living in Washington DC at the time. And by the way, I got a job with the District of Columbia government to organize the Public Information Office, which meant that I dealt with media from all across the world. And I had to organize it from the ground up staff mission objectives, you know, the whole nine yards. Um, (pause) when I finished that, and I also became the first the first city manager when we change the form of government in the city of Tuskegee, and I did lose my race for the second term, which didn't really bother me, because I am not a politician. But I wouldn't have given up that four years for anything, it was very critical in my life.

When I came back to Tuskegee, in 2012, I became President, CEO of the Tuskegee Macon County Community Foundation. Now, I organized it when I was mayor of the city of Tuskegee because I wanted a public private partnership because I understood the necessity of that in terms of economic and community development. I work for the National Council of Negro Women in Washington DC. After completing my time at in the District of Columbia government, which gave me a national presence that was preparing me for my job as mayor of the city of Tuskegee. Well, when I came back in 2012, the foundation was still being run. And I have to give a great deal of credit to my classmates, some of whom were the same ones who wanted me to come home and be and run for mayor. And they asked me to resign from the board and take on the responsibility of organizing the foundation. We started out with health disparities, that is the reduction of health disparities, which then led me to be involved in everything including broadband, because we don't have a hospital here in Tuskegee anymore. And so we had to find an alternative which was telemedicine. telemedicine, then leads you to well, you got to have connectivity is what broadband then Coronavirus hit.

I became very, very concerned about our students coming back to Tuskegee, from their summer vacation from places that were hotspots throughout the United States. So I wrote a letter to the President of Tuskegee University and asked them to delay bringing the students back until we the community could meet with them to figure out how we're going to deal with this Coronavirus. As a result of that, we developed the Coronavirus Community Task Force and Tuskegee University partnership that has led to something that I know you feel glad about in your heart because we grew up on that campus. And there was a separation starting about 1986 a separation between the University and the community in addition to the fact that we had brought people from other communities to fill the public housing units that were built under HUD for people who have selfish reasons, and they didn't do anything with the people, but nobody could really get their hands on how to bridge that gap. Well, TMCCF, which is the acronym for Tuskegee Macon County Community Foundation started on that journey. And I am happy to say that Tuskegee University and the community have started coming together, not only about Coronavirus, but for other areas, areas of interest, like economic development, like community development, like being involved with education again, throughout, you know, throughout the county.



And so, while we're in the infancy stages, we have started building that relationship and I'm proud to say that I am very much a part of that. In a leadership role and as a follower role as a strategic planning involvement, that that we have developed. And it is making a major difference in Tuskegee, it is going to grow. We also have what we call the movement 46, which came out of the out of the whole issue of we're talking about T-100 as a manufacturing concern coming here to manufacture fighter jets for training purposes, and it's going to bring about 800 jobs. And then I realized that's not going to hire the people that are here. Because we don't have a lot of engineers and other administrators and workers and welders and even janitors, and carpenters and brick masons, they don't have that anymore in Tuskegee. We used to have all of that we don't have plumbers, and Plumbing Companies, we don't have that anymore. And I'm saying it like that, because I want to emphasize the fact that we have had a major deterioration of the tradition that was started back, Lewis Adams and Booker T. Washington.

When we didn't get the contract, we came in second. And it was a boost to our psychology. Because we live in a . . . we were pretty low. And how we felt about ourselves about how we felt about the city. How other people perceived us, because you know, it used to be a time you were from Tuskegee, you were somebody and then all of a sudden it was like, Oh, yes, you are from Tuskegee, don't. Don't give me no check. I don't want to have a check. No, I don't know what's wrong with jobs. I was wrong with y'all. Y'all keep doing the same things over and over again. And it's getting you nowhere. The TM-46 started? Well, we didn't get the . . . when we didn't get the contract, and chief Frazier, who was the chief of police, for my administration, called a meeting to discuss the psychological. . . . and this is how it was framed. And I'm almost repeating verbatim . . . to discuss the psychological impact of the TM-46 project on the City of Tuskegee and Macon County. 63 people out of 65 people who were invited came, and we had a real discussion, and we realized that the idea didn't emanate from Tuskegee, it came out of Auburn. Oh, wow.

So it was about 15 of us that when the meeting ended, that the SAT there was almost like, we were stunned. And, you know, we started thinking about it. And we started all of a sudden talking. And somebody said, in fact, it was Reba who said, Dr. Dunn organizers, organizers we can do for ourselves. As y'all show, y'all want me to do that. And this Yep. And so I did. So we meet every Thursday at seven o'clock. we tackle various issues. It is a pure, volunteer, grassroots organization. We have no presidents, offices or anything like that we have facilitators, and we discuss very openly what we need to do and how we need to do to make Tuskegee and Macon County a better place. So here we go from task to TM-46. 46 is our is our tag where our cars and so that it made it mean, making can and that's, that's, that's, that's what I'm doing.

[01:19:32] Guy Trammell: Say real quick what TM means?

[01:19:36] Lucenia Dunn: Tm 46 is the movement 46

[01:19:39] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[01:19:40] Lucenia Dunn: Well, we got (inaudible) we are moving.



[01:19:45] Guy Trammell: Excellent, excellent. Well, thank you. You have used the telescope, the microscope and the magnifying glass. Does zoom in and zoom out to really give us good perspective? Thank you so much for being a part of the oral history project with TIS/CEP.

[01:20:03] Lucenia Dunn: Thank you. I really feel honored to have been included in this process. There's so much more to say and, and to analyze, but we are getting off to a good start because it is very important. In fact, it is critical that we document that period of history in our in our city in our in our, in our county, as well as the University because that is a model for us in the near future. And I am hopeful that we will do another test that might not have the same name but have that concept. So I'm honored to have shared my perspective.

[01:20:47] Guy Trammell: Thank you Okay, and now we'll be ending the recording.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Warren Hamilton/Philadelphia, PA

Interviewer: Calvin Austin/Millersville, MD

Date: June 20, 2020

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Warren R. Hamilton was born in Savannah, Georgia, October 8, 1946, the oldest of five boys to WWII veteran Jesse Hamilton and his wife, Eulee Hamilton. He attended Savannah public schools before matriculating to Tuskegee where he participated in both TIAL (Tuskegee Institute Advancement League) and TISEP. After receiving a bachelor's degree, Warren attended the James E. Beasley School of Law at Temple University in Philadelphia PA (1968-1973). He became a criminal defense attorney and later became active in the music industry. He and his wife Linda reside in Philadelphia where he continues to work in private practice.



Warren Hamilton

[00:11] Calvin Austin: It's 1:20 p m on June 21, 2020, and I'm Calvin Austin in Millersville, Maryland, here to interview Warren R. Hamilton Esquire, who's in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of Interior's National Park services.

[00:48] Warren Hamilton: Hi, I'm Warren Hamilton in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

[00:56] Calvin Austin: Okay. Warren, thank you for agreeing to participate in the project. And I want to get started by asking you to tell us a little about yourself. Your origins, I know you're from the great state of Georgia. Tell us about that, your parents, the community you grew up in.

[01:24] Warren Hamilton: Alright. Again, I was born in Savannah, Georgia, October 8, 1946. I am the oldest of what turned out to be five boys to Eulee and Jesse Hamilton. My father served in World War Two. One of the first houses we lived in was housing for soldiers that came back, it was a place called Caver Village in Savannah. My father worked for railroad. My mother, well,



she did some work as a maid and ultimately got a job at a clothing store as a clerk, at a wholesale divisional store as a clerk. Growing up, my father, he took advantage of the GI Bill, and he went back to school. He started in junior high. He went to high school, then he went three years at Savannah State. And that was during my kind of formative years, I guess, I think he was in Savannah State. I guess I was about second and third grade. And so, that was a part of me growing up, and but, you know, he was somebody that wanted to do something, and he kind of put that energy in us. So, I guess that, you know, where I've kind of come from.

I went to public school, in Savannah, elementary, junior high and high school. In high school it was 1960, yes in 1960. And there was a lot of movement in the country's civil rights. A lot of talk going on, in fact, as a result of me getting involved in a quest to have ROTC at a high school across town. There was a demonstration call. And all of the, you know, Savannah was alerted to it. It wasn't in my—this is I guess, I'm about 15 or 16, 10th grade, 10th or 11th grade. And so, I was like President of the Student Government involved in student government. And the principal called me to advise me that there was this stuff going on. And it was the first I've heard of it, but when I got involved in it, it led to me getting involved in a group, Crusade for Voters, which was run by Hosea Williams at the time. So, I got baptized kind of in the civil rights movement. Up until that point in time, I wanted to be a doctor [laughter]. But um, I saw these lawyers, come through Savannah, they were representing people.

And one of them happened to be Howard Moore, who ultimately represented Angela Davis. Well, I just thought they were cool. That's it. I didn't know anything about the law [laughter]. But I thought they were cool. And they were speaking up for black folks. So, that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a lawyer. And so I then, you know, time. Well, I think one thing too, is that I want to kind of say is, it's amazing, I think, back in Savannah, the teachers I had in elementary school, and in high school, who told us that we could be anything we wanted to be. And they could, a lot of them were teachers, because that was the end of the line. And so, the faith they had I still marvel at it, you know, as a testimony to not being trapped. You know, and even if you can't, you can release somebody else, you can release somebody younger, to get a kid to a place where you, they wouldn't let you go. And so, I mean, that is like, you know, there's a part of who went to Tuskegee. When I got there. I was there only a five-year program. I thought that was a good thing, because I didn't really want my mother and father to spend no money on me. I figured if I messed up, it'd be on me. So, I thought that was like a godsend.

And my alternative, I really, really wanted to—my dream school, so to speak, and people say that kind of stuff was Morehouse because Martin Luther King Jr. went there and [unclear], but I'm just thinking that the good Lord got all seeing eyes, I don't know, what I would have done in Atlanta, of course, I'd have gone to Atlanta with all my friends, and I needed to be at Tuskegee that's where I was supposed to be. The good Lord sent me to Tuskegee, for better or worse. And I kind of enjoyed it. Anyway, when I got to Tuskegee, I suffered multiple bouts of homesick. I got and I worked in the cafeteria, my job was making toast and picking it out of the sheets that they put the toast in, stack it into a serving tray and getting burned and all that I had my pangs of homesickness and all that. But come the spring as the spring of '65. That's when they call the Edmund Pettus Bridge



thing happened, you know, and students decided we were going to raise money, we went out and collected money to get buses to go to Montgomery to protest.

And as it were, we had our little meetings or what have you. And I would, you know, I told you guys about, you know, my civil rights law background, my resume, you know, I just became like a part of that group that ultimately became, I think, TIAL [Tuskegee Institute Advancement League]. We, I think Tom may have already mentioned this, but we became a part of that and that was Tuskegee's student civil rights group. And so that we got involved in that and it was just such an awakening for me. You know, just being around new people, people from other places, other states, it will really eye opening. I could measure myself being able to banter against other folks, you know, figure out. I had this good example of that, you know, we used to think, you know that guys from Georgia everybody else was better than you, especially people from up north, we [unclear]. Then we found we were good. We really contributed hanging there with them. You know, and we, and the other thing was the camaraderie that I mean, it was like, it became home quickly, you know, and it's where I wanted to be. And I'm really not sure whether I got involved in TISEP that summer was '55 or '66. I'm not sure. But in any event, you know, I heard about the program on campus. It was a way to, you know, to make, you know, some energy during the summer, way to get some money in the summer.

[11:27] Calvin Austin: Okay, one thing, if you could do me a favor, push your screen back, you've cut your head off. And if you could watch your hands because your hands blocking the camera every now and then. But continue. Okay.

[11:40] Warren Hamilton: All right. Thank you, thank you. It was really an education for me. And I think I told you before, when I, when I drove to Alabama with a team I really can't remember how many of us it was, but I know, we stayed at a couple of different people's houses. And that was my first time living in the country. Being exposed to well water, cause when we first got there, we would go and get a that bucket of water. And there's some bugs, oh, all the bugs out. As by the time we left we were drinking the bugs to [laughter], you get used to anything. So. And I think that was a good, good lesson for me. And probably others too, you know, just seeing the contrast. I mean, man, I saw poverty that you cannot imagine. I mean, I saw people living in places you cannot imagine. I think at the time, some of their annual incomes around \$400 a year. And it's, I mean, it's just a wake-up call.

The other thing I think I mentioned too, is I remember thinking we got paid around 300 something a month. And the first time I got the check, I felt bad. Because I felt like I was taking money I ought to be doing [unclear], it took away from what I thought I was giving. And so it was it was a part of the spirit that I had at the time, it was that we were supposed to be working, you know, to, for everybody to uplift everybody. It wasn't about financial gain or anything like that, in fact, to take money for me sort of desecrated the act that I was doing but I saw it as a part of the overall education that we had to provide to the community. I mean, in a lot of schools we had, we were talking, you know, positive black stuff. I don't know if Black Power had come up by that time or not. But uh, we were talking about, you know, that people ought to be proud of who they were, and their heritage, and the way they looked, their hair. You know, it was that kind



of message that we were bringing into this rural, impoverished, super impoverished area that we set up that school.

And I would hope that the fact that we were there stimulating some of the young folks that were around to want to do better and to be better, and to dream outside of the condition they were put in place then. So, I mean, that was a part of what I thought about the task, that it was hands on, people were out there, people saw people, and we are the greatest encouragers of one another. We are very encouraging of one another. And it was an excellent way to, you know, to just uplift our community. You know, and support people who have a real [unclear] over time Tuskegee has always been a presence in that area. I mean, people from the George Washington Carver days. So, it has always had outreach. And so, this is another part of it, I thought was appropriate at the time.

[16:02] Calvin Austin: So, you mentioned that you had initially wanted to go to Morehouse. And I think you also stated that your reason for coming to Tuskegee was that they had the five-year program.

[16:17] Warren Hamilton: Yes, that was, no. Well, I mean that was the cherry on the top.

[16:22] Calvin Austin: Okay, okay.

[16:23] Warren Hamilton: You know, it kind of relieved some qualms I had, because I didn't really want—I wanted to go to school on my own. I didn't want my parents, you know, to have to struggle. I had four brothers.

[16:39] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[16:40] Warren Hamilton: You know, I was the oldest. And so, I didn't really want to take away from anybody else. But as it worked out, you know, that program was kind of illuminating, and they've been so instrumental in kind of creating other situations for us. In fact, I worked in the cafeteria I told you at first, I then got a job in the student government office [laughter]. So that was, that was my job.

[17:13] Calvin Austin: That was all like, brother rabbit don't throw me in the Briar Patch.

[17:17] Warren Hamilton: That rabbit was so nice.

[17:21] Calvin Austin: Yes.

[17:21] Warren Hamilton: And I mean, that stayed with SGA the whole while I was there, you know, Gwen Patton, Benny James, you know, so it was, you know. I think the last year I was; you know, I was student government president. But it was, as I said man, it was. There were a lot of people coming through at the time. Cause we were, it was like, we were old aces in Alabama, you know, from the civil rights workers that came into Alabama, they was coming to Tuskegee and people [unclear] people [sigh] [laughter] [unclear]. And so, you know, it was that kind of



interaction. It was the strange idea. That was going on more. As I said, I have been, I was blessed by it.

[18:20] Calvin Austin: Great. So, was there any real adjustment or when you came from high school to college? Was there a major adjustment? I know moving into a dormitory, you remember your roommate from Tuskegee? Who your freshman year roommate was?

[18:39] Warren Hamilton: Yes, guy named Peter Stevens from Walterboro, South Carolina. And Peter was a perfect roommate because he was as organized [laughter]. I mean, it was. Yes, I feel bad. I mean, he did everything on his own, on a dime, all meticulously organized. I needed to see that. So and I remember to this day.

[19:10] Calvin Austin: Okay, I forgot all about Peter. I remember him. He was always neat dress guy.

[19:20] Warren Hamilton: I mean, it was, it went to all every aspect of his life. I mean, he was that organized.

[19:26] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[19:27] Warren Hamilton: From dress to his closet [laughter].

[19:29] Calvin Austin: Oh, good. Good. So, what was your major at Tuskegee? What did you know?

[19:43] Warren Hamilton: Political Science.

[19:44] Calvin Austin: And so, how did all that go? How did you, you know? What did you think of the education?

[19:54] Warren Hamilton: It was good. I was exposed, I was given tools, a lot of tools to move forward. You know what I'm saying? The road hadn't been, you know, like everything wasn't completely smooth. But I mean life isn't. But I was given some tools that I can adjust with, you know, it's because of the kind of nurturing you got. I think that that also helps, you know, later on in life when we struggles came. You know, you, if you train for a perfect game, and think that college is going to allow you to go and pitch a perfect game, you're going to have a crude awakening. They going to be so many of them they are going to knock the rubber off your ball you got how am I going to come back? How am I going to adjust or readjust? And so, I think that that is something that was invaluable. You know, that it was just the bond of friendship that you got that were enduring friendships that allow you to, you know, bounce back. You know, you got [crosstalk] people rooting for you [crosstalk].

[21:26] Calvin Austin: Other than the people in SGA, who were your friends?



[21:33] **Warren Hamilton:** Well, I don't know, I guess the pack I was with was the tank boys. Well, until we got to like, Samuel, was one, Sammy Young, Eugene Adams, Doctor Adams' son. I mean, I'm still in touch with Gene today. George Davis. George was older. He passed, I was at his funeral just a couple years ago. Yes, there's another guy, George. Well, they were older guys. But they were kind of in a group that I was around.

[22:16] **Calvin Austin:** You guys were in the movement, so to speak.

[22:18] **Warren Hamilton:** The movement, guys. That's basically—

[22:21] **Calvin Austin:** Yes.

[22:22] **Warren Hamilton:** Those. And, you know, like, I'd see Ruby Taylor, you know, I just think, you know, just think of some of the people who were basically like the movement folks.

[22:42] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Yes. Okay. And you mentioned Sammy. Talk about Sammy for a couple of minutes. Because, you know, he, I hear various stories about Sammy and things along those lines. And I knew him in passing, the wave and keep going. But, you know, like, we never really had a conversation. I really wasn't involved. But he was very impactful. His death was very impactful to the campus. Can you talk about that for a few minutes?

[23:15] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes, well, Sammy. You know, I mean, I remember once we were downtown picketing. And at a store, a grocery store for some reason. And these white guys came by and called Sammy a nigger lover, he had a hat pulled down over his head. I was here, Sammy took the hat off and got out of the street and scream, I ain't a nigger lover, I'm a nigger. So, that says a lot about Sammy. Sammy wanted, I mean, he was involved in and, you know, voter registration, and stuff like that. And he really felt just a part of the movement. He wanted to be a part of the movement. I mean, he's like, everybody, you know. There were parties, girls. You're drinking [unclear] [laughter].

[24:24] **Calvin Austin:** Haven't heard that a long time.

[24:26] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes.

[24:27] **Calvin Austin:** EP.

[24:28] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes. You know, that was a beverage of what we could get, I guess, not choice necessarily [laughter].

[24:34] **Calvin Austin:** The beverage that we could afford [laughter].

[24:40] **Warren Hamilton:** Anyway, I mean, it was that too. I mean, it was, you know, girls, and I mean, parties, and it was, you know, it was 18, 19, 20-year-old guys.

[24:54] **Calvin Austin:** Hey, what can I say?



[24:55] **Warren Hamilton:** You know, trying to figure it out?

[24:57] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. [Crosstalk] Okay. But, you know, so if you, you mentioned that you were SGA President. Was it a tightly contested contest? Or did you win?

[25:16] **Warren Hamilton:** Oh, no, blow out. No, it wasn't a blowout. In fact, I ran against William Clark. And I think I won by maybe nine or ten votes [laughter]. That was, and it was like, almost like this election. It was. It was about, I think it was one of the biggest turnouts that we had there. I mean, it was. And it was like nine or ten votes.

[25:43] **Calvin Austin:** Who was the vice president? Do you remember who the vice president of SGA?

[25:48] **Warren Hamilton:** I'm not sure. I don't know it. Was it John England? I know John was around. I'm not, I'm not sure. But I know John was around and there was a guy, Neal.

[26:07] **Calvin Austin:** Yes, okay.

[26:08] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes.

[26:10] **Calvin Austin:** But anyway. Well, okay. Billy Abrams, do you remember him?

[26:18] **Warren Hamilton:** Oh, yes. I know Billy.

[26:21] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Yes, and—

[26:24] **Warren Hamilton:** I'm just trying—is Billy alive?

[26:25] **Calvin Austin:** I think for some reason, I thought Billy was the vice president.

[26:33] **Warren Hamilton:** I think you might. You know, what I'm looking at now. I am seeing in my mind that picture where they had all the candidates and—

[26:41] **Calvin Austin:** Yes, okay.

[26:43] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes. You know, this is my mind. This is some 50 years ago [laughter].

[26:49] **Calvin Austin:** That's not almost it's been 53 years this week. So, that's 54 years as you ran, so don't feel bad. It's been a while. It's been a while [crosstalk]. Let's see. Okay, so you graduate from Tuskegee. You all prepared to meet the world. What did you do?

27:13] **Warren Hamilton:** Well, I wanted to be a lawyer. So, there were a lot of programs. And then there was a thing called Clio that I got in right after. They were, you know, trying to get lawyers, law students placed in school. So, we had a little summer program in Atlanta. And they,



law schools, came and recruited. So, I went to recruiting, I was recruited by Temple out of Philadelphia. So that's why I ended up going to Temple. And I went there, and it was, you know, it was an experience. You know, we got through it. But—

[28:02] Calvin Austin: When said it was an experience, we got through it, what does that mean?

[28:10] Warren Hamilton: Well, there was this dean of students at Temple, who in turn, didn't think that black students were able to handle the curriculum. And so we get pushed into a war, another civil rights war in law school. If you're fighting to maintain your status, in terms of you fighting, not only for yourself, but you're fighting for, you know, for the people. You know, you got this prejudiced guy who wants to keep the whole thing all white. In fact, from what I understand, at the time, this goes in the '60s, they hadn't, although there were law students taking the bar exam in Pennsylvania, a black person hadn't passed the bar in about ten or fifteen years in Pennsylvania. And I think the way the record was that there was a guy I knew there was a judge, a guy I met here, who was a judge. He was the 50th person to pass the bar in Pennsylvania. And that was 1950.

So, it was sort of you know, it was just political kind of football. In a sense, the way the bar association with the Bar Examiners dealt with, you know, even if you graduated from law school, and the law schools were basically reflecting it. You know, they made it as difficult as they could in terms of grades and put making you go through hoops, you're taking tests that you may not have had to take, other people didn't take, to prove that, you know, you were qualified. So, I mean, that is really what I'm speaking of, as I said, that maybe it was some like, students, they really were crushed by the efforts they made but you know, some of us got through. I got through, I took the bar, passed it. And then I became involved in, you know, just practicing basically criminal law. I got involved with a guy named Cecil Moore, who was a rather famous guy, he was a civil rights leader in Philly. I knew about him, because I used to read before I met him, but he was also a prominent criminal lawyer.

There weren't a lot of things, places for us to go after I got out of law school and you know, the major corporate [unclear] law firms were basically hiring people out of you know, the Harvard's, Yale's, what have you. And Temple was basically a school where that supplied a lot of the people the nuts-and-bolts lawyers, so to speak, that handle your city stuff and any depositions like that. So, I basically was in private practice, most of the time, I did work as a law clerk for a couple of judges over a period of maybe four or five years. I worked for a civil rights organization for a couple of years. It was called PILCOP. It dealt with police brutality. During that time, it was a guy named Frank Rizzo, who had a rather, he had a—he was an infamous strong cop, he became mayor. So, I worked in, you know, in the Civil Rights thing while I was at sea, so there are a lot of civil rights stuff I work with, along with doing criminal stuff.

[33:13] Calvin Austin: Okay, so.

[33:15] Warren Hamilton: So, that's, I've been involved with a lot of issues, you know, through the years.



[33:26] **Calvin Austin:** So, where are we now? What do you, what are you doing now?

[33:31] **Warren Hamilton:** I'm still practicing. Doing some business aid, basically. A lot of it has to do with, I don't know. Well, I did Chrome's up for all that time. Anyway. But I've been involved with subcontractors. I was also involved in music business. I did that for a while in terms of the, with the rap. I had some rap artists in the fact, I initially represented Will Smith. And with his first record. And so, I've had a number of young music clients I've dealt with.

[34:20] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. So, getting back to the, your Tuskegee experience. And TIS/CEP did anything that you gained from your work experience at TIS/CEP go with you the rest of your life or was it just a window of time that you experienced then you moved on?

[34:54] **Warren Hamilton:** No, I mean, it is impactful to the day. I mean in terms of the people and the need, our need to be in touch with people, our folks, to hear it from us. To hear our stories, to be able to associate themselves on a personal basis with people like them. So, I mean, that was, I mean, that whole thing is invaluable. I mean, if more people, more students would get involved with folks who didn't have that experience, didn't have people pushing them, then you don't know what that impact will be. You know, I know, I have met guys, I've done a lot of you know, criminal law with juveniles. And I know, I've talked to this guy, and I talked to all my clients. And about six months later, this lady stopped me on the street and said, I don't know what you told my son, but he has turned himself completely around all them guys he was messing with, you know, he just turned up, turn away from them.

So, you don't ever know. You know, it wasn't like I converted somebody and saved them, but it was just the interaction. I don't know, if he saw something in that interaction, if he identified with me, if he thought I was cool, like, I thought Howard Moore was cool. To make you want to be that you know. And so, that is what we can't discount, you know? How engagement, how contact with one another. This is good to do videos and what have you, but there's nothing like, you know, flesh on flesh. You know, and more programs like this will be good to give. And sometimes it may take some people off their high horses, you know, because they're [unclear]. You know, and so I think anytime you can come up with that, and a situation can convince you to come off your high horse, is a good situation.

[37:41] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. So, let's see. Now so I can get a complete picture of you. You are recently married and then recently by my standards, you recently married [laughter]. Tell us about your family, you know, your wife, kids, or any of them.

[38:04] **Warren Hamilton:** No, well I don't have any kids. But just my wife Linda. And we are—she has one daughter is [unclear] limited to my chosen path. But there are people around it [unclear] and what have you. But, you know, I can say I'm pleased with the way things are going.

[38:41] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, what about you? What about your family in Savannah? Any, are they still, you know, your brothers?



[38:47] **Hamilton:** Yes, all my brothers are basically alive. I have four brothers still scattered around Atlanta. So, we're, you know, we're in touch and—

[39:00] **Calvin Austin:** Did any of them go to Tuskegee or?

[39:03] **Hamilton:** My youngest brother. My youngest brother, ten years younger than me, Jamal. He graduated in, I think, chemistry. So, he worked with, I think, the city for— in the water department for a long time. Then he retired and went back. I mean doing consulting work or something.

[39:31] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Okay, and do you get back to Tuskegee? Are you in contact with anybody from our era at Tuskegee?

[39:47] **Hamilton:** I'm about the only person, well, there was a guy, I don't know if you remember him. Frank Green from Charleston, South Carolina. Used to be he like ran track or was around a track team.

[40:04] **Calvin Austin:** I've got to go look him up. Was he in our class when he went?

[40:10] **Hamilton:** No, he was ahead of us.

[40:13] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[40:15] **Warren Hamilton:** But he was around. He's in Philly. I talk to him a lot. So, as I say, I'm in touch with Eugene Adams. We call one another.

[40:32] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. And are you affiliated with any organizations or anything along those lines or?

40:42] **Warren Hamilton:** At this point, just, I'm just a church guy. I've been with the Mother Bethel AME church for about 27, 28 years. Now I'm on the trustee Pro Tem, on a trustee board and have been for a while.

[41:08] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. And trying to, just trying to make sure that—and I think you mentioned quickly passing that when you were down in at working in TISEP you were at a church in Roba, Alabama.

[41:26] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes.

[41:27] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. And that's. So—

[41:34] **Warren Hamilton:** You know what, and this name, I don't know if it just popped in my head. I think the lady I stayed with was Miss Chappelle.

[41:44] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Miss Chappelle?



[41:47] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes. That's the name just popped in my head. I don't know. I could be wrong.

[41:56] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, well.

[41:57] **Warren Hamilton:** That's whose place we stayed.

[41:59] **Calvin Austin:** And this was in Roba?

[42:03] **Warren Hamilton:** In Roba.

[42:03] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, I'm—

[42:04] **Warren Hamilton:** Right down the road. Right up the road, down a road [laughter].

[42:09] **Calvin Austin:** Down the holla [laughter]. Okay, let's see. Well, is there anything that you recall that you'd like to share with us before we conclude this?

[42:30] **Warren Hamilton:** That's, I guess, that's about it. You know, outside of it was. Oh, the other thing I remember is I lost 40 pounds when I came back from Roba [laughter]. And I know, Mr. Logan, he looked at me, he said, are they treating you right? Is something wrong? But it is just that heat, you know, and I guess playing in it is, it is to the right. I wasn't on no diet. Wish I could do it now.

[43:08] **Calvin Austin:** Well, don't we all because we, you know, like, it's one of those things where I look at you and I look at me, and I said, Gee whiz, you know, when we were in school, I was the ghost of vanished vitamins. But now I am, you know, I got a little bit going on, too. So. Yes, that's what happens. Okay, well, look. And this is, you know, this particular exercise has been a pleasure for me, because I have really gotten to connect with you. Found out a lot about you that I didn't know, and just to communicate back and forth.

[43:51] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes. Likewise, man. We saw one another it's like we, you Tuskegee, Tuskegee man. In terms of just the interchange and, you know, in terms of the way we approach the whole time we were there, you know, it was just it was very interesting.

[44:22] **Calvin Austin:** It really was, and, you know, like, and I have made more friends from Tuskegee that were there on campus with me since I left Tuskegee than I had when I was there, because when I was there, I was sort of a slightly focused nerd. But now that I have some time to sit and meet and talk to people, it's a lot better.

[44:46] **Warren Hamilton:** I think we've all had that sort of where their focus was leading them and, you know, you kind of regret it, the fact that you're, you hope, you wish you could have been with [crosstalk].



[45:01] **Calvin Austin:** And just think the people that left us that we don't have that opportunity to go back in and have these types of interchanges with.

[45:11] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes man.

[45:11] **Calvin Austin:** But look on behalf of the committee, I really appreciate you're agreeing to participate in this oral history project. And I will get back with you soon with some information about it. And we will continue to communicate because now that I know how to find you, I will find you.

[45:43] **Warren Hamilton:** You know, I've always said I would really like to talk to some of the guys. You know, like Melvin Todd.

[45:53] **Calvin Austin:**

Yes, yes. Melvin's up in Philly, no he's up in New Jersey, not too far from you.

[45:58] **Warren Hamilton:** Yes. In fact, you know, when they had that killing at South Carolina State? Remember when the boys were killed at South Carolina State.

[46:09] **Calvin Austin:** Right, right, right.

[46:10] **Warren Hamilton:** We took a fact-finding mission. I mean, nuts. We drove from Tuskegee to Orangeburg. He will, Melvin. I don't know if you remember Phil Frazier from New York.

[46:24] **Calvin Austin:** I remember the name, but—

[46:26] **Warren Hamilton:** We called him Nick, New York Knicks.

[46:28] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[46:29] **Warren Hamilton:** Phil. Phil, it was Willie Bobo. And then he went later.

[46:33] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, well, yes.

[46:37] **Warren Hamilton:** And it will be something, you know, that whole trip that we were, in fact, we drove to Savannah, and we stayed at my parents' house. And then we got up and we went Orangeburg, which is about two hours from it. And just to kind of recall some of those things that happened and this perspective that people now have, you know, on it, but—

[47:05] **Calvin Austin:** What did you guys find out?

[47:07] **Warren Hamilton:** Well, there was an assassination, they went to kill the, put the, whatever they call it, sled, South Carolina law enforcement. They stood on a hill and shot down. And I think they were trying to kill Cleveland Sellers. For the boys they shot were tall guys like



queen. And it was horrible. I mean, it was horrible. They had, when we got on campus, there were planes flying all over. It was rough. But that was the same year Kent State, you know, them folks they were getting—you heard about Kent State, didn't you?

[47:56] Calvin Austin: Well, I heard about both of them. In fact, Kent State was like in '69, '70 timeframe. And because I was living in Cleveland at the time when that happened.

[48:10] Warren Hamilton: Yes. Okay. Okay.

[48:12] Calvin Austin: And but, yes, and South Carolina State, one of my good friends here, was in school there. And the one thing that came out of that is that they did a report, and nobody from South Carolina will release that report. At least they hadn't up until—I haven't heard about it in a few years, but they haven't released it as of that time. Yes, but anyway. Well, look, sir, I will let you go to the rest of your day. And thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Appreciate you. And we will talk again soon. And you know how to get in touch with me too now. Okay, take care.

[48:55] Warren Hamilton: There's another document that sent. I'll forwarded it to you. The last one. I think I sent you the two release documents.

[49:03] Calvin Austin: Okay, great.

[49:05] Warren Hamilton: The third one I'll get into.

[49:07] Calvin Austin: Okay, appreciate. Okay. Thanks a lot.

[49:10] Warren Hamilton: Yes.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Eugene Harris/Eufaula AL

Interviewer: Guy Trammell/Tuskegee AL

Date: July 24, 2021

Transcriptionist: Kevin Holt

TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Eugene Harris was born to Willie and Pinkie Harris on January 26, 1943, at John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital on the campus of Tuskegee University. He attended St. Joseph Catholic School and graduated from Tuskegee Institute High School in 1961. He received two scholarships to attend Jarvis Christian College in Texas, graduating in 1966. A veteran, Harris served in the United States Air Force and reserve. He enjoyed a 28-year career with the YMCA in Cleveland, OH. Eugene Harris and Jewel, his wife of over 50 years, have a son and daughter.



Eugene Harris

[00:00:05] Guy Trammell: Okay, it is 1:40 pm and today is July the 24th 2021. I'm Guy Trammell in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. here to interview Eugene Harris, who is in Eufaula Alabama. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

[00:00:52] Eugene Harris: I am Eugene Harris, located in Eufaula, Alabama. I am being interviewed by Guy Trammell. Today is July 24, 2021.

[00:01:10] Guy Trammell: Okay, let's begin with—can you tell us your date of birth and where you were born? And then tell us about your parents and what they did.

[00:01:27] Eugene Harris: I was born on January 26, 1943. In fact, I was born at John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital in Tuskegee, located on the campus of Tuskegee University now. I—my parents, were Willie and Pinkie Harris. My father was an employee at the Veterans Hospital. He was on the police force there until he retired. My mother—

[00:02:04] Guy Trammell: That's Tusk-, That's Tuskegee Veterans Hospital, right?



[00:02:07] **Eugene Harris:** Tuskegee Veterans Hospital, right. My mother was on the staff at Tuskegee Institute at John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital for many, many years. I don't recall the number of years, but she left there, and she went to the VA hospital there in Tuskegee, where she later retired.

[00:02:33] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, okay. And I do believe that was the first veteran's hospital for blacks in the entire country. I believe.

[00:02:41] **Eugene Harris:** That's my understanding.

[00:02:43] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Now, we'll blend right on into that. Where you were born now, where you kind of grew up, and everything. Because did you live actually, at the Veterans Hospital or in the village of Greenwood, or—

[00:03:01] **Eugene Harris:** Yes. Okay. Alright. Of course, I grew up in, in Tuskegee. And I lived on Auburn Street, at the very top of Auburn Street. I attended St. Joseph Catholic School there. In fact, my brother and my sister also attended the same, the same school and—through eighth grade, and then we attended, we—both my brother and my sister, both attended Tuskegee Institute High school; we were all baby Tigers there.

[00:03:47] **Guy Trammell:** Right okay, now. And you got to tell me a little bit because—did you kind of frequent Greenwood also in around the campus?

[00:03:59] **Eugene Harris:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Greenwood, of course, Greenwood was a, was a neighborhood, it was a neighborhood in, in Tuskegee, and I'd frequent there, you know, often. I had classmates there, friends there, and all of that. So, Greenwood was just an integral part of the Tuskegee community.

[00:04:23] **Guy Trammell:** And I do believe the demographics there—say a little bit about that. Greenwood—

[00:04:30] **Eugene Harris:** Well, what I can remember, and hopefully I'm accurate on this, at the—at the time that I grew up there, my first 18 years, of course, was, was in, was in Tuskegee, in Tuskegee Institute. It was a majority of African American. And if I have to put a percentage on that, I think maybe I'm looking at anywhere from maybe 85%. I wanna say size 85% minority black, black people. The community was, of course, really, really dividing, you know, there was a black community and then there was, you know, a very, very small, white community a white population there in Tuskegee.

[00:04:51] **Guy Trammell:** And kind of talking about when you coming up, by the way, were you in the Boy Scouts?

[00:05:37] **Eugene Harris:** Okay, growing up of course I was in the Boy Scouts. In fact, I was in, was in two troops as I, If I can remember. I started off in troop 70 and then they—started troop 270. And I was a part of that particular troop until I—I don't remember now. I believe—I



believe—I know I was a first class—I believe that I sort of dropped out of Boy Scouts when I was a star. I think that was the rank, a star rank. I went to summer camps; Camp Tukabatchee—Tukabatchee I think it is, for, you know, in the summertime. I don't remember now if it was a week or a two-week camp. But I do remember participating in summer camp.

[00:06:45] Guy Trammell: Who were some of the adult leaders? Some of the names—

[00:06:49] Eugene Harris: I remember. I remember there were two adult leaders that I can remember. They were both veterinarians: Dr. Hall and, oh my goodness, I just can't—

[00:07:09] Guy Trammell: Ellis Hall.

[00:07:11] Eugene Harris: Oh, yes. Ellis Hall, that's absolutely, absolutely right.

[00:07:17] Guy Trammell: Was the other one Henderson by any chance?

[00:07:20] Eugene Harris: Dr. Henderson? Well, of course, Dr. Henderson was—well he was sort of "Mr. Boy Scout" and the, the, the veterinary doctors, Dr. Hall, and all of them they worked sort of under him as I can remember. They were—but Dr. Henderson was, you know, he was, he was "Mr. Boy Scout."

[00:07:47] Guy Trammell: Yes. And all that and all these were African American leaders?

[00:07:51] Eugene Harris: They were all African Americans. Yes.

[00:07:53] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[00:07:54] Eugene Harris: Every last one of them.

[00:07:55] Guy Trammell: Did you have any connection with someplace called Atkins?

[00:08:00] Eugene Harris: Camp Atkins? The name—I remember the name, but I just cannot remember anything in order to, you know, really be definitive about that.

[00:08:13] Guy Trammell: Okay. Tell us—you got to tell me where did you get your scouting uniform and things like that and, and who ran that by the way?

[00:08:21] Eugene Harris: Again, I'm gonna be—I don't remember. I just don't remember where we got the scout uniform on from now.

[00:08:36] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[00:08:38] Eugene Harris: Whether it was local, or whether we got it out of Auburn, or out of Montgomery or—



[00:08:43] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[00:08:44] Eugene Harris: I don't remember that. But I do, speaking of uniforms, I do remember an incident though, that involved uniforms. We had a—there was a fire at one of the scouts' homes at—at one time and there were two scouts that lived there. And I remember they—they lost everything, and I do remember that some kind of way, Dr. Henderson had some type of fundraiser or something like that where they actually went out and bought uniforms for these two young men. That I remember.

[00:09:26] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay. And any—remember any activity, other activities as a child involving maybe the campus or you know, things around—

[00:09:39] Eugene Harris: Oh yes, we—there was the—the baseball during the summer, and I don't really know if we called it the little league, but we had various teams in the community and probably, my guess now is, probably four, maybe five, you know, different teams in various communities. And you know, we competed there. And that was, it was a lot of fun. And we had the—the Coach Sawyers and all those folks were a part of that. But Coach Sawyer was one of the coaches on campus. And, you know, he was a participant and part of the leadership with, with that particular program. Some of the names slip me now, um—last name of Coach Davis sort of—Coach Sharp, who was—one of the, one of the coaches in fact, he was, if I can remember, he was actually director of the recreation at the Tuskegee VA hospital. And that was a part of the work that he did as volunteer, you know, with the, with the baseball. We had elementary school, we had, it was several elementary schools there. And we had Elementary basketball teams, where we actually had the—at the end of the season, we had the tournament at Logan Hall. That was a part of—it was wonderful, you know, just about just a wonderful extracurricular activity that we participated in there.

[00:11:42] Guy Trammell: And I got to ask did you ever get a chance to go into the library on campus and—

[00:11:48] Eugene Harris: Oh yes, that, that was the only library that, that I remember ever going into, you know, as a child, and that was the—the, the children's room at [laughs] on campus. That was, that was the library, you know, right across, from Logan Hall. That was something that we'd frequent quite often. In fact, the library there on campus sponsored community activities among the various schools we had. I remember I think was each February that was some type of contest we had among the, among various schools and things like that.

[00:12:37] Guy Trammell: Yes. And a couple more things. At the VA, did you ever see the men's baseball game?

[00:12:47] Eugene Harris: Yes, that was a—that was, that was something that it was a—it was a real staple in any community on Sundays. They had the baseball programs there. And they had, you know, teams that would come in and, and play. There were some very, very talented baseball players. Not only did they have folks in the community that were part of the team, but I do remember that, on at least one occasion, a person who was an actual, you know, patient there was



part of the team and participated, you know, with the, with the VA, team. But there were some very, very talented people that were part of that, that baseball team there at the VA, and then they had Andre Thornton. André Thornton, who was a professional basket—baseball player, was from Tuskegee. And I don't know, again, you know, I can't be real definitive about that but he may have played for the VA hospital, or he may have played for what they called the Crenshaw team there in, in Tuskegee because there were two teams there. But I remember all of that. Oh, yes. That was he had a lot of the community would come out to the baseball games on Saturday. I mean, on, on Sundays.

[00:14:29] Guy Trammell: Okay. And again, all of what you're talking about is African Americans, too, right?

[00:14:34] Eugene Harris: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. This is all African Americans. Oh, totally.

[00:14:41] Guy Trammell: And we're talking about in the middle of a Jim Crow South. It's almost like an oasis right there with all African Americans in the community. And I want you to mention too just one last thing: the movies. Going to the movies and things.

[00:15:02] Eugene Harris: What's that? I'm sorry.

[00:15:04] Guy Trammell: When you attended movies as a child?

[00:15:06] Eugene Harris: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, well, two things there. Um, there was a movie theater downtown. And from what I can recall—and it may have been—I guess it was one building two entrances: one black, one white. I believe that was the way it was set up. And the one on the—on the left side was the—was for African Americans. And then there was the Lincoln Drive-In Theater, and that was totally as I can recall, black, because there was no—there was no white participation there at all. So, it was. Yes, it was totally, and that was the drive-in theater, which was, you know, frequented by African Americans.

[00:16:11] Guy Trammell: Yes, exactly. Yes. This is kind of going back too. Do you remember any of your nursery school experience or some of the nursery schoolteachers or anything? Because I know that [unclear].

[00:16:26] Eugene Harris: I remember of course you know, as again, I started school when I was five years old, and that was kindergarten at St. Joseph. So, all of my teachers when I was at St. Joseph, were all nuns. They were all nuns. And they were all white nuns. We did not have any black nuns at the time when I believe they were Dominican. They were Dominicans. And I recall that whenever there was a, at least one black nun that was a part of that system that came into Tuskegee, and, you know, obviously, she was introduced to the school. And that lady was the daughter of a photographer at Tuskegee, and his name slips me now. I'll come up with his name.

[00:16:27] Guy Trammell: Polk?

[00:16:55] Eugene Harris: Yes. That's, that's exactly right. That's...



[00:17:44] Guy Trammell: P.H. Polk.

[00:17:47] Eugene Harris: Yes. It was his store. But I remember a good experience there in the elementary school. I remember St. Joseph because I attended St. Joseph. And then there was Chairman's Children's house located, you know, right off of the campus of Tuskegee Institute. Lewis Adams and Washington public from what I remember and then there were some that were located, Harris Barracks and some of the others, that were located out in the country as I recall.

[00:18:38] Guy Trammell: Yes man. Okay. Well, let's go up on what they call the hill, I believe. When you got there you remember some of the teachers there and that experience as far as preparing you for college. Was there any, how can I say, encouragement? In other words, how was that environment there at Tuskegee Institute High School?

[00:19:08] Eugene Harris: I remember, of course, going into high school in the ninth grade and there you were merged into a school where you've got several elementary schools coming together in the ninth grade there; people that you may or may not have known and chances are you did not know them. The teachers were—I thought we had some excellent, excellent teachers. They focused on education and in terms of preparation for college. It was not what you would do after high school except go to college. Tuskegee was that type of was that type of high school. And I remember Mr. Poole who was I believe the assistant principal and he was a math teacher. There was so many of them that we had: Mrs. Perry in English, Mrs. Dixon in English, you know 12th grade English and there were others. I just can't come up with some, but I think the preparation was good. I have no problems with the preparation that I had. It was just that, you know, it was there, it was presented to you, and you had to take advantage of it.

[00:21:23] Guy Trammell: Yes. Was Ms. Jeffries there? Ms. Poole?

[00:21:26] Eugene Harris: Ms. Jeffers chemistry. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yes, she was I believe maybe 11th grade. I don't remember now, you know, when I had chemistry. But yes, Ms. Jeffers, was there. Oh, yes.

[00:21:43] Guy Trammell: And talk a little bit about the facility itself because was it like an older kind of rundown facility? Was it more up to date was it—

[00:22:00] Eugene Harris: As I look back on it, the facility was adequate. It was a clean facility. And if you put it up to today's standards, of course, you know, facilities far exceed in terms of now. But if you look at, for instance, the chemistry lab, we had, I believe, the materials that we needed to work with, but you can't compare them with today's materials, obviously. But they were adequate at the time with the exception of the gymnasium; we did not have a gymnasium at that particular High School. And it was after my graduation that they put a gymnasium there at that particular school.



[00:23:14] Guy Trammell: Yes. Okay. So now, you said it was definitely an environment to encourage college, how did your classmates or I'll say schoolmates, as far as you know, how did they take that on and yourself also?

[00:23:40] Eugene Harris: I say this about Tuskegee, my growing up in Tuskegee at the time, it was not a matter of "were you going to college" it was just "where were you going?" Either Tuskegee or some other place, but you were going to college. And with my graduating class, and I think there were 158 of us. And out of 158, I would think that two-thirds of us went to college, either at Tuskegee or some other place. But you were, you know, you were encouraged. You know, as I said it was not a matter of "were you going" it's just "where you were going to go to college."

[00:24:34] Guy Trammell: Okay, so now, graduation's coming up. What was in your mind as far as where you were going and where did you decide to go?

[00:24:44] Eugene Harris: Well, you know, at the time, there wasn't a historical black college that I didn't know about. We knew about all of them and in fact, you may have put an application in at one or maybe two, but you knew, before graduation, what was going to happen, wherever you were going to school. There was some of us that had our minds made up before graduation, others, after graduation. I was sort of torn between staying at home going to school or going to, at the time, I was going to go to Tennessee State. And then I was offered by Jarvis Christian College out in Texas, two scholarships: I got an academic and an athletic scholarship. So, I said, you know, "what the devil, I'll go out to Jarvis Christian College," which I did. And I spent four years out there. That's where I graduated college. But that was just a matter of it was definitely academics there at that school.

[00:26:23] Guy Trammell: Okay, so, what years were you in college?

[00:26:28] Eugene Harris: '61. I graduated from high school in '61. And actually, finished college in 1966.

[00:26:37] Guy Trammell: Okay, okay. Now, here you are on a college campus now. And you are living there; any transitions or anything? Any adaptations you had to go through? Or?

[00:26:56] Eugene Harris: Oh, being away from home was the only one, you know. Really being away from home was the only as I, as I saw it then, was the only thing that was, and it wasn't a problem, not at all. But it was just being away from home. College life, from the outside, you sort of experienced that by the fact that you grew up in Tuskegee. So, you knew a lot about college life and what to expect and all of that. So that wasn't a real adjustment problem. It was just being away from home. That was the only thing.

[00:27:46] Guy Trammell: Okay, now, what was your major and the year that you graduated?

[00:27:50] Eugene Harris: Okay. I was a history major. And I had a physical education and sociology minor.



[00:27:58] Guy Trammell: Okay, and you graduated from college in, what year was that?

[00:28:03] Eugene Harris: It was January of 1966.

[00:28:06] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now, how did you come? Did you come into college with your major in mind? Or how did you come to that conclusion?

[00:28:17] Eugene Harris: That sort of grew on me a little bit. When I was in high school that last year before I really made up my mind where I was going to school, as I indicated. Speaking of Tennessee State, they had what was called a pre-law major. And I wanted to go into law. And that was going to be my major. But of course, I went to Jarvis Christian, and they did not have that. But they had a history major, which I said, "Well, that's what I'll do." And that's the reason I chose history. And I wanted to stay in, you know, in athletics sort of. So, I had a physical education minor.

[00:28:17] Guy Trammell: Okay, now, were you able to, while you on campus, did you join any of the societies for history or any of the ones in some of the areas that you were taking?

[00:29:27] Eugene Harris: Yes. I was part of what was called the history society out there in Texas, and of course, being in that particular state, many of the activities related to Texas, with the Texas history and all that, so you had a lot of programs that dealt with that type of thing; the Texas societies and so forth. Part of the groups were, the NAACP. I was a part of the student NAACP there. That was one that comes to mind. The Physical Education Society there. I joined the group that was, excuse me, the Officials Association, and later I was a certified basketball official there, taking the test, and all of that so, you know, that was nice, and then I was a varsity basketball player. So, that worked out real well.

[00:31:04] Guy Trammell: Excellent, excellent. Yes, I know, Booker T. Washington's executive secretary Emmett Scott, actually he picked him up out of Texas.

[00:31:12] Eugene Harris: Yup. Yes.

[00:31:17] Guy Trammell: Okay, so now you're there and how did you hear about TIS/CEP and, by the way, were you in the summer program? The Community Education Program? Which one?

[00:31:30] Eugene Harris: Okay. After I graduated from college, I enlisted because I had received those student deferments and I had forgotten the 4-Fs or whatever the student deferments were, so I knew I had an obligation to the military. So instead of waiting to be drafted in, I volunteered, and at the time they were looking for black folks who had a high math aptitude. I took the air force exam, and I scored pretty high. So, I was able to get into the power utilization program there and get into OTS school, and I was going to be an officer. I thought that would be you know, pretty good. In January of '66, I was sworn into the air force and into OTS school. Unbeknownst to me, though, you know, there were a lot of problems there. And segregation is



segregation and prejudice is prejudice and all of that, and I encountered quite a bit of that in OTS school. I later learned though, while I was there, that I could get out, because I was married and not have to stay in because I had a...my training officer was someone who...you couldn't believe the attitude of that particular person towards minorities. And in my squad, I was the only minority, and I was not about to pass anything, you know, under this particular individual. So anyway, I was able to self-eliminate myself from active duty. And my obligation then to the United States Military would be six years in the reserve, is what I was able to do. So, I did not have to stay on active duty, you know, at all. So, I came out in March of '66, went back to Tuskegee, and that's when I joined TIS/CEP, '66.

[00:34:43] Guy Trammell: Okay, and was it the summer education program or the community education program?

[00:34:50] Eugene Harris: You know, I don't remember really which one, but it was in March that I became a part of the program. So technically I'm not sure which one it would have been.

[00:35:04] Guy Trammell: Okay. And in the reserve, what state were you in with the reserve?

[00:35:11] Eugene Harris: I was here. I started off in Alabama and most of mine was done in Ohio.

[00:35:17] Guy Trammell: Okay, so how did you hear about TIS/CEP? Was it fliers or some of the talk or—

[00:35:24] Eugene Harris: Well, I think it was, by a matter of my you know, coming back home and being on the campus, for whatever reason, that's where I learned about TIS/CEP and what was going on through. And I may have gone directly to Dean Phillips to ask us. I was seeking employment and everything else. So, it may have been Dean Phillips that I actually talked to you about that.

[00:36:03] Guy Trammell: Okay. And what job or what particular activities were you involved with?

[00:36:13] Eugene Harris: I was what was called a recreational specialist. I worked with Mr. Chenier, who was over that particular program. His wife was Mrs. Chenier in the physical education department, but I worked for Mr. Chenier as a recreational specialist. We would go out to the various counties and train the teacher coordinators on how to really teach physical education using educational components. We also built the see-saws and swings and that type of thing for the various counties and actually, the sites where they were teaching kids.

[00:37:19] Guy Trammell: Okay, you got to tell me some of those sites, were some of them a little bit more—

[00:37:26] Eugene Harris: I can tell you the counties. We did a lot of work in Lowndes County. And at the time, Stokely Carmichael was working down in there, and that's where I met Stokely



Carmichael. And of course, you know, he was doing the voter registrations and all of that and our paths crossed and of course, TIS/CEP crossed with the, with his programs with absolutely no problem. We worked in Montgomery County, doing some work there. We also did work in Lee County, and obviously, Macon County, those I can remember right off.

[00:38:20] Guy Trammell: And I guess you mainly traveling on what dirt roads?

[00:38:27] Eugene Harris: Yes, there were a number of paved roads, but there were a number of dirt roads, because the actual sites were churches. They were teaching in churches, and most of them were located in the rural areas. And that was dirt roads. No doubt, dirt road. And my work was mainly during the daylight hours. They were not, you know, at night, but you know, some of course, types of work were at night, but not with the particular work that I was doing. And you were very cautious about that. It was a very dangerous time to be doing, you know, some of the work that they were doing, you know, and in terms of civil rights and all that.

[00:39:24] Guy Trammell: Now was it before that time or during TIS/CEP that you became aware of, like you were saying, the danger that was out there? And I know you're probably talking about the Jim Crow and the racial divide. At what point had you somewhat become aware of the situation that was out around the South here?

[00:39:58] Eugene Harris: I would think that I was aware of it, you know, long before joining TIS/CEP; long before that. I knew the attitude of people and the prejudice that was out there. And it was to my advantage, of course, we were working with TIS/CEP to have known, you know, some of that, you know. We were not naive to that type of thing. We were very cautious though. We were extremely, extremely cautious. Particularly in certain counties like Lowndes County, which very, very tough, very tough. And some of the people that we worked with were teachers. Well, they were ex-teachers or teachers that were fired when they started integrating the various systems, they were no longer a part of the county or the systems. As a result, TIS/CEP had many of those folks to work with; they no longer had jobs. So, they knew what was going on. They would caution us, you know, about those types of things. We didn't drive our personal vehicles. We always went out in the TIS/CEP vehicles. And most of them were station wagons, I guess it was. And they had certain license plates, and the police and everybody else knew when those cars came into those counties. And you were, you knew, you know, what to do and what not to do in those counties. So it was, it was dangerous. There's no doubt about that, you know, it was, it was very dangerous.

[00:42:14] Guy Trammell: Okay. Were you able to see any results? Were you able to go back to some of the sites before that summer was out to see how the facilities and the programs are going? Or did you get any feedback?

[00:42:33] Eugene Harris: Yes, I would think that with our particular program our part of that. One of the things that was developed is I put together a manual, and I guess we call it a sort of a textbook, lack of recreational program, educational recreational program, and each site had one of those. And they used that. They use that manual. And those manuals started with the program and when the program ended in the summertime, you know, they still had those manuals, the



recreational equipment that we built and put into those places. We went back and we repaired equipment and all of that. And eventually, of course, the site whether it was a church or someone's private home that we were using. They actually used that equipment, because it was something where we got them to sign off, you know, on that. So, it was actually theirs to keep. So, I think it was pretty good, you know, in terms of their participation and then the after the thought of this program. It was something that truly lasted.

[00:44:19] Guy Trammell: Absolutely, yes. Now as you went on, you tell us about your career, and what you fully went into? What was your occupation? Yes.

[00:44:37] Eugene Harris: Well, after TIS/CEP, and I was with TIS/CEP for a little over a year, I went to Cleveland, Ohio, and cut through a lot of things. And I actually started off working for The YMCA of Greater Cleveland. I started off as the Physical Education Director there. And I worked for the YMCA for 28 years. I had a number of jobs: I was the executive director of branches, Vice President of a number of programs, I ended up as the group vice president in charge of all of the facilities. I had nine YMCAs under my supervision, and I worked there for 28 years for retiring.

[00:45:51] Guy Trammell: That's a major change in climate too, now [laughs].

[00:45:55] Eugene Harris: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, it was from working with, I would say, almost 100% African Americans to, you know, the integration and all of that, but it was not without its , you know, challenges and all that because the YMCA, like, so many other companies, had its problems too. I was offered a position before leaving Tuskegee to go to Cleveland with the YMCA in Montgomery, Alabama, as a physical education director there, in what is now the Cleveland Avenue YMCA. But it was a part of the Montgomery Association, but it was not fully a part of the Montgomery association. It was not a part of retirement programs and now that. I looked into all that, you know, and I chose not to accept that position.

[00:46:05] Guy Trammell: You might need to clarify, because, again, I do believe that's in more of what the African American part of Montgomery versus where the other...

[00:47:19] Eugene Harris: It is. There were, like I said, a number of companies. You join a company, but you don't have the full benefits of the company. You know, you're not a part of the retirement system. You're not a part of the insurance programs and that type of thing. And that was what was actually taking place with the black people and the YMCA in the south. Had I been a part of that YMCA, I would have received a salary, but not been a part of a retirement program. not been a part of the insurance program. But the whites were. Now in other sections of the country, in fact as an example in Cleveland, I had the full benefits. So that's what I meant by that.

[00:47:46] Guy Trammell: Absolutely. Yes. Okay. And have you been able to become involved in any government position along the way?

[00:48:42] Eugene Harris: I'm sorry, I didn't hear—



[00:48:44] Guy Trammell: Have you been involved in any government position along?

[00:48:47] Eugene Harris: No. Yes and No, I received grants. I was the, and I don't remember the year now this is again, through my YMCA career. One of my YMCAs was responsible for the housing programs in Cleveland. We established the first transitional housing program there. We wrote a grant. I was the lead staff person for this. We wrote a grant and received a 10-year and I believe it was \$3 million for rehabbing a facility and implementing the first transitional housing program for homeless men in Cleveland. So that was a government program. And you know, that was one of the programs I was responsible for. It was under my supervision that we did this. And there were some other small governmental grants, but it was what's called "pass-through" from the government down to the cities and some of the—oh boy, it's slipping me now, in terms of the programs that we offered, but we offered a lot of programs that were offered by the city of Cleveland, but it was money. Block grant! That's the word I'm trying to come up with; block grant money that we got to offer a number of programs. Summer programs as well as 12-month programs there. And they were all government programs.

[00:51:15] Guy Trammell: Okay. Have you had a particular political party or religious affiliation along the way, too?

[00:51:26] Eugene Harris: Oh, yes. Democrat. In fact, here in Eufaula, I am the Chair of the Barbour County Executive Committee of the Democratic Party.

[00:51:45] Guy Trammell: And particular church?

[00:51:48] Eugene Harris: I am a Catholic, I am a practicing Catholic.

[00:51:55] Guy Trammell: Okay. And what, also because I know before retirement and even after retirement, civic activities have been involved in?

[00:52:11] Eugene Harris: You faded on me again.

[00:52:13] Guy Trammell: I'm sorry. So yes, what specific activities have you been involved in either before or after retirement?

[00:52:20] Eugene Harris: Oh okay. Well, in Cleveland, you know after spending 30-something years, you know, actually living there, I was a part of the—a member of the NAACP, I belong to the various civic clubs. you know, I was a Kiwanis person, held an office in the Kiwanis Club for a long time. I did work with the county programs as a volunteer coordinating some of their regional programs. I was a member of the Urban League, and you know did work with them, the American Red Cross. After retiring from the YMCA, I worked for the Summit County Red Cross area in Ohio for four years. I developed; I actually started their program for—financial development program there in Summit County. And I did that for four years.



[00:53:56] **Guy Trammell:** And that kind of helped people learn about financial literacy and financial empowerment? Is it on that level?

[00:54:09] **Eugene Harris:** That was a part of it, but it was more on the fundraising portion of it.

[00:54:14] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[00:54:15] **Eugene Harris:** I developed that department, and that department was responsible for the fundraising for the entire county. It turned out that Summit County was the fourth largest Red Cross in the state of Ohio that we put together.

[00:54:40] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, okay. Excellent, excellent. Okay, now, you mentioned your wife, could you tell us her name and her occupation?

[00:54:49] **Eugene Harris:** Yep. Her name is Jewel. We met in college. We've been married for—good she's not here, I'd probably get it wrong—been married for 55 years. No 50, yes, 55 years; been married for 55 years. She is a librarian by education. She has a master's in library science from Case Western Reserve University. She was in the public library there in Cleveland, Ohio for a number of years. And when the library started to automate, in fact, she got out of the library system, and she worked for the Gaylord information system. And she actually automated libraries. She was in sales, though she sold automation, sold computers to the libraries for 20—I'll get this wrong too, 24 years. That's what she did, you know, before retiring. And of course, keep going, we have two kids, a son, and a daughter. Son's in the Greater Chicago area and daughter is still in the Cleveland area.

[00:56:32] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, okay. They like the North [laughs]. That's all right. Okay, toward the end, I want to get your perspective on with TIS/CEP; how can I say, lessons that the rest of us should learn from TIS/CEP and how valuable are the concepts that you saw in TIS/CEP possibly for today?

[00:57:05] **Eugene Harris:** I think we need some TIS/CEPs today. There's absolutely no doubt. There were many things that TIS/CEP did in all aspects, you know, from education to just daily living. The food program that TIS/CEP had, the educational programs that they had, the health programs that they had, you need that. TIS/CEP is what I would call a community-type program, offered by an educational institution, administered by an educational institution. And it's out there, you know, we need the TIS/CEPs.

[00:58:02] **Guy Trammell:** Had you stayed in touch with anyone from TIS/CEP since that time or come across any of the ones from TIS/CEP?

[00:58:12] **Eugene Harris:** The only person that really, I can say that I really run across—well, a couple of them really. Lucenia Dunn, who was the mayor of Tuskegee for a while, I am in contact with her. That's one person. Wendell Paris worked for TIS/CEP for a while, who was a classmate of mine. It's interesting, you know, I am in contact with him, in fact, and we had lost contact and I was at a national meeting of the American Red Cross many years ago. He was also



at that meeting, and we touched bases together when he was with another agency at the time. But those are the only two that I can really, really say that I've been in contact with.

[00:59:22] Guy Trammell: Now, both of those are quite active in the community on a large scale.

[00:59:28] Eugene Harris: Oh yes.

[00:59:29] Guy Trammell: Would you be surprised by that? As far as, you know, given the background both [in] the TIS/CEP and being in Greenwood?

[00:59:39] Eugene Harris: No.

[00:59:40] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay. And give me a little bit of why that's not surprising to you, because that's amazing, right there.

[00:59:49] Eugene Harris: They're both, you know, the type of people that are going to stay involved, helping folks and being positive about everyday life; just active, positive individuals.

[01:00:08] Guy Trammell: And kind of throw yourself in there too because you're there too. The ingredients there, you kind of stirred that up with Tuskegee and TIS/CEP and everything. How does that come out to such a, some incredible lives that have come out because I know probably some more of your schoolmates and different ones have really done some major things in life.

[01:00:40] Eugene Harris: I think it all goes back to foundation. Our foundation in Tuskegee and I can't help but look, you know, and I look at—there's a picture of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver that you have in behind you. Booker T. Washington's great-grandson and I were classmates at St. Joseph: Marshall Cabiness. You know, we were good friends. Very good friends. You take Chappie James, Denise, who was in our class, my class at St. Joseph. And Daniel of course was behind us. You know, those were some of the types of people that we were associated with in Tuskegee, and I can go on and on. Sammy Younge, good, good friend, good, good friend, a year behind me. But you know, those were the type of folks that we associated with, you know. Those were our friends, the people that we grew up with. And you know, I could name so many folks that were like that, that left Tuskegee and went on to do many, many, many good things.

[01:02:21] Guy Trammell: Okay. And by the way, that is, like I said, Booker T. Washington but that's awesome. Lewis Adams, the one that brought Booker T.

[01:02:29] Eugene Harris: Oh, that is Lewis Adams, that's not George Washington Carver. That's Lewis Adams. That's who that is.

[01:02:33] Guy Trammell: Yes. Yes sir. And since you especially mentioned, Sammy Younge, could you just mention a little bit about coming through because you were right there in that time



period of the main part of the Civil Rights Movement in America? Come think about some of your memories and any involvement during that time.

[01:02:59] Eugene Harris: Well, you know, let me give you one incident with Sammy Younge that I can absolutely remember. And this was, I guess, would have to be the summer maybe the summer of '64. I think it was summer of '64. It was on Tuskegee's campus. Sammy Younge and Wendell Paris were together, and they were right near the Student Union there. And I happened to, I don't know if I was coming out of the student union, you know, going into the student union. This was during the summer. And I remember Wendell said, "Gene, come go with us." "Where are you guys going?" He said, "We're going down to Lowndes County." I remember that. And Sammy said, "Yes, come go with us." You know, and they were—I did not go, but I remember that you know, they were getting ready to go and do whatever it is that those guys were doing at the time they were very, very active. They were very, very active people. Sammy was just a great guy. Just a great, great guy.

[01:04:47] Guy Trammell: And he's from Tuskegee, right?

[01:04:50] Eugene Harris: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. he's from Tuskegee. He is a Tuskegee guy. I've got the book here, you know, at my home where Sammy Younge: first college student killed in the student movement.

[01:05:12] Guy Trammell: That's it, yes. Now, one more thing and then any thoughts you might have too, but I just have to ask you, with both, you know, Dean Berg Phillips with TIS/CEP, Sammy Younge, Wendell Paris, TIAL: Tuskegee Institute Advancement League, I think you probably knew Gwen Patton and some of the others. But why do you think there was so much coming out of this area of Tuskegee during the Civil Rights Movement? Like you were saying, going all the way over to Lowndes County and other places, here TIS/CEP was going all over counties throughout the area.

[01:05:59] Eugene Harris: I think you had the leadership. You had the people with the talent. Of course, I did not know Gwen. I knew of Gwen and if what she did, you know, I guess it's back to the time that she was—was she the president of the Student Council of Tuskegee, from Montgomery and all that? Well, and there were others around her, but I did not know Gwen, but I knew the work that she did. And I knew the work that so many others in this area did. We had some talented people. We had some people who accepted the challenge of going out and doing something, making things better. They were just great folks. And there's been a lot written about the Gwen Patton and people like that and you have to look at that. They were some talented people, and they accepted the challenge.

[01:07:15] Guy Trammell: Okay, any other thoughts you might have about your time with TIS/CEP and what was the result of that? Did that have any effect on your career and in your life too?

[01:07:30] Eugene Harris: I think that TIS/CEP was one of the first work experiences that I had, and it was a positive one, you know: a very, very positive one. I worked with some positive



people. I worked with some folks that were—I worked with some talented people; I really did. Mr. Shinier, I didn't really know him growing up. I knew his wife, but I did not know him. But these turned out to be some very talented people, very educational folks. And, you know, this was good. And they had, you know, a very positive effect on me. It was all good. Definitely so.

[01:08:34] Guy Trammell: I just want to thank you for that work. And thank you for all the work you've done and achievements you've done, even in Cleveland. It's a second home for me up in actually Columbus, Ohio. And thank you so much for being that young person out there making a difference in TIS/CEP too. We appreciate this interview. Okay.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Aloha Franklin Higgins/ Birmingham, AL

Interviewer: Joan Hamby Burroughs/ Birmingham, AL

Date: December 14, 2022

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Aloha was born in Birmingham, Alabama. Her formative years were spent in Birmingham's Collegeville neighborhood. She, her parents and eight siblings lived in a home that was about three blocks away from Bethel Baptist Church, a place of prominence in Birmingham's Civil Rights History. Her family participated in mass meetings and civil rights activities led by Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. Aloha enrolled at Tuskegee Institute in 1964 and worked in TISEP during the summer of 1965. Her Elementary Education major complemented her role as a tutor that summer in Lowndes County AL. Aloha graduated from Tuskegee Institute in 1968, and later, earned a master's degree from Indiana State University in Terre Haute, IN. She taught at the elementary level for 37 years: seven years in Indianapolis, IN, and 30 in Birmingham, AL. Aloha married Harold Higgins (dec.), they have three children, all of whom are Tuskegee graduates.



Aloha Franklin Higgins

[00:19] Joan Burroughs: Today is December 14, 2022, it's 10:30 am. I am Joan Hamby Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama, and here to interview Aloha Franklin Higgins who is in Birmingham, Alabama. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. And to correct myself, it is now 10:53 am on December 14, 2022. [Pause] So now you can begin.

[01:14] Aloha Higgins: Today is December 14, 2022. I am Aloha Doris Franklin Higgins in Birmingham, Alabama. And I am being interviewed today by Joan Burroughs.

[01:31] Joan Burroughs: So, I'll start again and ask you, Doris, how—about your growing up. Where did you grow up and tell me about your life before TIS/CEP.

[01:43] Aloha Higgins: Well, I married Harold Higgins, who was also—who's now deceased—but also a graduate of Tuskegee. We have three children who graduated from Tuskegee. So, everybody in my household, graduated from Tuskegee. My son is now a Doctor of Veterinary



Medicine, with his degree from Tuskegee, and my two daughters have careers that they enjoy. I'm a retired teacher. I taught for 37 years, seven years in Indianapolis, Indiana, where I got my master's degree from Indiana State in Terre Haute, Indiana. And the other 30 years I taught here in Birmingham, Alabama. I've been retired for 20 years.

[03:12] Joan Burroughs: And so, you were teaching in Birmingham then in the 70s?

[03:20] Aloha Higgins: I taught in Birmingham, during the time when they integrated the faculties in Birmingham. They thought that, you know, for integration, that they would start with the teachers instead of doing a total integration. So, I was a part of that, in that they integrated all of the schools, mainly by taking out all of the best black teachers and sending them to white schools. And taking all of the—I won't say trash, but that's what it was—worse teachers in the white schools and sent them to black schools. You know, we were very disappointed at that particular time because we weren't interested in integration, per se. All we wanted in our school system was equality; equality in materials and equipment. Integration was not our first priority. In my opinion, integration hurt us as a race of people in Birmingham.

I grew up in Collegeville, which was an area in North Birmingham. I grew up about three blocks from Bethel Baptist Church, where there were many Civil Rights mass meetings and bombings. There were meetings and marches organized under the leadership of Rev. Fed Shuttlesworth and others. A bombing occurred there. So my family and I were just a part of that during the time that I grew up. That really has been a part of me throughout my teaching career, and throughout my life. All of that made a grave impact upon my life.

[05:44] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so how did you hear . . . when did you attend Tuskegee, you were a freshman in 1964?

[05:55] Aloha Higgins: 1964.

[05:58] Joan Burroughs: And so how did you hear about TIS/CEP?

[06:03] Aloha Higgins: I heard about TIS/CEP through the work-study program. I figured that, if I worked during the summer, I could save that money and use some of that money for my tuition and things that I needed in the Fall. I came from a family of eight children. So, my family did the best they could in providing what I needed. But I also thought that this was a good way for me to help with my education . . . by working in the TIS/CEP program during the summer.

[06:44] Joan Burroughs: I see. So, you were then what year in college when you began? You were going into your—?

[06:52] Aloha Higgins: I was going into my sophomore year.

[06:55] Joan Burroughs: Okay. And so, what did you know about the program itself, when you began, when you started working there?



[07:05] Aloha Higgins: I actually didn't know too much about the program. I just basically knew that I was going to get a chance to live in a community, with a family and do tutoring, or whatever I was asked to do in the community working with children. I thought this would be a great thing because of my degree in elementary education. I thought this would be good practice: for me to be able to work during the summer with children. This was a wonderful experience!

[07:52] Joan Burroughs: Was there any preparation for that, for that summer? Did you do anything before you started working with the children in the counties?

[08:02] Aloha Higgins: Like I said, there was no real preparation that I needed because, you remember, my degree was in elementary education. So, I just felt that this was going to be a great time for me to start practicing some of the things that I was learning in classes, at Tuskegee. So, yes.

[08:29] Joan Burroughs: Where did you work when you were doing TIS/CEP?

[08:32] Aloha Higgins: I went to live with a family, the Means family in Fort Deposit, Alabama, which is in Lowndes County. So, they are the family. That was an experience, you know, really, that I'll never forget. Because what we would do, we would go to the community center to tutor each morning. First of all, first thing, I lived with the family and in the community. Two other students from Tuskegee lived there with me. So, there were three of us. Now, I remember their first names, but I cannot remember their last names. Aufeit and JoAnne, were two of the other girls that were living there with that particular family in Fort Deposit.

During that time, we would go to the community center, and we would work there and tutor the kids. We would do all the things that we would have done in a normal school situation from eight o'clock until 3:00. The children were very receptive in that community, they were eager to attend the program. We had no problems getting the students there, mainly because they could get a free lunch. They could eat lunch there, meet with their friends, and do all of that in a safe environment. They had a chance to have some activity. Parents were grateful that we were there because they knew that their child or their children were in a safe environment, a safe learning environment from eight o'clock until three o'clock.

The students never missed; they were all there every day. And at 3, the students would leave. Well, we would go not too far from where we lived, to Hayneville, AL. And there was also an area called White Hall. White Hall is where the Stokely Carmichael and the SNCC group worked. So we would work with them, starting, you know, about 4 o'clock. We would go through the community trying to get the people to register to vote. That took up most of our evenings, because trying to convince them, the people in the community, to register to vote was a hard job because most of them were afraid.

Many times when we got to a family, they would want us to maybe read something for them; some kind of document, or they would want us to tell them how much they owed on a particular item that they had purchased in the community. They would do that to kind of bribe us to the fact that, you know, yes: 'I will register to vote, but in meantime, I need you to do this for me.' And



in doing that, we found out that a lot of the people—which really broke my heart—because they were being cheated. Say a family had bought a refrigerator, and they were paying like \$5 a week for the refrigerator. Well, when we fully figured it up, we found out that they had paid for that refrigerator maybe about a year ago, but they were still being asked to pay that \$5 every week. So, we outlined everything to show them where this is what it cost, what you had been paying and, this is what you have paid already, you don't owe anything else.

So, once that happened, it was easy for us to get to the next family because that family normally would call ahead—to the next family because most of them were relatives—and tell them know, ‘if you got something that they . . . you need to have read or need to get, you know, figured up they will do it for you’. So, it was always easy to get to the next person. So, we would go through the community and share that information with them, help them out and read stuff for them. A lot of them couldn't read and write or figure up how much they owed on an item, to a particular merchant in Fort Deposit. And I think what they did was they would go back to that merchant and tell that merchant, ‘This is what I’ve paid and I don’t need to pay you anymore money.’ So, that merchant really got angry at the fact that we were going through the community ruining his business. As a result, we were all in a car one day going to register the next person with Stokely Carmichael, Willie Ricks—we called him Reverend Rick's—who was really the mastermind behind Stokely Carmichael. He was the one that gave all of the best advice and information, but Stokely Carmichael would be the one to present it. In my opinion, Stokely was like the mouthpiece. One day we were driving down a dirt road. We saw this truck coming from behind driving fast, fast, fast. You could only see the dust behind us and there was no way two cars could be on one of those little roads at the same time. So we kind of speeded up. We ended up in a lumber yard at the—we turned into a lumber yard. But this truck chased us.

They fired a couple of shots and stuff. None of those shots hit us or the car. But they surely scared all of us. Once I heard the first shot, I mean, I was down on the floor in that car, and so was Stokely Carmichael, and everybody else. I think half of us were wet from that chase. You know, after that. I didn't do a whole lot of—that really scared me. I didn't do a whole lot of going through that community to register people to vote, but we still worked in White Hall with the voter registration and getting out to the people, you know, advocating civil rights.

[17:45] Joan Burroughs: I'd never heard that story. That's interesting. That was terrifying too, I know. Wow. And so—

[17:56] Aloha Higgins: Just to work with SNCC was a eye opener. For those who don't know SNCC stood for Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. That was what Stokely Carmichael was mainly known for, SNCC. But he helped to organize a lot of rallies and other events in White Hall and Haynesville, Alabama.

[18:41] Joan Burroughs: Okay. All right. So, what did you—do you remember the subjects that you taught, other tutoring that you did was just pretty much —

[18:58] Aloha Higgins: It was pretty much academic. We would actually have the kids to come and bring what you don't understand. So, they would bring stuff that they'd had in school, and



we would show them how to, you know, multiply and divide. The basics really, and work with some of them on reading. Trying to help them learn how to read because some of them—quite a few of them did not— or couldn't read. So, we spent most of our time on math and reading.

[19:43] Joan Burroughs: And so, with the adults too, the literacy rate was pretty bad there so yes, that . . . I'm just trying to figure out how you could even work with voter registration with the literacy rate so depleted.

[19:58] Aloha Higgins: Well, and not only that, they were really scared to go and register to vote. So, you had to do a lot of coaxing and asking and begging to at least try. As a result, we did see where quite a few of them went and got a chance register to vote. Now the people, well actually the blacks, were just naturally scared in a community like that. See, because in the family where we worked, where I lived, the Means, asked us not to have Stokely Carmichael and any of the other SNCC workers at the house, because they would sometimes come and sit on the front porch and talk about, you know, stuff. And he said [clears throat], he said that he was getting too much flack on his job in his daily living as a farmer. He explained to us why they were putting pressure on him, because he was allowing Stokely and all of those other SNCC workers and us to be at his house. So, we respected his wishes after that. We never asked them, or they never came to the house again. But we did continue working in White Hall.

[22:04] Joan Burroughs: And so, did the community see a difference in TIS/CEP and SNCC? Or did they see it as the same thing?

[22:11] Aloha Higgins: Well, I know that they saw a difference because the children were learning. As an educator, it's when that light turns on with a child who hasn't been able to read, and all of a sudden, after teaching the basics, reading sounds— the light comes on in that child's life. He learns how to put sounds together to make words. Then, that was pleasure for me, and pleasure to my soul. Then a lot of the parents saw that their children were actually learning something, they were actually learning how to read. And they were actually learning how to do math. So, a lot of the parents were almost as excited as the children. They just saw improvement in their children from coming to the TIS/CEP program. They wanted us to extend the hours, you know, from eight o'clock to three o'clock, instead of the eight o'clock to 12 o'clock. So that's why I know that they were excited, and they saw the impact of our being there, helping their children.

[23:57] Joan Burroughs: I, yes, I think the center that I worked in, we worked eight until two or three, and I never knew what was going on in any of the other centers.

[24:06] Aloha Higgins: Okay.

[24:08] Joan Burroughs: Did any of the adults seek, maybe, the opportunities to learn reading or? Did any of them . . . I know, in some interviews that I've had, people have stated that adults would come or come after hours or something to learn to read or write. Did that ever happen with you?



[24:37] **Aloha Higgins:** Well, like I said, we would help them read documents and you know, things of that nature. So, in doing that, you know, they would be right there with us. So, I think that that was their way of asking, to, you know, 'Help me to read? Help me to understand'. So, that happened quite often.

[25:10] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, but there was, there was no instance of like a one-on-one teaching an adult to read. I see, yes. Yes, okay. And so, did you continue to work with TIS/CEP throughout your tenure as a student at Tuskegee?

[25:30] **Aloha Higgins:** I just worked with TIS/CEP that one that one summer.

[25:37] **Joan Burroughs:** I see.

[25:38] **Aloha Higgins:** Yes, but one summer did wonders for me because, like I said, I had monies to use for the Fall. Because of the economic standings of my parents. My mother was a maid at a school and my father was a janitor for the Birmingham Housing Authority. With eight children there was not a whole lot of money floating around. I did get a scholarship to Tuskegee. Otherwise, I know for a fact I never would have been able to go there. The scholarship didn't cover everything. I can remember my mother having to pay \$85 every month, which was pretty much one third of her check. So, you know, she did that just so that I could get an education from Tuskegee. I was always grateful for that.

[26:55] **Joan Burroughs:** But after TIS/CEP, you were able to pay for your own things?

[27:00] **Aloha Higgins:** For that summer or that fall, I was able to pay for all the things that I needed for that year. My mother didn't have to help for that year.

[27:18] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I found myself in that same situation. That I was able to pay, you know, for a year.

[27:26] **Aloha Higgins:** Yes. Yes.

[27:28] **Joan Burroughs:** But now, which high school you finish, in Birmingham?

[27:37] **Aloha Higgins:** I finished George Washington Carver High School. I know we had a great foundation. I know that we had something special graduating from there because when they integrated the faculties, they pretty much raped our school. They went in to Carver took all of these black teachers and they actually made them supervisors at the board of education, or they sent them to white schools. They pretty much took all of our teachers. That's when we realized that, evidently, we had the best.

[28:39] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, that was evident also in the scholarship you received from Tuskegee that you had a good foundation.

[28:47] **Aloha Higgins:** Yes, right. Yes. Yes.



[28:51] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so now [pause], so after TIS/CEP, after that one summer, you know, because TIS/CEP lasted until 1968, you didn't go back out into the counties anymore. And you didn't work on the campus, in any of the campus work study—there were jobs on campus that were associated with TIS/CEP as well. So, you didn't work with any of those?

[29:20] Aloha Higgins: I had jobs, other jobs on campus. But they were not TIS/CEP related [crosstalk] I worked at the library for years.

[29:36] Joan Burroughs: All right. So um, let's see. How did—can you summarize or do you think that working in TIS/CEP had an effect on your later life? Or did you—is there anything that you think, any impression that you carry with you that had an impact on your life after TIS/CEP?

[30:07] Aloha Higgins: Working with TIS/CEP actually showed me how other people lived. I had never lived with another family other than my own. I also learned how to milk a cow that summer. That experience gave me more respect for farm life.

[30:27] Joan Burroughs: Did you?

[30:29] Aloha Higgins: And that, to me, was awesome. That's when I also knew that I loved teaching because I loved working with those students. Also, in working with TIS/CEP, where I worked, I saw that we had a lot to do in the civil rights world. That showed me that, you know, we still had a long way to go. So, TIS/CEP really broadened that aspect of my life. But it also told me that, you know, what I was learning at Tuskegee could impact a child's life. I could change the world through one child at a time.

[31:48] Joan Burroughs: That's a good foundation [laughter]. Okay, so now, you did talk about your knowledge of the civil rights movement. I guess before, growing up in here in Birmingham, you talked about Bethel Baptist Church, is there anything more you'd like to say about that?

[32:11] Aloha Higgins: Well, during that time, I can remember going to Woolworth downtown, the five and ten cent store was and stuff [unclear]. And I can remember seeing those water fountains that said 'white', and 'colored'. Most of the time the fountains that were for 'colored' did not work. The water would barely come up. My parents would always make sure that we did not try to drink from the white water, white fountain because they knew we would get hurt or in trouble. Yes, that made an impact on my life.

[33:25] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I'm sure that was hard, that was a hard thing to have to deal with. I know when I think about the impact of TIS/CEP, and I think about, you know, the civil rights movement . . . did you ever think about that, again, when you teaching later, maybe in the 80s and 90s? Did you ever talk about it at all to your students or the impact of what you did then, the history?



[34:10] Aloha Higgins: I would always talk about, you know, TIS/CEP and working with those kids in that community, because a lot of the kids that I met after that didn't know the advantages that they had. I could see that, you know, they had advantages from working with the kids in the TIS/CEP program. Some of those kids just had nothing and had never been out of the community pretty much. It made me realize that those children were deprived of many things. As a result, I always taught—in my early teaching years—I taught in all black schools. I could talk to those kids and try to prepare them for life. They needed to know how important it is to learn to read and write. They needed to know that they had to be well educated in order to compete in this society. This frame of mind came from my thinking, and that's coming from the fact that I worked in Fort Deposit and saw how deprived those children were. Yes, so it did have an impact on my life afterwards. I would share this with students I taught, how eager those children were for learning. They wanted to learn, they wanted to learn to read, they wanted to stay at the center. They didn't want to leave. So, here I am, teaching in a public situation and got to almost force the children to learn. I would share with them, a lot of times, my experience in working with TIS/CEP in Fort Deposit. Just to try to motivate those children to do what they needed to do.

[36:56] Joan Burroughs: Yes. Yes. And so now with that, I was going to, I want to read something to you. I want you to think about it and answer this, based on the statement. So, there was an article, a report, in the Southern Education Foundation. It was the Southern Education Foundation report of the fall of 1965. And it listed TIS/CEP as—well it said this about TIS/CEP. It said, "Tuskegee, another kind of demonstration in the Black Belt, a new kind of civil rights movement." They were talking about TIS/CEP, how did you, how do you—can you give any thoughts about that statement, or what you think it means? Another kind of civil rights demonstration?

[37:50] Aloha Higgins: Well, for the mere fact that we were educating black students. We were helping them learn how to read, how to write, enlightening the parents as to, you know, how to register to vote. Helping with money issues and stuff—they were afraid. And they looked at that as a civil rights issue. So, they didn't like that. Yes, I can see why they said that because I was also a part of that.

[38:57] Joan Burroughs: All right, so did you participate in civil rights after 1965? On Tuskegee's campus or in any way?

[39:08] Aloha Higgins: Yes, you know, during that time our student government at Tuskegee would organize trips and go to Montgomery to demonstrate. We would get on buses and stuff and go to Montgomery to demonstrate. On Saturday mornings we would go to Montgomery to demonstrate. I can remember in Montgomery going to a little diner and we sat down. It was three of us. I was sitting just on the edge of a stool at a counter when we were told, "We don't serve blacks". I smelled burning rubber. So, what had occurred was some white men who were sitting at a booth got up, they put a burning cigar on the back of a stool, hoping, I guess that I would sit on it or move back onto it. This I remember from demonstrating in Montgomery. I also remember we were walking on the sidewalk in Montgomery when someone dropped a cigarette in the top of my Afro. It did burn the very top of my Afro. We would often do civil



rights activity in Montgomery. Tuskegee students were in Montgomery when the Selma to Montgomery march to the capitol took place. We were there waiting for them. We did get to hear James Baldwin, who wrote *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, a black author. I heard him speak. I also heard Mahalia Jackson sing right there in the public. Those were memorable events.

[42:13] Joan Burroughs: That was the Selma march that succeeded. You met Selma marchers there in Montgomery?

[42:19] Aloha Higgins: Yes, yes. So that made an impact on all my life, you know, because after that, I read all of James Baldwin's books, just for the mere fact that I had met him in person. I was blessed to hear Mahalia Jackson sing. All of this was the result of a civil rights march.

[42:57] Joan Burroughs: Because, you mean, you had come from that in Birmingham, so it was easy for you to assimilate in Tuskegee, in the movement.

[43:06] Aloha Higgins: Yes.

[43:06] Joan Burroughs: So now, do you remember any of the civil rights activists who were on campus at Tuskegee during that time?

[43:15] Aloha Higgins: I know we had quite a few. But I can't. I see their faces, but I can't remember the names [laughter]. I think George Davis was one.

[43:30] Joan Burroughs: Yes, many of the SNCC workers were there on campus. Stokely Carmichael, was there Willie Ricks, he had been a—he was a student, I think. But so they came through Tuskegee a lot. They were there, gave us a lot. Okay.

[43:46] Aloha Higgins: Okay. Yes. Those two I got a chance to know personally, I worked with personally, you know, Willie Ricks and Stokely.

[44:00] Joan Burroughs: Yes. So, I'm just—we'll close with the statement; your overall opinion or your idea of the work that the civil rights movement accomplished.

[44:24] Aloha Higgins: I think the civil rights movement put a dent, just a dent, but it was a dent that was needed into where we are today. Had we not done those small things, and had we not made an impact with, or through, the TIS/CEP program, then, I don't think we would be where we are today. From the writings of that article that showed that TIS/CEP made an impact on civil rights. It was something we could do in a nonviolent situation.

[45:31] Joan Burroughs: Nonviolent but helpful, huh? Based on what you said about your interactions with the people in the community that you served. Well, this has been a wonderful session and great interview.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Chester Higgins, Jr./Brooklyn NY

Interviewer: Guy Trammel

Date: May 14, 2023

Transcriptionist: Joan H. Burroughs

Chester Higgins, Jr. was born in Fairhope, Alabama, and grew up in New Brockton, Alabama. He attended Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University), where he was mentored by the school's official photographer, P. H. Polk, and graduated in 1970 with a bachelor's degree in business management. Higgins worked as a photographer for The New York Times from 1975 and exhibited in museums throughout the world. Chester Higgins' is a published author of several works that feature over fifty years historic photographic research. His most recent work, *Sacred Nile*, narrates the story of the African beginnings of spirituality, antecedents of the Biblical world along the River Nile from the 6,000-foot-high mountains of Kush (modern-day Ethiopia) through Nubia (Sudan) down to the ancient land of Kemet (Egypt).



Chester Higgins

From Chester Higgins' Facebook Page Photo Gallery

[00:04] Guy Trammel: It is seven o'clock, pm, Central Standard Time. And it's Sunday, the May the 14th 2023. And I am Guy Trammel here at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. I'm here to interview Chester Higgins, who's in New York. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's, TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

[00:53] Chester Higgins: I'm Chester Higgins, in Brooklyn, New York and I'm being interviewed by Guy Trammel about TICEP. Today's date is May 14 19 2023.

[01:19] Guy Trammel: Excellent, excellent. And thank you for doing this interview. If you could just begin just give us a little background on your family, where you came from.



[01:30] Chester Higgins: Okay, I'm a native Alabamian. My mother was a schoolteacher. I grew up in a town. She's from Fairhope, Alabama, and across the bay from mobile, and Baldwin County. And she landed a job in a small country, town I'm about 800 people called New Brockton, which is in the southeast corner, where Georgia, Florida and Alabama come together. We are about maybe 40 miles from Dothan. And it's in this community that I grew up. And a school that was eventually named after my grandfather, who was very active politically, and who caused the school to be to be built. Because back then, before hand there were no schools in the county. And he was able to convince the board of education, the County Board of Education to pay for teachers. But they wouldn't pay for anything else; the content but no infrastructure. So he was able to arrange to have students taught by the teachers in two structures. One was a AME Church. And the other structure was a Masonic Lodge. Over time, as the white board of education retired a big white school somewhere else in a county, he hired carpenters to go over and take that school apart and bring it back. Piece by piece, nail-by-nail, window by window and then reconstructed on his property that he donated. So, and he made a living as a tailor. He was running a small businessman, running the only dry cleaners in the county and that are not particularly a part of the county for black people. And also he was, because of his activism, he got he got his house burned out by the Ku Klux Klan once. But you know, he never gave up. So that's why my mother wanted me to go to (she went to Alabama State); but in her mind, she wanted me to go into Tuskegee. But she really admired Booker T. Washington, and what to my mother was really a race person. And so I, again, I, I sort of, you know, took that from her and all her friends who dutifully every year made sure that we had a curriculum on black history that was not to be found in the books from the government. But as what teachers took upon themselves to make sure that we knew something about who we were, and something about the consequence of our people.

[04:37] Guy Trammell: Oh, what was the first time you came to Tuskegee? Was it before you attended?

[04:43] Chester Higgins: The first time was in the fall of '64. And I had become energized by the space movement. I wanted to be a part of that and I came to work and by and that meant that I came to study electrical engineering. But I just discovered it my mathematics preparation was woefully inadequate. In my high school, my graduating class was only 12 people. I think seven boys and five girls, the highest level math was algebra. So, when I got to chemistry, I realized that I, one, I did not know, geometry, trigonometry, calculus. So I flunked out of that because of my, my ill-preparedness with mathematics.

[05:44] Guy Trammell : What was it like on campus at that time when you actually came in?

[05:51] Chester Higgins: Well, your campus was very exciting, because, you know, it was it was a Years later, the same experience when I go to Africa. I'm in a majority culture of black people: taking care of business. Everybody who's in any position of authority, are black. Your friends are black. They all come from families. I guess it is almost like every immigrant mentality to work hard. There were a few who was slackers, but most people were there to work hard, to do the work. Because you're reaching for promise, they're reaching for a promise of being more productive in society. They want to and they hope that this productiveness in society



will give them a chance to make an earning to make their life better, and the life of their family and their children and their parents better. So people will all strivers; and it came in also '64, '65 was the year of intense activity. Selma, because of the Martin Luther King SCLC campaign; the Selma to Montgomery march. We always had a lot of interesting speakers come to Tuskegee. Speakers who were politically inclined. So, you know, Stokely Carmichael came, James Farmer, and then we had our own people who were active. So, in terms of consciousness of culture, which we also grow up to see brought great entertainers there. In consciousness and politics, and you know Tuskegee, students were very involved in in helping to push along, be supportive of the move to elect the very first black public elected official. And that was, Sheriff Amerson became the first black elected official in the country. Due in a large part, he ran a very good campaign. But he also reached out to students to help. And students were very helpful and eager to get involved.

[08:11] Guy Trammell: The way I understand it, basically, it was the students that made that happen. This was right about the time when Sammy Young was murdered at the bus station, I believe,

[08:22] Chester Higgins: Students became the foot soldiers for his campaign, they realized that, that the office of a sheriff meant an awful lot because it meant whether or not people like the killer of Younge would be arrested and find justice. And at the time, the judge and the sheriff were not on the side of the black people. Nor was the mayor. So I think it became an eye opener that we had to we had to elect people in order to feel safe. We had that elect people who look like us who share our values.

[09:04] Guy Trammell: Could you share, because I know you know, this is we're talking about TICEP and I know there were several other organizations on campus. Give your perspective of the awareness, like you were saying, it, looks like there was an awareness taking place at that time for black people. And the roles that you saw, you know, with the movement on campus, at that time that was assisting it.

[09:33] Chester Higgins: People were being challenged in a very positive way about their values and their sense of worth. Martin Luther King came to speak, Malcolm X came to speak, and it got people to thinking that look. You know, we are an oppressed group. Since we're all educated people, we understand that the way to change this is not by burning bridges, burning stores down. But by turning out for the vote, trying to affect the narrative of power in any ways that we could. So students will go over to Montgomery and demonstrate against our great Governor George Wallace. And they would go, they would not shy away from debate about the value of the lives of black people, and at the oppression of white racism. So, those were heady times, so to speak. And then you had the student unrest, which, culminated in that in a way. You know, we all grew up in a time where in our families, we were probably the first and second generation to go to college. Where the day-to-day life was racism. And it's where you lived in a culture where your enemies constantly reminded that you that they hated you. And you therefore always were reminded that you did not fit in, you're the other. And there was a special place in hell for you because of your color. So you had to, so choice was either to succumb to that, which many people did, and understandably to survive, or on behalf of those people who had no



understanding of how to fight back, the fight back in their name. And I think that's what educated black people, that's the role that they took. And so as being a part of the educated group at Tuskegee, that's the role that the students took too.

[12:03] Guy Trammell: Again, the dichotomy, and I know, you know, you being from Alabama: Jim Crow, that's like Jim Crow was home in Alabama. And then for this to be taken place, in the middle of, for Tuskegee to even exist, you know, the concept of Tuskegee Institute, and could you just speak to that? Because it's so to me, it's very unusual. And I think if people would choose where to do something, would they even think about that. I mean, that's amazing.

[12:36] Chester Higgins: Well, but what places safe, you push you push against; yes Alabama is the home of the Confederacy. It is probably the seat of the most racist: Alabama and Mississippi, Louisiana, all of it.

[13:02] Chester Higgins : Alabama, yes, is a seat of the Confederacy. But if you can't but worry, what else can you push? I start over again, Alabama is the seat of the Confederacy. But where else can you push? You have to push at the hardest part. And you know, King understood that, that's why they went they chose Selma because they say Selma's going to be hard to push. And let's bring the media here to see how bad things are. Same thing with Alabama; let's bring the media here to see how bad things are. And you have to give it to someone like Booker T or Mr. Allen who gave Booker T the land the start Tuskegee. You know, you can't, there's always going to be obstacles in life. And you have to decide to stand, make a stand somewhere. You have to be strategic. And in one way, the middle of Alabama trying to build an institution that will help the black people liberate themselves because of their knowledge and skills. Is an interesting construct that will invite so many enemies. White people who want to keep you down and under control. Because essentially what you're doing is you're taking a sharecropper, you're educating the sharecropper, how to read the ledger. That's to try to be more . . . so they can be more helpful and raising their own wages, their own earnings. And there's risk with that and I'm sure, you know, there was a time when one of the presidents had to stand guard with rifles at night because the Ku Klux Klan had threatened to invade the campus. I think there was Robert Moton.

[15:10] Guy Trammell: That's right. That's right. Robert Moton.

[15:12] Chester Higgins: So there's always. . . Tuskegee has always lived with that. But you know, the students didn't really have an understanding necessarily of that, because we were benefiting from being in the presence of other like-minded achievers, who wanted to better ourselves and living in a black bubble. Essentially, living in a black bubble that gave us some protection. And what does the 18, 19 year old kid need? Because they are dealing with the issues of identity and confidence. And in that setting, our identity was reinforced, our sense of competence reinforced. So it was a great place to be.

[15:59] Guy Trammell: And I want to just a couple more questions, and that is thinking again, on TICEP and then the, you know, just thinking about the different ones there like Gwen and Wendy and different ones: How did you see what was taking place at that time, especially the



influence of programs, like TIS/CEP had on people? So that is they went on out in life? Because I mean, it's like a who's who, of what's taking place in the south and across the country and places when the ones at Tuskegee went through these programs, and then emerged in life. Not just, you know, a person on an assembly line someplace that just as, in a sense, kind of forgotten about, but I mean, actually, really making a difference. You know, I know we talked talking about radicalization and everything like that, but

[16:55] Chester Higgins: Well, TIS/CEP gave people skills. You know, TIS/CEP was essentially a subversive activity. Kudos to Dean Phillips making it happen. But it was subversive, I think, and totally, because what you were doing is that you were using the veneer of literacy to empower the people about their political possibilities. Literacy was very important, because you know, the sharecropper needs to start learning how to read the ledger that the white man is fixing, so you can question it. And that literacy, and then as you get that literacy, you begin to value it, and then valuing that literacy, they have a new attitude about what your children are learning from school, how to take advantage of it. Yes, in the beginning, you know, you had students teaching other adults literacy. And it says that children became literate, then you had their children teaching, reinforcing, teaching them literacy. Literacy became more important, because the only literacy at the time they had was either what the, what the sharecropper, what the, the owner, the white man was telling them about a Bible. And, and both of those things needed to be looked at closely. I think, you know, the Bible was something that was put off, that's fine, because that was not an immediate effect on people's lives. But what was immediate, was the lack of health facilities, the lack of educational facilities, the lack of fairness, but the people didn't know how to measure fairness. And TIS/CEP is something that taught them and it taught these people just by osmosis. Seeing these young kids come out and work with them. And give respect to them and try to help them grow and become fuller into in themselves. And being next to that sense of not only obligation, but positive outlook and confidence, affected the people in a very positive way. So it was very, so but on a, on a state level, on the black belt level, it was subversive to the powers that be. But because you were lifting these people up from the ignorance and empowering them with the right, feeling that they had the right to know better, and that they had the right to affect their lives, ever so slightly. I mean, it was I think it was a two-year program, I'm not quite sure.

Most of my time was spent, you know, on campus. But you could see when the students who went out and worked for Tyson, whether they were addressing people to vote, doing literacy campaigns, doing political engagement, they have more getting a kind of managerial experience in organization experience that would affect them for the rest of their lives. They saw firsthand the effect that they were having on people. They had an organization structure. Dean Phillips and worked out a structure that, I guess, essentially a process that they fit into. And they saw that process when they tried it, and it worked. And they kept making it work. And it just. . . they stood taller on the campus than the students who were not a part of this.

[17:56] Guy Trammell: That's excellent. And last thoughts, if you could, the parallels between the young person, then than young people today, with what's going on, you know, the perspective of, again, the concept of changing the rules, you know, those type of things, looks like the laws of being coming out in just almost like a scattergun type situation.



[17:56] Chester Higgins: Well, I agree, I agree. But you know, I, first of all, I don't really know that much about what the young generation is doing. Every now and then I have this intersection with them. What I think every generation is probably disappointed, to some degree, with the generation after them. There's always reasons for that. I mean, you know, when we were kids, you know, people talked about, I had to walk barefoot for miles to go to school, you don't have to do that now. So, you could do something else. That's always, this is very, when you start comparing things, there's always going to be gaps. Now, I think that one of the problems now, if we have problems in my generation, we find it so many, we think there's so many students, and it's going to be because of COVID too, that so many young people like an anchor. Whether that anchor is social anchor, moral anchor, or they lack aspirations. But you know, that's a product also of where they are getting that information.

One of the biggest problems of schools is that we are allowing our enemy to teach our children and to teach our children and tell them what's important. So therefore, when our children are taught by our enemies, of course, white is always going to be right, and black is always going to be bad, bad. When we allow our enemies to teach our children, we will then find the moral core, or the or the moral compass is going to be affected. And sometimes that is good, and sometimes it's bad. But it's always going to have a residue, and in some cases is it's going to produce a wound, a wounded soul, a wounded bird, and sometimes moves heal, and the scab grows over it and other times wounds don't heal. And that's time and that's about how we respond to the children.

So, I think that all of us . . . that's limited, you know, and we know that as, as Malcolm said, it's easier to raise a child correctly than to try to, to repair a damaged adult. But you know, dealing with youth, people are just trying to be positive, I've tried to be encouraging. I try to do, what I would do with my own children. I try not to judge them. But if I can, but I think I learned something from old people: if you can just drop a little thought into their heads, that may marinate. That's probably as much as you can do. Unless you take more active control of their time. Unless you decide to become the coach that they have to spend hours within physical activity or in a computer coding activity, or even on other social cultural activities. That's how kids learn, not by what you tell them but by watching you.

If we can produce situations where we are the people that they look to, as we try to transfer skills. That's what TIS/CEP fundamentally was about: transferring skills. Literary skills, cultural skills, political skills. And I think that's the example. Whether we're doing it on a national level, county level, city level, neighborhood level, even on our family level. You know, culture starts at home. So how we affect that and how and what we do matters. And when the children see that things matter to us, then they begin to think twice about it, because everybody is looking for an identity. Everybody is looking for how to make themselves or find what it is that is going to help them achieve a sense of identity that's worthwhile. And if they can't find it, then they'll do something. And if you can't get positive attention, then they go, you'll go for destructive, negative attention. So, the key, if we really want to influence anybody, is to try to come up with positive influences. That doesn't spend time on integrating them and judging them,



but say: Hey, look over here. Have you thought about this, check this out. It may work, but the other way is guaranteed not to work.

[26:13] Guy Trammell: That's, that's incredible. And I appreciate you sharing that. I think those are great words to end on and really to push us forward too. I hope we can possibly get some additional virtual conversations going on.

[26:29] Chester Higgins: Thank you very much.

[26:30] Guy Trammell: Okay. All right. I'm going to stop this now.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Donald Hodge/Huntsville AL

Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham AL

Date: September 21, 2021

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Donald Hodge, a TIS/CEP tutee, attended the TIS/CEP program at J. W. Darden High School. During his senior year Donald and 12 other Black students left Darden to integrate Opelika High School. Post high school graduation, he attended Alabama A&M College (now university) and graduated receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and physics. Donald, a research engineer, was employed with the U. S. Army Space Defense Command. One of Donald's avocations is coaching football. For 23 years he has volunteered youth football. An avid chess player, Donald teaches chess to both youth and adult.



Donald Hodge

[0:38] Joan Burroughs: Okay. It is 8:35 PM on September 21st, 20th, 2021. I'm Joan Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama and I'm here to interview Donald Hodge, who is in Huntsville, Alabama. This interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior National Park Service. Donald.

[1:20] Donald Hodge : Again, my name is Donald Hodge, I want to thank you all for allowing me to take part in this interview, I hope I can share some of the things that I got out of the program. And where I think it benefited me. And I believe it benefit those that were part of this program. So, I'm ready for the interview.

[1:42] Joan Burroughs: Thank you, Donald. Alright, I'd like to ask you first, how did you hear about the TIS/CEP program?

[1:50] Donald Hodge: Well, it was brought on to us at our school route by our principal. I'm not sure where he got information from, him being one of the old school principals that believed in learning. And that summer, at our school, these smart teachers, college students, came to our school. We knew a couple of them. One of them was part of Darden High. J.W. Darden High,



Opelika, Alabama. A graduate. His name was Carl Trimble. Oh, and we came to that summer program, some of the students and neighbors told us that you're going to the enrichment program. An example algebra, as I was going to take in the fall, and Carl Trimble taught that algebra class and some other classes were history and English. So, we found out about it, because again, our principal wanted us to enrich ourselves. And we took classes and got something from it. And, we truly enjoyed it. And like I say, that's the way I learned about it, because of our principal Mr. Martin.

[3:12] Joan Burroughs: Okay. All right. So, now that's how you started with TIS/CEP. Tell us a little bit about yourself. Your growing up and where you lived, your parents, a little bit about your life before TICEP.

[3:28] Donald Hodge: Okay. I grew up in Opelika, Alabama. I was born in a family of five boys and one girl. I am a twin. His name is Ronald, and him and I is the youngest in our family. My mother, who was a nurse, an LPN, that went back to school and got her GED to encourage us continuing with our school and do better in school. Going to school I did very well in some of my subjects, in particular science class. Played high school football. Upon graduation, well prior to graduation, my senior year, twelve of us in high school, J.W. Darden High School integrate Opelika High. On graduating Opelika High, I attended Alabama A&M University. Received my B.S. in mathematics and physics from Alabama A&M University. Later on, I gained a master's degree in optical laser physics from Alabama A&M University. During the time of my work career, I work for the US Army Space Defense Command as a research engineer doing work in the field of optical laser, fiber optical, power, microwave both fields that that will be our army weapon system. So also, in addition to outside things, coaching youth football for 23 years, in addition to that, I teach chess at a couple of local schools for the last three years up until the pandemic. Plus, I taught at the University of Alabama, Huntsville, adult class in chess.

Chess is one of my pet projects. When I retired from the US Army Space Defense Command 19—sorry—2016, one of the things I told my [unclear] that I wanted to go out and teach chess to our young people, in particular our African American kids. Those are the kids that I felt like they spend a lot of times on these phone games. And I took that up on myself, went to various locations trying to introduce chess in these schools. Some of them I got turned down, but I kept, kept trying to bring chess into the school. And one day, I had taught at the Boys and Girls Club chess. As soon as I did that, one school in Huntsville, Alabama asked me to come over and teach chess to gifted kids. Those kids all you have to be in a gifted program, you have to maintain an A or B average. So, they were some good kids, but I wanted to reach out to all kinds of kids. But at that time, I only could get those gifted kids. So, then the pandemic hit. So, it got dropped. And then last year, my football team got dropped because the pandemic, so I'm back coaching football, so I'm [unclear] about that. [Unclear] These kids that I coach are seven or eight years old.

And about eight, nine years ago, city of Huntsville recognized me and they named a football field after me. It's called Donald Hodge football field. It's in a public housing project. That's the key. Meaning that you done touched a lot of lives. In 25 years, I've been coaching and they



recognize that and that's one of the biggest things that I—that came across me. Now, I got a lot of awards since the years I've been coaching and working in my career, but that is the biggest thing I ever received was the city of Huntsville, Alabama, naming something after a African American kid, a young guy that came from Opelika, Alabama. And this program that you all started, it came from there. I missed, I forgot to mention one person, this guy named Isaac. Oh, history. During this time, we would have break. He had an old chess set that he brought. He brought it out during the break. And started teaching us chess. And I picked it up. I picked it up. And from then on, my whole life been wrapped around chess. So those are some of the things that I, during the time I came, came through my early part of my life and up until now. What I am and where I am now.

[8:21] Joan Burroughs: That is amazing. That's wonderful and it's inspiring too.

[8:25] Donald Hodge: Yes, thank you.

[8:27] Joan Burroughs: Now, so you attended Alabama A&M.

[8:30] Donald Hodge: Yes.

[8:30] Joan Burroughs : Your minor—your major was math and your minor was physics.

[8:35] Donald Hodge: Yes.

[8:36] Joan Burroughs: All right. That's a—

[8:38] Donald Hodge: Matter of fact, all my, all my family members in Alabama A&M University.

[8:42] Joan Burroughs : Really?

[8:43] Donald Hodge: My twin and I was last two. The other three finished before we did. I remember my mother said this. These are my last. Cause she used to bring us up on holidays, in an old car, her and my stepfather. My mother worked two jobs to put us through school. I can't forget that. There were two or three jobs, scrubbing floors so we can finish this university, Alabama A&M University. And when my twin brother and I finished, and she came to the graduation and she told some people behind us, this is my last two at this college. It was a college then and didn't call it Alabama A&M. She said A-N-M, this is my last two that I'm coming up here to see graduate. And I owe a whole lot my mother and all my brothers feel the same way.

[9:39] Joan Burroughs: That's wonderful.

[9:40] Donald Hodge: Yes. Yes.

[9:40] Joan Burroughs: That was a—she was an amazing woman.



[9:43] **Donald Hodge:** Yes, she was. Yes.

[9:45] **Joan Burroughs:** So, you were a high school student and you were one of the TICEP two T's then you will one of the people who studied with the TICEP tutors.

[9:57] **Donald Hodge:** Yes.

[9:58] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay. Do you remember anything about other than the classwork that you did in the program? Were there any extracurricular activities or other things?

[10:09] **Donald Hodge:** Well, um, well, I would like to say I only thing I can remember of extra activity was Isaac teaching chess. It was another lady that taught English.

[10:19] **Joan Burroughs:** Uh huh, I see.

[10:21] **Donald Hodge:** I think her name was Vivian Lepree I can't remember. She made us pronounce our words. Clearly [laughter]. She remembered my name because she, I guess, sometimes I would break a pronoun or verb [laughter]. And she would say, Mr. Hodge, that's not right [laughter].

[10:44] **Joan Burroughs:** No, where you were sitting earlier was a good place. I can see your full. Yes, cause you're—well, yes.

[10:50] **Donald Hodge:** Okay. What about now?

[10:51] **Joan Burroughs:** That's good. That's okay.

[10:52] **Donald Hodge:** Okay. All right.

[10:53] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay.

[10:54] **Donald Hodge:** So, I remember her saying that because she made sure that we said our nouns and verbs correctly. So [laughter].

[11:06] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, so you were—your principal at that time was the person who in—who told you about the program, and you felt pretty good about attending it then?

[11:16] **Donald Hodge:** Yes, because this was the first time we ever had any type of program, there at the high school. During the summer, it was a summer school program that you had to go to summer school if you fail something. Of course, I never failed anything. And during the summertime, you know, you'll work doing some odd jobs. And there weren't that many odd jobs to do at that time. So, this program that this principal that we had, brought this program in school, so that was ideal. And I hate to say that, but it was girls in the program. That was the key [laughter].



[11:54] **Joan Burroughs:** So, it was an enrichment program, but it was also good for socializing.

[12:00] **Donald Hodge:** Socializing [laughter].

[12:05] **Joan Burroughs:** So, um, when, and then the—you were in the classroom most of the day and then you had chess that was after the program.

[12:18] **Donald Hodge:** Yes, yes. I think we have some things out after the end of the section. Like maybe at one o'clock. I'm not sure. I forgot what time did it stop doing the daytime? We might have had some little things like, playing some ball, softball or whatever. Also socialize with the girls.

[12:37] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Yes, I know that was the fun part.

[12:41] **Donald Hodge:** That was fun [laughter].

[12:43] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Okay. Do you remember some of the people? You said that Carl Trimble taught there and the lady who taught English. There were only two tutors at your school?

[12:55] **Donald Hodge:** No, there were several. Yes. Oh, yes. I know. Tuskegee was the main one. And I'm not sure whether Alabama State was involved with it. Yes, okay. Was Talladega College involved with it?

[13:09] **Joan Burroughs:** Talladega.

[13:10] **Donald Hodge:** Okay.

[13:11] **Joan Burroughs:** Kids from Talladega, from Alabama State and maybe Alabama A&M also. We had students there from all over the country. And we had students even from Minnesota, from St. Olaf College.

[13:24] **Donald Hodge:** Yes, okay. Yes, I remember that. I do remember those [unclear] in particular Tuskegee. Carl Trimble made sure that we know what school he was going to [laughter].

[13:42] **Joan Burroughs:** Let's see. This—most of the questions that I had were for our tutors. And we were so feeling so privileged to have some of the tutees. That's what Dean Phillips calls you.

[13:58] **Donald Hodge:** Yes, that what he called it [laughter].



[14:03] **Joan Burroughs:** We were so happy. You know, we don't, we have, we found a few and now that's another dimension, you know [unclear]. So, you only, you attended that one summer. What grade were you in then in high school?

[14:18] **Donald Hodge:** Um, maybe the ninth.

[14:22] **Joan Burroughs:** Ninth?

[14:24] **Donald Hodge:** I was taking algebra that next semester.

[14:26] **Joan Burroughs:** And you did? Did you attend it the second year? Was that in 1965 or which year?

[14:32] **Donald Hodge:** You got me on that. I tell you [laughter]. If you come up with some kind of equation. I can remember that [laughter]. Well, I can't remember what year was that? But it was only that summer.

[14:45] **Joan Burroughs:** Only one summer.

[14:46] **Donald Hodge:** Yes. Yes.

[14:48] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, the program ran from 1965 through 68 [crosstalk]. It started before then, but the TIS/CEP part. The part that you were working with began in the summer of 1965. And then it ran through that until the community education program.

[15:10] **Donald Hodge:** Okay.

[15:13] **Joan Burroughs:** So, you think that the chess playing, that was the part that influenced you most about.

[15:19] **Donald Hodge:** Chess, of course, the chess. And then like I said, reason is it laid a foundation for me because I never seen anybody in particular any black people playing chess [crosstalk]. Never heard. I never heard of a game called chess. And Isaac. Let me just step back on him. He taught us world history. He taught it in a way for about he would bring things in and I remember this part very well. And [unclear] the first man that he on this earth was a Cro-Magnon man, he will demonstrate how that man look. He was step through phases of evolution, how man would look. That I remember. And then like I said, when the break came, and he brought this old chess in, and that gravitated me and from then on, I play chess every break I had during my school term. And then during my college time. Matter of fact, I even, when the chess tournament came in second place, Alabama University, my freshman year, based on the fact that Isaac taught me how to play chess.

[15:19] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.



[15:19] Donald Hodge: So, I learned a lot from it. Because then that fall year. I was ahead of everybody in algebra. I was ahead of everybody in history. And [laughter] knew the correct use, thanks to Vivian Lepree [laughter]. I can hear her now. I can hear her now. Saying Donald, that is not right [laughter].

[17:00] Joan Burroughs: Let's see. So now. Did you know? This TIS/CEP program took place during some very serious civil rights times, you know, times we were really struggling.

[17:19] Donald Hodge: Yes. Oh, yes.

[17:20] Joan Burroughs: Were you ever involved in those kinds of things?

[17:23] Donald Hodge: Well, in part I was involved was my senior year, when I integrated with the predominant white high school. And I never thought that time that these twelve African American students would be accepted to that high school. We did. It went well, based on the fact that the people that sign up for our program was all volunteer. And we were some smart students that went over there. And the part that we played to integrate in high school laid the foundation for the next group and the next group that went to that high school. That high school was like every high school in Opelika, Alabama. It was staunchly segregated, and those people didn't want us over there. When we got there, we carried ourselves respectably. And we were smart. And, again, that enrichment program. This program set the pace during that summer helped us get ahead of those white kids. We were ahead of them. When I got my senior year, they asked us, have y'all took geometry? Oh, yes. You took algebra. Oh, yes. You took chemistry. Oh, yes. That was based on that summer program. [Crosstalk] That summer program that y'all had.

[18:51] Joan Burroughs: And so, the, you started, the name of the high school that you started in was?

[18:56] Donald Hodge: J.W. Darden High.

[18:58] Joan Burroughs: Okay. And then later on?

[19:00] Donald Hodge: My senior year. My senior year, we integrated Opelika High.

[19:04] Joan Burroughs: Opelika High School. That was major [laughter].

[19:08] Donald Hodge: Yes. Well, you know that. That reunion that y'all had. That was the same year, my senior year of high school at Opelika High. But I wanted to go to this program. Because this program. The TIS/CEP program meant a lot to me. It meant a lot. Because this where it all started from If that program had of never been there, some of those classes that next year. I'd have been behind of some of those students.

[19:39] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[19:41] Donald Hodge: Yes.



[19:42] **Joan Burroughs:** That's good.

[19:43] **Donald Hodge:** Yes.

[19:43] **Joan Burroughs:** The reason I mentioned the Civil Rights era is because this grant, the work that we're doing, the project aligns the TIS/CEP program as another part or function, even though it was a social development program and an education program. It was part of what people needed at that time.

20:19] **Donald Hodge:** Oh, yes. Yes.

[20:20] **Joan Burroughs:** Like you said, there were very few opportunities.

[20:24] **Donald Hodge:** Yes, yes. So, well, you know.

[20:28] **Joan Burroughs:** I want to read something to you.

[20:29] **Donald Hodge:** Okay.

[20:29] **Joan Burroughs:** In the Southern Education Foundation report, in the fall of 1965. TISEP/TICEP was listed as Tuskegee, another kind of demonstration in the black belt, a new kind of civil rights demonstration. And so, for us, that was that social program that educated and helped up students like you to advance, you know, to go on and do other things, like you said. So, that was part of that. Do you see that as being part of the struggle for that era? Or?

[21:09] **Donald Hodge:** Oh, yes, it definitely was. And one of the things that I couldn't visualize was that Opelika is not in a, what you call rural area, I would say, compared to the [Unclear] County, and Lowndes County, and the Greene County, Escambia County.

And to have us part of that, to have Opelika part of that program, that mean a lot. Because, I kind of felt like, we need it. Even though we weren't in the rural area, we still need it. And I always believe that principal at J.W. Darden High knew it. And that's why brought it there from, I don't know, what the dean feel. He might have known Dean Phillips, I don't know.

[22:01] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, there was a lot of outreach to you know, [crosstalk].

[22:05] **Donald Hodge:** That principal was a Alabama State graduate. I don't know, he might have knew Dean Phillips.

[22:12] **Joan Burroughs:** A lot of outreach I think went into building that program, you know, throughout the counties.

[22:17] **Donald Hodge:** Yes.



[22:18] **Joan Burroughs:** And so, tell me about your decision, then. You majored in the math and science fields. So, I mean that that was your, that was your calling?

[22:32] **Donald Hodge:** Well, not really [laughter]. In the beginning it wasn't because I didn't do very well. And I'm going back to this program that summer that I took part in. The TICEP program it enriched me because, like I said, that in the fall, I took algebra and spend some other science classes. So I'm ahead of everybody. And I'm bragging on it myself. Oh, goodness, I just had the same algebra problem back in the summer. So, it enriched me. At the same time, I'm saying to myself, oh, I can, I bet I can master this stuff if I stay with it. So, you know, as time went by, things got a little harder for me in physics in particular. But like anything once you get used to it, it'll come to you. Well, without that summer program, I probably would just be like another student.

[23:26] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[23:26] **Donald Hodge:** I would never get—I would never got into mathematics.

[23:29] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[23:30] **Donald Hodge:** Yes.

[23:31] **Joan Burroughs:** Were there many students that in the program there in Opelika, at that school?

[23:36] **Donald Hodge:** The partner's program? Oh, yes. It was several of 'em. My twin brother. Gwen Mitchell [sp?], Phyllis Meal, I remember, we all went to Opelika High. Those that went to Opelika High, probably half of 'em took part in that program. Yes.

[23:59] **Joan Burroughs:** I see. Okay. Well, you really did make the most of that, the chess playing and in terms of introducing it to, you know, students today, children today.

[24:12] **Donald Hodge:** Yes. Oh, yes. Yes.

[24:14] **Joan Burroughs:** Lifelong commitment.

[24:16] **Donald Hodge:** Oh, yes, that's, that's my pet project is chess. I think about it. Matter of fact, back here during the time we've been working out my football team, took some charts on a billboard, to my football team, and compare chess with football. And they was enthused about this when you compared chess with football. And I got this big ol' billboard. On one side I had chess and on the other side I had football and how you compare it together. So, it's all, football is all about science and mathematics. I hate to brag about this within 25 years, my team been undefeated fifteen years consecutive. Undefeated due to science and mathematics I teach to my kids. Yes, it all started, again, back to that TIS/CEP program. You got to tie all this stuff back together.



[25:17] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] It seems like you took full, full—

[25:23] **Donald Hodge:** Advantage of it [laughter].

[25:26] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. [Unclear]

[25:30] **Donald Hodge:** Well, in addition to that, I remember, I can't remember who the teacher was in the TIS/CEP program, he told us in a class that you need to get up early in the morning to study. I get up four or five o'clock. This other student said, "Oh, no, can't do that." I said, I'm gonna try that myself. So that summer I started getting up at four or five o'clock and my mom would come home from work on a third shift from nursing. And she see me sitting there reading a book and said, Donald why are you sitting up this early. And tell her that, well everything is quiet. Ronald is sleep. That's my twin. And everything I can absorb everything. And I tried that. That's summer from then on, all the way through high school and to college and to my career, I would get up at four or five o'clock in the morning and study. That came from that TIS/CEP guy that told us in our class to get up at four or five o'clock in the morning. I forgot who they were.

[26:32] **Joan Burroughs:** Sounds like you really internalized it. Wonderful. Is there anything else that you can remember that you want to share or talk about with this?

[26:48] **Donald Hodge:** The people that taught us during that summer were a way of representing in terms of what they want us to learn. They had a good background on what they knew. A good, a very good background. Even though they were student themselves. They had a good background on what to teach us. If you think about it, teachers have lesson plans and things like that. Those people that taught those classes, maybe had a lesson plan in their mind. Or they remember what they was taught at Tuskegee or Talladega or et. cetera. This how I'm going to teach some high school kid these methods, and they were very good at it. And it wasn't never no talking in the class, that was just unheard of. Because that principal that we had at that high school wouldn't allow that. Because he brought those people there for a reason, a reason to enrich us. These black kids to get enriched. And I will tell you, I'm not sure I told you this. We need that now. I teach chess and coach football in the public housing. And some of those kids. They well behind in things because the school they push, push our kids to this, push them through, push them through. We don't have enough college students coming into the school during the summer and teaching these things that that program taught us.

[28:23] **Joan Burroughs:** That's so. And they were, the students, were close to your age. I mean, they were college students. You were in high school.

[28:31] **Donald Hodge:** Yes. I was in high school and they—go ahead.

[28:32] **Joan Burroughs:** You said they didn't even worry about lesson plans. I think that you think that they kind of just kind of knew where you were and how to reach you or what? What do you think? How do you think that worked?



[28:46] **Donald Hodge:** They knew how to reach us there. And they knew from their learning from high school, the grade that we was in, this is where you should be. And that's how they taught it. [Crosstalk] Yes. So that's, again that fall came around? Well, these algebra problems or these history problems should be no problem. Well, you should be. But again, if you didn't have that program, you may.

[29:10] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[29:11] **Donald Hodge:** You missed out from scratch. The rest of those students.

[29:14] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. So, you had, you were up there.

[29:17] **Donald Hodge:** Yes. [Crosstalk] [Unclear] You can brag about it [laughter].

[29:26] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, well, is there anything else you'd like to say or?

[29:30] **Donald Hodge:** I just want to thank that program. That program did a lot for me, and I still carry it on in my heart to the kids that I teach chess and my football team. Started from there. And I'm still carrying that to my kids [crosstalk]. And I believe that you can leave here with something, you can pass on to these kids. And that's what I'm here for. God gave me a reason to be here and the reason he gave me this, this knowledge of physics and mathematics to pass on to my kids. That passes on to a football player its more than just playing football, it's more than playing chess. Got to be a kid, respectful to your parents. We have a little motto, my football team, we say every day at practice and now the game. We say, God help us to mind our parents. God help us to do good in school. And we'll be a winner. That mean that doesn't matter how you win. If you lost this chess game, you still won. If you do those two things, you still the winner. That came from my mother.

[30:37] **Joan Burroughs:** Character development.

[30:39] **Donald Hodge:** That's right [laughter].

[30:43] **Joan Burroughs:** That is clever.

[30:43] **Donald Hodge:** That's what I [unclear]. That's what I learned from this program. And I'm happy to take a part in this interview.

[30:52] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I guess I'm switching. The screens are switching around. I'm looking at them do this.

[30:58] **Donald Hodge:** Okay.

[30:59] **Joan Burroughs:** So, Carl, I mean—

[31:03] **Donald Hodge:** Carl Trimble.



[31:05] **Joan Burroughs:** There's also, I know another Clyde Trimble.

[31:07] **Donald Hodge:** Oh, you do [laughter].

[31:08] **Joan Burroughs:** I think I told you that once before.

[31:10] **Donald Hodge:** Yes. When they also, what's his name? He was Tuskegee. The one that set this thing up, gave me the contact. Good now. Billy Abrams.

[31:26] **Joan Burroughs:** Ah, Billy.

[31:26] **Donald Hodge:** Billy Abrams. Yes. Yes, he's a Tuskegee graduate. Yes, yes. Yes. He was the one. He was the one that asked me to take part in this interview.

[31:36] **Joan Burroughs:** Well he has really been helpful, you know, getting people to.

[31:43] **Donald Hodge:** He's always.

[31:44] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[31:45] **Donald Hodge:** Anything big to take part in. I don't know. He just carry it out.

[31:52] **Joan Burroughs:** Well Donald this has been a wonderful interview. And I thank you so much for sharing this. We're going to be—I'm going to send you back a transcript. We'll have it transcribed. And you can sign a final document, if you wish. And I'll send that to you anyway. So that you can sign that and we can use the interview. But this has been one of—it's been very inspiring too. That chess and the football that is, that's something.

[32:24] **Donald Hodge:** [Laughter] One other thing. When I went to reunion, I came back to my church. And I post stuff on Facebook. And this lady went to nursing school at Tuskegee, Dean [unclear] [sp?] wife was in class too. She said Dean [unclear] wife was in class I believe together. And she asked me how did I know the Dean [unclear]. I said, I don't know him but he was over that program that took part in.

[32:50] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, really? That's great.

[32:51] **Donald Hodge:** Yes. Yes. Yes.

32:53] **Donald Hodge:** Yes. It's small world but the work can be large.

[32:59] **Joan Burroughs:** And keep making it better by doing all that good work you're doing with those children because they really need it.

[32:59] **Donald Hodge:** Yes. Thank you.



[33:07] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay. Thank you so much. And this will conclude our interview. And feel free to call or anything.

[33:16] **Donald Hodge:** Okay, well I'll text you and let you know how my football team is doing.

[33:21] **Joan Burroughs:** Please do.

[33:22] **Donald Hodge:** I will definitely do that. We one and one right now.

[33:26] **Joan Burroughs:** Alright the. [Crosstalk]

[33:27] **Donald Hodge:** Well, thank you Joan Burroughs.

[33:28] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay.

[33:28] **Donald Hodge:** God bless you.

[33:29] **Joan Burroughs:** You too.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Ellis Jones/Pensacola FL

Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham AL

Date: December 13, 2022

Transcriptionist: Kevin C. Holt

Ellis Jones, after retiring from the aerospace/aircraft industry, returned to his hometown, Pensacola Florida. A 1967 graduate of Tuskegee Institute majoring in Commercial Industries/Electronics, Ellis spent most of his adult life in Southern California. His employment at Lockheed Missiles, Northrop Aircraft and Hughes Aircraft afforded him opportunities in various aerospace/aircraft industry engineering support departments. A father of two, Ellis is past board president of the Chappie James Museum of Pensacola FL. He also serves as an ombudsman, tutor and organizer of community-based activities and events.



Ellis Jones

[0:11] Joan Burroughs: Today is December 13th, 2022. It's 5:05 pm. I am Joan Hamby Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama and here to interview Ellis Jones. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TICEP/TISEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. Ellis.

[0:49] Ellis Jones]: Today is December 13th, 2022. I am Ellis Jones, located in Pensacola, Florida, and I am being interviewed by Joan Burroughs.

[1:02] Joan Burroughs: Thank you. Okay, so we'll begin the interview, Ellis, with you just telling us a little bit about yourself. You, just your history, your bio, where you born, and information about you.

[1:17] Ellis Jones : Okay, I was born in Pensacola, Florida. I was an at home birth, which is fairly rare nowadays.

[1:27] Joan Burroughs: Yes.



[1:27] Ellis Jones: I spent my early years in Pensacola going through the school system, elementary, junior high, and high School. I graduated from —Booker T. Washington High School and I entered Tuskegee Institute in 1962. I graduated in 1967 and subsequently moved from Florida, to Northern California. I moved along with another Tuskegee graduate, Thomas Johnson. We became roommates and we stayed as roommates for about two years. In addition to myself, there were other Tuskegee alumni who were also employed by Lockheed Missiles in Sunnyvale, California. I left Northern California and moved to Southern California after about two years. I spent about 40 years in Southern California. I married, had two kids, and subsequently, divorced. I returned to Pensacola about 10 years ago.

[2:48] Joan Burroughs: I see, okay. So, and what did you do? What kind of work that you do at Lockheed?

[2:55] Ellis Jones: I worked in the aerospace/ aircraft industry. At Lockheed Missiles, the first program that I matriculated into was the Agena Spacecraft Program After working at Lockheed Missiles for two years, I transferred to Burbank, California facility, where I was employed by Lockheed Aircraft.-While there, my work was primarily oriented towards aircraft support. So, for the rest of my career, I supported various aircraft. I eventually left Lockheed. My next position was with at Rockwell International; Rockwell International had a huge contract to build a large aircraft for the Air Force. It was the B-1 Bomber. I spent two years at Rockwell, and I worked there until the program was cancelled. I then worked for Northrop Aircraft. Northrop Aircraft built various fighter airplanes; I supported the F-5 fighter. At Northrop, I was employed in a Test department and later in various engineering support departments. After Northrop, I worked for Hughes Aircraft; while there, I primarily supported the radar systems for the B-1 and for the B-2 Bomber. I was employed at Hughes for 22 years, and later retired from Hughes Aircraft.

[4:21] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so tell me then, we'll jump into TIS/CEP now. How did you hear about the TIS/CEP program? Or project, yes.

[4:31] Ellis Jones: You know it's been such a long time ago and I tried to follow my steps and I do recall that the Institute had a campus newspaper called The Campus Digest. I'm very familiar with the energy that Dean Phillips brought to the campus. I know that he energized the students a great deal. As far as I know, the concept for the TISEP program was developed and initiated by him, t, and the idea gathered support through the energy that he exemplified. I think that as positive comments were made throughout the student body on campus and as the ideas were passed along. many students became curious and ultimately got involved in the efforts.

[5:24] Joan Burroughs: I see. So, what year in college were you at the time that you spoke?

[5:31] Ellis Jones: I was a student at Tuskegee from '62 through '67. I participated in the TIS/CEP program, I think, for approximately two years. So, my first encounter as a TISEP student worker involved my acceptance of an assignment in a small town in Lowndes County, called Collirene. It was there, that I spent the summer as a tutor. I believe that we spent eight to



10 weeks in Collirene. I worked both as a tutor and as a support persons for the ongoing high school and junior high school programs that were developed and run by the local teachers.

[6:23] Joan Burroughs: What year was that?

[6:25] Ellis Jones: I believe that my experience in Lowndes County occurred in 1965.

[6:27 Joan Burroughs:] Okay.

[6:27] Ellis Jones: I vividly recall, that we stayed—there were three of us who stayed--- in the same house. We lived in a house that was owned by Mr. Miles and Mrs. Miles. They had a son, whose name I believe was, was Frank Miles, who was running for office at that particular time. He was part of the first slate of black candidates who were running for office in the county. So, we had a chance to witness the founding, the development and the organizational efforts of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization to participate in the political system. It was a very exciting for us to witness that effort, and for the residents to participate in such a great effort. I got a chance to attend many of the meetings that were being held which sought to encourage the residents to register, vote and to participate in he election process. I got a chance to see and learn of the many efforts of the of SNCC, --Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee-- which included efforts to enroll and assist the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in their political efforts.

[7:42] Joan Burroughs: Well, that was very interesting.

[7:44] Ellis Jones: It was. It was.

[7:45] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[7:45] Ellis Jones: It was an exciting time.

[7:47] Joan Burroughs:
So, you stated that you tutored in the program.

[7:50] Ellis Jones: Yes, I did.

[7:52] Joan Burroughs: What were they? Did you do anything other than that? Or was that your—

[7:56] Ellis Jones: During the summer, tutoring the students was my main objective; that was my main role. After the summer program, we returned to the campus; I worked on the campus, in support of the TISEP supply room. There were supplies that needed to be distributed to the tutors, who remained in the various locations that TISEP supported. Consequently, supplies were continually restocked and distributed. Included were provisions to the tutors, that included -- books, pencils, notebook paper--- those kinds of sundry items that were needed by the tutors. I worked on campus to assist in their efforts.



[8:30] Joan Burroughs: Okay. So, you started in 1965, did you work with TIS/CEP throughout your remaining college career?

[8:38] Ellis Jones: I think I worked probably a year and a half possibly. Because I can't remember exactly when the program began and what year it ended. So, my best guess is a year and a half to two years.

[8:54] Joan Burroughs: I see. Well, I'll help. I know that there were programs prior to TIS/CEP. Okay. I think that they were located mainly in Macomb County and TIS/CEP's outreach expanded to 12 to 13 counties over the 1965 through '68 years of its existence. Many students worked on campus after going out into the county. Some people went back out into the counties summer after summer and during the school year, so yes, that sounds about right. You're, yes.

[9:31] Ellis Jones: Okay. Okay.

[9:35] Joan Burroughs: So, what influenced your decision to join TIS/CEP?

[9:42] Ellis Jones: Well, you know, as you know, the, as you recall, the '60s were really I won't say, use the word exciting, but I guess that's probably a good adjective, a good descriptor, because there were a lot of efforts centered around the civil rights movement, you know, beginning with the freedom rides and the sit-ins. And walk in, so demonstrations all around the country. And I think it developed a sense of duty for each and every one to consider what can they do to further along the cause. And so, when that program developed, I think it was just a natural sense of duty to consider volunteering for. Although I didn't realize the significance of it at that time. But it sort of pervaded the sense of duty, I think, to a lot of students to get involved.

[10:53] Joan Burroughs: I see.

[10:54] Ellis Jones: During that time period, it was very common to see and hear many of the workers from SNCC, who often came onto the Tuskegee campus to talk and rally support for their efforts. Remember, Tuskegee sort of had a long history of being involved in those kinds of things. I recall, that as a freshman, my English teacher was Dr. Peters. I vividly recall her conversation to the class. During one of the class sessions, she mentioned that she had received a PhD in English (from Boston University, I think). She mentioned to the class "well, you know, I tried to vote today, and I flunked the literary test."

So how could you flunk a literacy tests? PhD? She said, "yes, they gave me a Bible verse to interpret, and I didn't interpret it to the satisfaction of the poll worker, so I flunked the test, they would not let me vote." So that kind of comment—when you hear stories like that, sort of piqued your interest. Of course, we had always known about the segregationist attitudes that pervaded the south. It was just time for everybody to not just sit on the side, but to actually do something about it. Especially something good.



[12:31] Joan Burroughs: So, you named a couple of people that worked in the community that you were in Mr. Miles and his son. Do you remember any others who worked out there?

[12:42] Ellis Jones: Well, I remember. I remember John Hewlett who was running for sheriff. I remember the Logans, I believe because they were, I think they were teachers. And I think one of them, I think Mr. Logan, was running for Board of Education. So, I remember Hewlett, I remember Mr. Miles. I think he was running for a tax collector-- possibly. And so those three names I remember. I can't remember the other names, but I think that they're probably six or seven candidates, Black, African Americans who were running for office at that time.

[13:23] Joan Burroughs: Do you remember any other Tuskegee students who were in Lowndes County at the time that you were there?

[13:32] Ellis Jones: Well, I recall, there were three of us who stayed in with Mr. Miles. So, three, yes, three males and one of them—one of their names was Ramsey, Needham Ramsey, and I can't remember the other person's name. But there were three of us who stayed with, in Mr. Miles' home during that particular summer.

[13:53] Joan Burroughs: I see.

[13:54] Ellis Jones: Yes.

[13:56] Joan Burroughs: Okay. So, and you said you worked with the program about two and a half years? So, after the '65 year in Lowndes County you worked a couple of more years until you graduated?

[14:06] Ellis Jones: Yes.

[14:08] Joan Burroughs: Okay. Talk a little bit about the community then. That community Collirene. What was it like?

Ellis Jones: I don't remember many details. It was a very small, very rural community. You know, I grew up in a small town. Pensacola was a small town, but we were sort of urbanized to a certain extent. But when I got to Collirene, it was totally rural. For example, we didn't have indoor plumbing. So, there were a lot of accommodations, that I was accustomed to, that were not available during that summer. I had to make a lot of mental and physical adjustments. . There was not a central downtown area. I remember that we lived in a house that was in sort of a rural area. For instance, we didn't have a lot of neighbors that we could just walk next door to, to sit and talk.

However, the thing that I do recall was the kinship and the friendship of the neighbors; the camaraderie that they had, even though they lived a distance apart from each other, was obvious. They were united in their cause to seek justice and to move ahead with their efforts to form and to organize a political party and thus have their own elected officials. It was sort of a scary time for the residents, I'm sure, because they were typically not financially independent. So, they



oftentimes, they had to work for someone else. And those persons who they worked for typically were not of the same race, nor did they have the same ideas regarding the political aspirations of blacks, because they (black residents) were seen as a threat.

In many instances, their problems/mindset centered around a lack of economic self-sufficiency for black citizens. There were threats of violence. I recall that when we were there, there was a murder; I think. I think it happened in Selma. There were a couple of murders. Viola Liuzzo was murdered. It did not occur where we were located. Later, in Selma, (I believe he was named, John Jackson, was murdered in Selma. He was, I believe, a native of, Lowndes County.

[16:52] **Joan Burroughs:** I think Perry County. I think.

[16:55] **Ellis Jones:** Pardon me?

[16:55] **Joan Burroughs:** I think he was from Perry County.

[16:57] **Ellis Jones:** Okay. Okay. But you know, the name I think, yes. So, he. So, there was a big effort to intimidate the residents of the area, to scare them, and to ensure that they did not accomplish their goals of becoming self-sufficient and utilizing the polls to their advantage.

[17:17] **Joan Burroughs:** That, well now in Lowndes, in Hayneville, do you remember that murder?

[17:22] **Ellis Jones:** What was the name?

[17:25] **Joan Burroughs:** In Hayneville?

[17:27] **Ellis Jones:** I do vaguely remember, but I can't . . .

[17:30] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, there was a murder there also during our tenure, and, you know, when? In Hayneville.

[17:37] **Ellis Jones:** Okay.

[17:38] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. I just thought that. I mean, Collirene is kind of far from Hayneville. I think.

[17:42] **Ellis Jones:** Okay.

[17:43] **Joan Burroughs:** Hayneville is more city like, well, for a rural area.

[17:47] **Ellis Jones:**
Right, okay. Okay. Okay.

[17:53] **Joan Burroughs:** Let's see.



[17:55] Ellis Jones: Retrospectively, when I recall the historical accomplishments that resulted from their initial desires, to become politically independent, I must always congratulate the community of residents.

[18:21] Joan Burroughs: So which Center did you work in Collirene? Was it a school or a church? Or? I mean, the actual place?

[18:31] Ellis Jones: I think it was. I think it was a church, I believe. Or maybe it was both. I remember going to a church and I remember going to school also. Oh, okay. But I can't. I can't. I can't, you know, especially a long time ago, I can't recall the details.

[18:50] Joan Burroughs: Did you see the same students daily?

[18:57] Ellis Jones: I think we did see students regularly and almost on a daily basis. There were exceptions, such as a required meeting for tutors, that we were expected to attend. I think the students looked up to us as role models, or something akin to that concept. Because we were college students, we were a little older than they. But I think that they looked upon us as role models-- as models of-- as examples of what they could achieve. Hopefully, we inspired some of them to further their education, after high school

[19:25] Joan Burroughs: Yes. And so, what did you teach? What did you tutor?

[19:30] Ellis Jones: Well, we just helped. We just helped, just generally speaking, with probably math and—but we just sort of helped out on an as needed basis.

[19:40] Joan Burroughs: Were there teachers from the area present in the—

[19:44] Ellis Jones: Yes, I remember Mr. And Mrs. Logan, they were part of the school system. Those are the names that I do remember.

[19:52] Joan Burroughs: I see.

[19:52] Ellis Jones: I do remember those two names.

[19:55] Joan Burroughs: Right. Now, do you, can you summarize it, or do you think that the TISEP experience, did it influence your life in any way? Your, the choices that you made or how you chose to live?

[20:13] Ellis Jones: Yes, as I was preparing for the interview, I thought about that whole year of 1965. I, recalled, you know, of course, the significance of Bloody Sunday, which happened due to the initial efforts to march from Selma to Montgomery. I recall, that as I did the research, that we as Tuskegee students, travelled from Tuskegee to Montgomery, during the following week of Bloody Sunday; we marched and demonstrated in support. We . . . [unclear]. . . the Capitol, and although we were afraid, nonetheless, we were bold, because there was strength in



numbers. We marched to the Capitol in support of the demonstrators who tried to cross the bridge.

I recall that later that month when the 2nd march, from Selma to Montgomery was finally approved, we returned to Montgomery the night before the occurrence of final leg of the march—into Montgomery. There was a big rally at St. Jude's Church/facility, you know, it was called the “Night of the Stars.” A host of well-known entertainers had assembled to show their support for the final leg of the “March”. There were people such as Harry Belafonte, Sammy Davis Jr., and Peter, Paul, and Mary. They entertained us and praised our efforts to continue with the march. The following day, the marchers who started from Selma, completed their trek into Montgomery. They had completed the approximate 26 miles walk, from Selma to Montgomery. Those of us supporters, who were not part of the original group from Selma, filed into the streets, behind the original marchers; we marched along with them to the Capitol.

Of course, there were many residents of the surrounding area that did not support the March. but our efforts to support them, made a difference. Although, I don't remember how many marchers there were---- possibly there were 15,000, 20,000 people or 25,000 people. There were a lot of folks who participated. That whole year of events and activities in 1965, definitely galvanized, motivated me, and I think that they served as an impetus for me to become more of a participant instead of just sitting on the sidelines and observing. Those experiences in which small groups and large numbers of participants are involved, provided an important lesson. Learning the lessons that that there is faster progress when numbers of people get involved in things—is important. So, I think, it's been, in fact, I know, that the concept of the “power of participation, by concerned people”, does work. It's been a very positive influence as I consider my in my life's philosophical concepts.

[23:01] Joan Burroughs: So yes, one of the questions that, yes, that I was going to ask was about the civil rights movement. You've kind of already given a lot of information on that, but I was going to read something to you. And I want you to think about this in terms of your experience with TIS/CEP.

[23:22] Ellis Jones: Okay.

[23:23] Joan Burroughs: There was an article in the Southern Education Foundation report of the fall of 1965. That was after that summer that we were—

[23:33] Ellis Jones: Okay.

[23:34] Joan Burroughs: It listed TISEP as—well, it did, it said this about it. It said, “Tuskegee, another kind of demonstration in the black belt, a new kind of civil rights demonstration.” And so, when you think about that, in relation to TIS/CEP, what are your thoughts on that?

[24:00] Ellis Jones: Well, I think yes. And when, you know, when you think about the ideals of Booker T. Washington, I mean, some of the ideals anyway, I think it's sort of aligning with his



ideals of going out into the community and becoming a positive force for education and subsequent change.. See, one of his goals was to distribute information and education and to bring out the rural areas of the community. To assist with, in any way we can, to volunteer if needed. But to—not just to become a classist institution, but to actually be part of the community, to be part of the people. And I think that that TIS/CEP Program sort of expanded his idea. Which I never thought about that way, but I think it did by going out into the community.

[25:10] Joan Burroughs: Yes, with your education. Yes. And so, you already said that you participated in activities that supported the civil rights movement. And you kind of talked about that a little bit already. So, were there any other areas of participation that you were involved in with civil rights?

[25:31] Ellis Jones: Civil rights? Um [pause], no. I hadn't really thought about that, per se. In Pensacola, I've been involved with a local group called “Movement for Change” since I've returned here. But they were initially founded as a social justice group. I'm not a member right now, but I had a talk with them today about getting involved. Future plans include my involvement with administering and participating in a program for kids. Our early conversations have involved plans to initiate programs next year. The goals are to implement programming that's related to development of a success and leadership module for kids.

So, I'll still be working, via different avenues, in order to implement volunteer efforts work with the community and to develop the assets of the community, as much as possible. At one time, I was part of the Chappie James Museum, Although I'm no longer part of it, I recall the emphasis that we attempted to use for museum visitors--- directly related to the modeling of General James and his emphasis on character development, service, action and leadership characteristics that were relevant to his stature and growth. Again, we tried to instill in community residents, the principles, and character of General James and what he stood for. As always, I attempt to use any opportunity, especially as a volunteer to contribute, but also develop myself as I go along with the program.,

[27:15] Joan Burroughs: Well, that seems to be an extension of TIS/CEP ideals—

[27:22] Ellis Jones: Right, I think so.

[27:24] Joan Burroughs: —community. Yes, yes. Yes. So, you had friends who were also part of the civil rights movement in the '60s?

[27:36] Ellis Jones: Yes.

[27:38] Joan Burroughs: Yes. And so how—did you ever, how did, what were your views on some of the organizations like SNCC. I know we had TIAL on campus. We had the Tuskegee Institute Advancement League, that was closely aligned with SNCC. But I always define the SNCC people as those who kind of dropped out of school to do just civil rights work. And did you know any of those people, then these—



[28:09 Ellis Jones: Well, you know, when I went, I didn't really keep, I didn't maintain any contact with them. I do remember [pause], I'm trying to think of his name, Bob Moses, Bob Mants who worked in Lowndes County. And I remember in fact, I think he just died a few years ago, I think his thing was.

[28:30] Joan Burroughs: Yes, a few years ago. Yes.

[28:31] Ellis Jones: The SNCC workers were so courageous ---to me. I mean, they were fearless. I remember that they drove a little white Dodge car--- I think a Dodge Dart. People always talked about how fast [laughter] how fast it must have been because they had to always evade the Night Riders who were who we're targeting them. So, I always looked up to them as being some courageous folks.

[29:02] Joan Burroughs: They were in Lowndes County.

[29:04] Ellis Jones: Pardon me?

[29:04] Joan Burroughs: They were in Lowndes County while you—

[29:06] Ellis Jones: I know, they were there when I was there. I never knew exactly where they lived. But I think that was more of a secretive effort. But I know they were there, because they showed up every day. At least it appeared that I saw them almost every day. Yes.

[29:18] Joan Burroughs: Yes. So, I mean, you just really answered a lot of the things that I was going to ask you because I think the last question I had was, what was your opinion at the time about the civil rights movement and the people who were involved in that? And so, you want to answer that you can?

[29:42] Ellis Jones: Oh, well, they're my heroes. You know, there were people who really put their lives on the line and they did protest the injustices of the times, but in a different manner . They actually feared for their lives, whether campaigning for office or registering others to vote, —, they were really killed and who went through all the dangers that we didn't see on a daily basis. But there are a lots of folk put their lives on the line. They always have my utmost respect and honor.

[30:25] Joan Burroughs: So, it seems that you kind of carried that through your career, yes, I mean in your life, because you're still active in the community. That's just my assessment [laughter] you know. But—

[30:38] Ellis Jones: Yes, I try to be. I try to be as much as I can, you know. I think it's everybody's duty to give back in some form or fashion.

[30:47] Joan Burroughs: And you were in, so you were in the air—you majored in what? Engineering you said or?



[30:55] Ellis Jones: No. Electronics well it was a separate school, called the School of **Commercial Industries**; we had a major -- Electronics. So that program has now been disbanded. Its curriculum was discarded. . Unfortunately, it was disbanded. . I don't know why, but it was. So, [pause] it was something that probably—with 20/20 hindsight the school probably would have kept the program. Electronics skills and knowledge is so important nowadays.

[31:32] Joan Burroughs: I see, I see. Okay, well, is there anything else you'd like to contribute to this conversation? About?

[31:40] Ellis Jones: No, there is nothing else for me to contribute. I just want to thank you for pursuing the TIS/CEP legacy, because oftentimes, the people who actually experienced it, don't get a chance to write about it nor to publicize the efforts, the successes and the impact of such a program . Unfortunately, it's a common occurrence for someone else to come along later, and attempt to validate the experiences of someone else. That often leads to errors and misguided experiences that are seemingly well documented, but oftentimes are only partially truthful...So thank you and the committee for your efforts.

[32:04] Joan Burroughs: I thank you participating because this is where, this is the heart of the project, you know, among the people who were there.

[32:12] Ellis Jones: Right. Right.

[32:13] Joan Burroughs: So, this is very, I'm very appreciative of you doing this.

[32:18] Ellis Jones: Well, thank you. Thank you.

[32:20] Joan Burroughs: Okay. Well, let's see. Yes, I think you answered everything.

[32:30] Ellis Jones: Oh good.

[32:31] Joan Burroughs: Yes, yes, all the questions. And like I said, I do appreciate it. And I guess we can officially, unless there's something else that you'd like to say, we can close the interview.

[32:45] Ellis Jones: Oftentimes, relevant experiences of our lives are forgotten or they can be characterized as unimportant. This exercise not only helped me with telling part of my life story, but it also will help with the integration of parts of “The Big Story”---people rallying around a common goal, utilizing the necessary energy , and persevering . I'm just so grateful that I had a chance to participate. Not only did I get a chance to see and experience, to a certain extent, the historical FIGHT for Lowndes County, but I witnessed the successful transition of a community which, at one time, had very little hope; Mainly because of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization , future successes were initiated and solidified for future generations.. They eventually did elect the persons that they wished to elect. The Black Panther logo was later granted permission to be used by the Black Panther Party. So, it was great to have a bird's eye view of that whole history, and to say that I participated in it, via some form or fashion,



[33:27] **Joan Burroughs:** Say I was there [laughter].

[33:31] **Ellis Jones:** Right. Right.

[33:34] **Joan Burroughs:** Thank you, Ellis. So, it's now almost 5:40. And we can end this and please stay in touch. I'll be sending you the transcript.

[33:47] **Ellis Jones:** Okay.

[33:47] **Joan Burroughs:** And when I send the transcript, you can, you know, look through it and make corrections and things that might not have transcribed properly.

[33:57] **Ellis Jones:** Okay.

[33:58] **Joan Burroughs:** And in any additions and if you want, I believe, I'd like you to send a—you sent a nice picture of yourself. So, I like that. We're going to be using that in the final work.

[34:08] **Ellis Jones:** Okay, great. I look forward to seeing more of the final efforts. Thank you.

[34:14] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, thank you very much.

[34:16] **Ellis Jones:** Okay.

[34:17] **Joan Burroughs:** This will conclude our interview.

[34:19] **Ellis Jones:** Okay. Thank you.

[34:20] **Joan Burroughs:** Thank you.

End of Session



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Narrator: Gail Jothen/Maryland

Interviewer: Lisa Daniels/Birmingham, AL

Date: February 6, 2021

Transcriptionist: Joan Burroughs

Gail Jothen was born in Chicago but grew up in Oregon, where she lived until attending college at St. Olaf in Minnesota. There she met her husband, majored in classical organ and church music. After graduating, she became a music teacher. Jothen left teaching to have children and worked in churches, as organist and Director of Music and Choirs until her retirement in 2007.



Gail Jothen

[00:05] Lisa Daniels: It is Saturday, February 6, 2021, at 1:48 PM Central Standard Time. I am Lisa Daniels, the interviewer with Gail Jothen, the interviewee. We are going to get started at this point in time. Thank you for joining us.

[00:024] Gail Jothen: It is my pleasure.

[00:25] Lisa Daniels: So, if you would, please tell us a little bit about yourself.

[00:32] Gail Jothen: I was born in Chicago, my father was trained to be a doctor, medical doctor during World War II because the army needed doctors. So, they paid his way through medical school. And he was doing his internship in Chicago, where I was born. And we lived various places as he could practice medicine anywhere. And we finally ended up, he wanted to go somewhere where there was no snow. So we ended up in Oregon, where I went to grades 1 through 12. And then I went to college at St. Olaf, and I majored in classical organ and church music. I met my husband in the TISEP program. But we didn't become more than friends during that time. I don't know if he mentioned that to you in his interview, but then we became close when we went back to St. Olaf. And I married him, fortunately, because I could not have made a living as an organist. And we married and he taught grades one through 12. And I ended up teaching too because there was a need for music teachers. And then the second year of our marriage, I went, I left him to get my certification to teach. And after that I taught for two years and the I, I started having children and quit teaching.



And I've always worked in churches, as organist and Director of Music and Choirs since then. I retired in 2007. And I've enjoyed retirement very much. I've done a lot of reading about the black movement today. I've become acquainted with it on Kindle X. And I've read a lot of other books. Because I think our country really needs to change its attitude. And I totally believe in white supremacy, that's a terrible thing that we've endured for too many years. And I wish I had more power or more influence to help people, but I don't. We've always lived places where people were more egalitarian. But I think the East Coast is a very conservative area, and especially Maryland, where there was segregation. I've been horrified at some things that people have told me regarding their feelings on minorities and the movement towards, frankly, equality for any minority, but especially for blacks. It's been a shocking experience to live here. They're very nice people, but they're kind of clueless. And I don't know how things, I don't know how people get people to change. I really don't. So that's about it.

[04:02] Lisa Daniels: Thank you. So you mentioned Chicago and having an opportunity to grow up in Oregon before heading out to St. Olaf. What was it like, before you went to St. Olaf? What was it like, before you went to St. Olaf? What did you know about the world before you lived in a small town?

[04:21] Gail Jothan: Oh, I did read the newspaper. I was a dedicated newspaper reader, even at the age of eight and nine. I read the paper, probably the cartoons initially got me going, but I always read the paper. Out in Oregon, and I'm sure in the entire Northwest, it's a different world. They don't really know much about the East Coast. They didn't like all the terrible things that were happening in Alabama and Georgia. We didn't really know much about it. And when we went to St. Olaf, nobody I knew even had a radio and we didn't read the newspapers. So we were very sheltered. We were in a bubble. And I say the same thing in Oregon, we were in a bubble. There were migrant workers from Mexico that had hard lives. And nobody, nobody ever mentioned it. They didn't get any publicity in the paper. And my town wasn't rich. It was a very lower middle-class town. My mother was very unhappy there. She had a lot of depression because she was a trained music teacher and there was nothing for her there except her children. And she really should have had a career because she had so much depression.

But there we had a very homogeneous town of white people. I never knew a black person until I went to Alabama. But I'm sure there were some in Portland. I know there were some in Portland. And I know that Oregon had a law that outlined where black people lived in Oregon until 1921, which horrified me. Of course, I didn't learn that in Oregon history in eighth grade. They didn't teach you anything. They didn't teach you about how, what we did to the Indians. We destroyed their habitats and put up dams so that they couldn't fish. White people have done some horrible things. And, but we didn't know any of that, we were kind of naïve and innocent. And I was naïve and innocent when I went down south. I probably still, am naïve and innocent. Just because I live a very pleasant life. We've been poor. We were on food stamps one year. But it's never been to the point that we've had no choice. And we've always had parents that were able to help us. So I, I don't like to say, we've been blessed because I believe God blesses everybody, not just rich people or people who do well. But we've been very lucky. We've been just very lucky.



[07:06] Lisa Daniels: What made you apply to the program?

[07:10] Gail Jochen: I'm going back home for the summer to Oregon, and I couldn't. That was after my sophomore year. I went home for the summer at the end of my freshman year. And there really wasn't a job for me. Newberg was a very small town. And there were no opportunities. And I like to stay busy. And I also like to help my parents financially because my dad was not a rich doctor. He was, this was before insurance and people either paid or they didn't pay, but he still had to treat them. He was a family doctor. And I don't really know how I learned about the program. But either a friend or maybe a brochure was at the college. The college did not promote it. They didn't advertise it or tell everybody about it. But I read that we could go to Alabama, we would be there this summer. And at the end of the summer, we would receive \$900, which was a lot of money in those days. That paid, that would have paid half a year itself, the \$900.

And I thought, wow, this would be fun. And I had some friends that were interested. One in particular in Kristy Swanson, whom I am still in contact with. But I wanted adventure. I wanted, I had—my parents had not ever told us, “Oh stay at home, be with the family, don't leave us, blah, blah. They were not that kind because they had not stayed with their families. They had—their families were all in the Midwest—they had left to go to Oregon. And you never had that feeling that family was the most important thing. It just wasn't. Doing your thing and making a difference in the world. My dad used to always say, “Our aim is not to be happy, but to help others.” And he believed, and he acted that in his life. So it was a, it was a part of my family's (Ethels?) ethics.

[09:26] Lisa Daniels: So, what was your initial reaction when you arrived in Alabama?

[09:32] Gail Jochen: I was surprised at the geography. I had never been south. And it was very green. Very hot, humid, lots of trees, a lot of back country roads. As time went on, well, the trip down there was an adventure for almost all of us because none of us wanted to spend the money or had the money to travel. I went down with Christie and two guys with a car. And we had all sorts of adventures that don't relate to the TISEP program. But getting down there, everybody has a story about traveling. It was, But I thought Alabama was a beautiful country, but it felt like a foreign country, it really did. You just felt a sense of it being a police state. It really was a police state. The police ran that state of Alabama, under George Wallace, very tight, very tight. And they had ultimate power to do anything they wanted. It was horrifying.

[10:50] Lisa Daniels: Would you tell me a few more details about that? What do you mean by they were able to do anything they wanted?

[10:56] Gail Jochen: Well, I'm sure my husband told you a few of the stories that I've heard with him. You know, like being taken in front of the police in a gas station and forced to pay a fine for something he didn't even know he'd done. But we were scared to death to travel in cars with black and white. And if we went to a restaurant, which we would have to do, because we were traveling around, the white people would have to get out and get the food for the black students. They couldn't come in with us or we wouldn't have been, they wouldn't have served us. We were not allowed to be seen off campus with a black person. We, it just felt fearful. They



were feared, fearful and it certainly passed on to us. Because after a while there were so few of us white people compared to the black students that you forgot you were white. I'd look at the mirror and I'd think, 'Oh, I'm white.' And that I felt the same sense of fear that they did. And they felt fear, because it was white policemen and a police state that was scared to death, I don't know what, I'm not a southern person. But it was, like I say, it felt like a foreign country and not a peaceful, calm, pleasant foreign country.

[12:37] Lisa Daniels: You mentioned you were in your in you, it was allowed, it not allowed for you to go off campus with a black person. Who put that into place? Was that a part of the program?

[12:50] Gail Jochen: Yes, I think it was part of the program. Okay, although I could be wrong. Because we spent some time with Dean Phillips. You know who he is?

[13:00] Lisa Daniels: We spent some time, for the record. Tell us who, for the record, who Dean Phillips is. Okay?

[13:04] Gail Jochen: Dean Phillips was the man who go the grant from the federal government to have this program. And we met with him. Three or four years ago, he came to DC and gave a talk. And Michael and I went down there to hear his talk. And we went for dinner. And I got to be friends with his wife. She started emailing me, but they go to Texas a lot in the winter because, they're getting, especially Dean Phillips, is getting on in age. But we got to know them very, I though, very well for in a short time. And what was the next question?

[13:52] Lisa Daniels: I think the question focused in on who put them into place that that you know, you couldn't walk off campus with—

[14:00] Gail Jochen: Right, right. I also thought that the program had to ask St. Olaf students to participate, because I had heard or thought that colleges, like colleges in, -- the federal government requires the program be integrated. And I thought that they had to come to say no, because Alabama University's white students would not participate. But when I met with Dean Phillips, he said no, that was not accurate. So I probably know some rumors that I think are true, but may not be. And so that, I don't know if it was just in the air that you do not go off campus with a black student, or we knew that it would be dangerous or whether somebody told us not to. I would, I would surmise that somebody said that because it would have been dangerous. You know that Tuskegee Institute and Tuskegee are two separate towns. And we would never think of going to Tuskegee. We had to stay in Tuskegee Institute. And the one time that you've heard the story, my husband tried to go to church in Tuskegee and they would not let him in.

[15:22] Lisa Daniels: So, could you tell us a little bit more about why you though it might be dangerous to go off campus with a black person? During 1965.

[15:22] Gail Jochen: Well, I think somebody might have called the police and had us arrested. I think that is a very strong possibility. Or somebody might have told somebody else, and later on,



they would have tried to find us and shoot us. That would not have surprised me at all. It was, it was a fearful atmosphere.

[15:56] Lisa Daniels: Were you afraid that that would happen to you because that had happened to someone else?

[16:01] Gail Jothan: No, I was too young and too stupid. It's like COVID, how many people are healthy and young and think, "I could never get COVID." You never think it's going to happen to you. Unless you start getting to be my age, you start being more fearful, you'd be fearful when you get my age. But when you're young, you don't think bad things are going to happen. It's a shock.

[16:27] Lisa Daniels: So what role did you play in the TISEP program?

[16:33] Gail Jothan: When we got down there, we were invited to join any program that wanted or were interested in. And they had, I can't probably think of all the programs, but they had a psychology program where they tested the kids before the summer and then were supposed to test them after. They had the teaching students who went out into the counties and lived with black families and taught in wherever they could because Alabama schools would not allow us to use the public schools. That was just forbidden. So we were teaching in churches and barns and garages and just whatever we could. And so there was no other option. And there must have been other options. Oh, you could work on the transportation area. They had a lot of drivers, and we had to rent vehicles for the music program. Yes, we had a piano, a small piano we had to drag around, and instruments, and music stands. And then, there was the music group, that if you were interested in music, which I was, that you could be in the music group.

And we stayed on campus. We lived on campus, in, we first had a dorm room that was air conditioned and very nice. And then they said, "We want you to go this other dorm and everybody, every white student had a roommate, a black roommate. Which I think was a very good thing for them to do. But you know, we wouldn't have done that on our own. And we rehearsed for the first three weeks or two or three weeks in a choir and there is an instrumental group that practiced. We learned how to teach a lesson. Although most of us are not natural teachers. My husband is a natural teacher, when, in fact, that's what really impressed me the first time I saw him teach in a classroom. In the TISEP program, I was really impressed because he was very poised, and was able to keep the kids interested. And I just thought he is a natural teacher. Whereas for me, it was hard. I was, I'm an introvert and, I'm not shy, but I had never taught. And it was a good experience for me to learn. And the kids were all very interested. We never had any trouble with the kids. They wanted to be there. And they wanted to learn, and they were all good kids, well behaved. Nobody, of course, nobody had to be there. It was their own choice. But there were a lot of kids. There were a lot of kids.

[19:41] Lisa Daniels: So you mentioned that this program really took place outside the public school system. Why do you think the public school system wouldn't allow this program?



[19:53] Gail Jothan: That's a good question. I think I have what is he real. But what reason they gave to Tuskegee, and to Dean Phillips, I, that's probably another explanation that they gave. And I don't know what that would be, except maybe they said, would say that schools weren't open in the summer, and they couldn't open them for Tuskegee. But I'm sure they didn't care whether they educated black students and help them. They just didn't care. They were happy with the way things were, the status of the culture, the class distinctions there, they were happy with that. And they didn't see anything to change.

[20:43] Lisa Daniels: What was it like teaching in a barn or being in a barn or a church, teaching those students since you weren't able to be in the public schools in the regular classroom setting?

[20:55] Gail Jothan: Well, it was always hot and humid, there was never air conditioning. And we were, had spent our time in Minnesota, where it's not humid and summers are comfortable. And so that was a change. But we expected that and were young. It was eye opening, to think that people didn't care how the kids were being taught, where they were being taught. It was an eye opener. I didn't imagine people would ever be like that. I mean, it was mean, it really was. I'm sure that they aren't, they aren't really mean people. But they acted—they had some mean streaks in them that would, just didn't care about kid that needed help to bring their schooling up to what the white kids were getting. And they had no—they just didn't think, they didn't think of black people as the same level as they. Anybody that is not like them is not as good.

[22:12] Lisa Daniels: You mentioned that your living, at first you were in an air-conditioned dormitory. Was that all white or was that integrated?

[22:26] Gail Jothan: I think it was integrated but it was integrated in the rooms. Okay. So I probably had a White roommate. I don't remember because most of the time there was spent with in a non- air-conditioned and with a black roommate.

[22:42] Lisa Daniels: What was it like having a black roommate in 1965?

[22:45] Gail Jothan: Oh, she was a dear. I mean, she wasn't any different than anyone at St. Olaf, really. Maybe she was more down to earth. Because we had some snobby people that St. Olaf, that probably looked down on me because I wasn't high class or something. But she really was a sweet girl. She was from Mobile, and I think her name was Queen. I'm not sure but I would love to have kept in contact with her, but we didn't. I thought she had a lot of common sense. I remember her telling me that in any relationship between male and female, that if it wanted to achieve continuity and constancy, that they had to challenge each other. I had a really, that was a really deep thought that was a profound thought to me. I hadn't thought about that. But she was real sweet. She had a good sense of humor. She was attractive. She was a teacher in the county. I'm not sure where. But she was in the dorm, a lot of the time.

[24:02] Lisa Daniels: Did she share any part of her life that you were unaware of, in regard to Alabama?



[24:09] Gail Jothan: No, no. I didn't know. I was so clueless. I didn't know what to ask her. I didn't even think about asking her about how it was to be a black person in Mobile growing up. I'm sure we talked, but it was mostly about what was going on in our lives right then and there. It wasn't, we didn't talk any history. And at that time, I wasn't interested in history. Not even my own parents. They died before I even asked them as much about their ancestry. I regret it to this day. But you know, it's like the saying goes: History starts when you're born. I didn't think about my ancestors or anything. I don't know much about them. My parents, we didn't talk.

[25:08] Lisa Daniels: What are some of your fondest memories of the TISEP program?

[25:13] Gail Jothan: I think being with a group of people with one focus, which was to teach in the schools and be with kids who, they were very, very loving, loving kids and loving to us and they were very lovable. And it was, it wasn't stressful. Being a student in college, I felt stressed most of the time. This was not stressful. And the meals were delicious at Tuskegee. I remember that the food was wonderful. And everybody was friendly. And it was wonderful being a part of the music group. Because they were, I don't know many of us in the music groups, because there were, I don't know how many of us, 20 or 25. We were close. And I had grown up without relatives or good friends. I had friends, but I wasn't close, intimate with them. And this was really fun for me to be with people. I think that's the biggest joy I had there was to be with people who had the same desires and focuses that we all had together.

[26:37] Lisa Daniels: What did you like most about? Go ahead.

[26:40] Gail Jothan: Oh, I was going to say that we were a community. And I think we lack that today. At least we, like, I live in the suburbs. We don't have much of a community here. And I love communities. I love being in a community. That's why, part of the reason I'm a member of a church, it's a community. I think community is a wonderful thing. And with COVID, we don't have it. We don't have it. Anyway, what was your next question?

[27:07] Lisa Daniels: Yes. I wanted to know about Tuskegee's campus? What was the difference between St. Olaf's and Tuskegee's campus? And what did you like there?

[27:19] Gail Jothan: Well, the air-conditioned dorms, the little we saw of them. It was obviously not as much money spent on the campus. And I know that the students had built many of the buildings, which to me was wonderful. But I can't imagine St. Olaf students doing that. There were poor kids at St. Olaf. Nobody, nobody had to go to the length of having to build a building. It was nice to have a warm place after a year at St. Paul for I felt cold from September to May because I'm not from Minnesota. But it was a nice campus. And my husband were there a couple of years ago and he said it has changed and grown a lot. So, it's not the same place, but I liked it. And dorms were nice. So it wasn't really that different, except it probably wasn't as expensive of buildings.

[28:32] Lisa Daniels: So, we talked about your fondest memories. Could you tell me some points where, that were a bit shocking to you? Some things that might have happened?



[28:42] **Gail Jothan:** Yes. The most, a lot, I don't know what percentage, of males at Tuskegee Institute are what I would call sex positive. Do you know what I mean when I say that?

[28:59] **Lisa Daniels:** Could you explain?

[29:02] **Gail Jothan:** It means that they look on sex more positively and they don't try to repress it as we in the did At St. Olaf nobody had cars. And people had sex but if they did, nobody knew about it. And at Tuskegee, it was very open and accepted. I, somebody told me that there was a club called the Booster Club, that it was males who competed against each other to have sex with the most women, that, to me, was shocking, because we came from, I came from a ?howbe? Lutheran background, where if you had sex before marriage, it was very, very bad. And I guess the term is sex negative. And Tuskegee was sex positive, which was shocking to me. I grew up with a totally different idea. And I was a good girl. I wasn't a rebel. So, somebody I remember after we got back, somebody said that they heard that the St. Olaf girls at Tuskegee came back not one was a virgin. Well, I don't think that was true. I know I was still. But it, it's very possible that a lot of them did lose their virginity there. And I'm not saying it's wrong, but it just happened.

[30:41] **Lisa Daniels:** Was this a club at Tuskegee University?

[30:47] **Gail Jothan:** It wasn't a school sanctioned club, it was something that the guys had created just among themselves.

[30:58] **Lisa Daniels:** Okay. I just wanted to clarify that for the records.

[31:00] **Gail Jothan:** No, it wasn't the school. School may not have known it, probably didn't know about it.

[31:05] **Lisa Daniels:** Okay. So you mentioned that, what were some other shocking or interesting memories that you had of the summer, just being in Alabama in general?

[31:10] **Gail Jothan:** I think having to be segregated, that was shocking. I've never had to be segregated before. Being afraid of the police. I had never thought of that. Being white, among a lot of people that weren't white. I don't know if that was shocking. But it, it, it just felt different. It felt different to be a minority. That's what we were, we were in minority. Although we were not treated poorly, I can't say that at all. But we were a minority. And that was a good experience. We should all be able to walk in someone else's feet, or shoes, walk in someone else's shoes and experience what other people experience.

[32:23] **Lisa Daniels:** You mentioned being afraid of the police, can you go a little bit more into detail about that? Why might you be afraid of the police?

[32:32] **Gail Jothan:** Well, we heard the stories of some of the students who were really abused by the police, like my husband and another woman who was taken in by the police, and me made her drink alcohol. And I don't remember what they were trying to get out of her, but they, they



were abusing her. And when we were driving, if we saw a police car, the black kids would put their heads down. And we were afraid. It just felt like a foreign country. That wasn't a place you wanted to live. Also, if a truck would go by, sometimes if they had, they'd have like, young white men in the car. And they could see who were, in the truck, they could see that we were in a mixed car. And they would either point their finger at us or pretend like they were shooting or they would let you know they didn't like what they saw.

[33:49] Lisa Daniels: And so is that the reason why black students or black kids will put their heads down when you were in the car?

[33:57] Gail Jothan: Yes. Yes. Yes. They were afraid. I don't think they would have been afraid if we hadn't been in the car with them. But having a mixed car was not acceptable.

[34:21] Lisa Daniels: So, when you travel to these different communities, how, how know, do you think your work made a difference? And if so, how?

[34:31] Gail Jothan: We talked about this with each other. And I even talked about it with Dean Phillips. I said, "You know, I don't think we made much difference down there. What really made a difference was to us, we learned so much. We were enriched, we were made aware of the world as it was much more than if we stayed in St. Olaf or gone home to our lovely small towns or wherever we came from." But he said, he responded to that. And he said, "You did make a difference." That there were kids that we taught that have still talked about that years later. Then, I was totally surprised because it was just one summer. I know they had the program other summers, but we were there only summer, and I thought, I'm sure we didn't make much difference in these kids' lives. But according to other people, we did. But it sure made a difference in our lives.

[35:44] Lisa Daniels: So, after the program, we're back to St. Olaf. What was that like, returning back to St. Olaf? Did anyone ask you about your experience in Alabama?

[36:00] Gail Jothan: That was my junior year and juniors in music spend most of their time with music majors. We were a small group of maybe 30 kids. And I was an organ major, so I was practicing, like five, six hours a day. Wo I did not hang around with kids except music majors. And my husband was a music major. And that's when we started getting interested in each other. Although we never dated, we had to go to performances in the evening. And we were in classes during the day. And we had lunch together and I spent a lot of time with him. But he never asked me out. I think he was kind of shy. And we just finally fell in love just being together. But I remember somebody telling me propinquity as a cause of marriage, be near each other. And that's what happened with us. And one of my friends was a junior counselor in one of the dorms. And she did ask me to tell the story of the summer to her, her dorm corridor. And so I did write down the story. And I came and talked to them about it. But that's the only ever, that the only, nobody ever said anything about the program at all. It was just no. Like, it was summer and then it was time to go back to school. But St. Olaf didn't sponsor this and the Black, racism and all that, wasn't even— Nobody had that in their mind at that time. It's just the things--just as normal as they were.



[37:51] **Lisa Daniels:** Were there any Black students at St. Olaf at this point?

[37:54] **Gail Jochen:** I think there was one or two. There was one I know behind us, in the class behind us. And he was a very sophisticated young man. He wasn't, he didn't come from a poor home or anything. And he, I guess, became class president one year and he was very active at St. Olaf.

[38:21] **Lisa Daniels:** So you mentioned telling the story at the dorm corridor? Do you remember any of the questions that they might have had for you?

[38:30] **Gail Jochen:** I don't remember them having any questions. They knew so little. They didn't even know what to ask.

[38:40] **Lisa Daniels:** So, let's go back to being, go back to the music. What kind of songs did you play?

[38:59] **Gail Jochen:** That's a good question. The music leader, that I don't know if he was appointed or he was, just came forward and said he'd do it, one of us, St. Olaf people. Well, what kind of music did we know? We knew choral music that was folk songs, American folk songs, English folk songs. We did not know any music that would come from black culture. We did learn spiritual or two. But that was another thing that surprised me when I went to Tuskegee, was I thought all the students would all know of musical, that were music, that were spirituals, I thought spiritual. So, when I think about I think I was really naïve because they were listening to Motown and all the pop music that they liked. They weren't listening to spiritual from the past, no more than we were and I can't tell you the names of the groups that were really big. I remember hearing them because my mother was a very strict mother. And like I said, I was a good girl. And she would not let me listen to pop music when I was growing up. And then I was majoring in classical organ. And so I was, I was pretty ignorant. My husband is not, he listened to all of the groups, and he played in a dance band. So he, he was more, he was more familiar with mass culture than I, I was really very narrow in my worldview. It was a good experience for me. Got me out of that little box.

[40:47] **Lisa Daniels:** So you mentioned spirituals, can you name any that you might have played? Or any song that you might have played?

[40:59] **Gail Jochen:** Well, "The Water is Wide". That's an English folk song. And "Early One Morning Singing" Early one morning, just as the sun was rise. And I heard a poor girl, and da da da da da da. Oh, don't you leave me, Oh don't you see me? I papa papa papa papa—we sang that, I remember that. And we did sing a spiritual. But since then, I know so many spiritual because they correlate, they're very popular that I couldn't tell you which specifically ones that we sang there. I know that my husband went visited William Dawson, who was the choir director at Tuskegee. For many, many years. He was very, very famous. And he used a lot of spirituals, and he did buy a record, long playing record of his choir singing many, many spirituals.



[42:05] Lisa Daniels: What does, what are the songs meaning? “The Water is Wide” and “Early One Morning.” What are the meanings of—

[42:14] Gail Jochen: “The Water is Wide” is about a suitor who can’t cross the river to get to his love. Early One Morning is about a girl who has been deceived by a boy. And she’s bemoaning that fact in the song. They’re both, I believe they’re both English or Scottish. Just typical love songs. Same old, same old, they’ve deceived me. I can’t see them.

[42:50] Lisa Daniels: So there was, in 1965, in the TISEP program, there were black and white students singing love songs.

[43:01] Gail Jochen: Yes. Yes, I never thought of that. That is kind of interesting, together. And another thing about Tuskegee, about the social life was, as I said, the social males were much more sophisticated sexually than at St. Olaf. And they were very much interested in us as white women. And we did date, I dated two guys, one was, his name was Elijah. He was on there occasional weekends because he was teaching out in the county. And I always thought it was kind of ironic that I was being with him because he was going to be a pastor of a church that didn’t allow instrumental music. And I was an organ, church organ music major. So, you know, there was no, that the negative of that relationship. And then I also spent time with a man by the name of Sam Thompson. I don’t think he was a student because he seemed older. And he, he took an interest in me, but I was scared of him because he seemed very, very attractive. And that scared me. Because I had never been attracted to somebody that much. And, you know, I was young, and I knew I had to finish college and I, I didn’t want to have any problems with relationships at that point.

So those are the two social—and I remember it wasn’t too far from when we, the program ended. I remember we had to move to another dorm. Maybe they were getting the dorm ready for school that we were in. And I remember being in a bathroom and using, in the tub, in a large dormitory bathroom. And I remember washing my hands at the sink and I could hear some of the other students from Tuskegee talking and they were saying, “Oh, he’s married. I wonder if the girl knows that he’s married.” And they also said, “I don’t understand why the same old boys don’t date us. Why are the black guys dating the white girls, but the St. Olaf boys were not dating?” Well, I could have told them. They didn’t date at St. Olaf either. They just, they weren’t socially adept. They were all come from farms or rural areas or homes, or you didn’t talk about getting married or you had to, they were, they were a lot of introverts. Like my husband, he didn’t date much at St. Olaf. And we didn’t date, we just got to know each other, and fell in love. But they, they were probably jealous, with reason. But they didn’t know what type of guy that were there from St. Olaf.

[46:12] Lisa Daniels: So right now, you’re clarifying that it wasn’t a racial issue in regards to the dating piece, it’s more so, social adeptness.

[46:21] Gail Jochen: Right. Exactly. Exactly. Yes.

[46:28] Lisa Daniels: Thank you for sharing that. It definitely adds more color to the story.



[46:35] **Gail Jothan:** They were from a different culture than we. We were from a repressed, northern culture.

[46:40] **Lisa Daniels:** Right: This is the sex negative culture versus the sex positive culture. Exactly. Okay, that makes sense. Okay, did you get a chance to visit any other places outside of Tuskegee? And in the south?

[46:55] **Gail Jothan:** I did spend one weekend visiting one of the St. Olaf students who lived in a kind of a shack in the county where he, he was living there and with a family. And he invited me to spend a weekend there, and I maybe spent just the day. I can't imagine where I would have slept. But that, he was very proud of this family he stayed with because the man, he was very poor, yet he had built his own water system. And he had built this cabin for his family. And we came from families that nobody did things like that in their own home. And this man was very capable of doing what needed to be done for his family to provide shelter. And, you know, they weren't rich. They weren't rich at all. They were very poor, may have been a tenant farmer, for all I know. But I remember visiting. That was kind of awesome to see that. Because I didn't have to live there. It would have been different. Just to see it. I'd never seen anything like that.

[48:09] **Lisa Daniels:** So you mentioned, you know in regards to cultural differences of course, sex positive, the self-determination piece as well. What are some of the things that you brought back with you either in lesson or in documentation, back to St. Olaf.

[48:33] **Gail Jothan:** I don't think I made any difference at St. Olaf. But I know in the years after, when we lived in Michigan and our first year of marriage, or the next year, you know, it did make a difference. Because the next year I and three other young ladies from St. Paul have spent the summer living in Detroit, in the upstairs of a, in a black neighborhood, in the upstairs of a two-family house. And the landlady lived below us. Like I sometimes, I can remember her name and sometimes I can't, but she had two children. And she rented this out to us, and the whole neighborhood was very, very black. And I wouldn't probably have done that if I hadn't gone to Alabama. And it was called the living witness program. Why it was called that? I don't know. But it was connected with a church in that area, a Lutheran Church and they had promoted having students live there in the summer. And it was a good experience. And then the next year when I got married, and we lived in Michigan, we lived in a small house in Michigan. I paid to have those two children come visit us for a weekend. We paid their bus fare, and they came to visit us because I thought it was important that these kids get out and see parts of Michigan that they had never seen. We were on the western side of Michigan by Grand Rapids, Muskegon. And it was fun to have them. But I didn't keep with them. I have pictures, but I don't, I didn't keep track. Nor did I keep track with anybody from Tuskegee, which I regret now, because I looked at the list of people that I've kept in touch with or know about since that program that I gave in the pre-interview. And there were like six or seven people, and they're all white. They're all white, we all went back to our own homes and continued our lives.

[50:52] **Lisa Daniels:** Why do you think that was the case, that you primarily stayed in touch with white people from the program?



[51:01] Gail Jothan: Well, the white people in the program were at St. Olaf. I saw them. This was in the days before technology. Nobody, nobody, it's so much easier today to keep in touch with Facebook and emails and texting. And it's just so much easier. In those days, it wasn't, like my parents—I would, when I went to St. Olaf, I didn't see them for months. And that year, I went to Tuskegee and Detroit. It was probably a year before I saw them. I didn't think anything of it. And phone calls were expensive. And my mother, my dad was working all the time. And my mother wasn't, well, because of this depression. And so I didn't really connect with even my parents at the time. I regret it now, but I just didn't think ahead. I'm sorry.

[51:54] Lisa Daniels: Did you write? Did you write to anyone when you were away in Detroit and Alabama?

[52:01] Gail Jothan: I did hear from Elijah. He wrote me one or two letters. But I think I was starting to get involved with Michael. And I just think I wrote and said that this relationship isn't going to go anywhere. And one time that Sam asked me to go to Chicago, meet him in Chicago. That was impossible. I had, when you go to St. Olaf in those days, not today but in those days, you didn't take any money with you. You didn't need any, you didn't do anything. I practiced seven days a week. And we even had classes on Saturday. Your whole life was the college, and you just didn't go anywhere. And to think I would take a bus or fly to Chicago was just the wildest idea that I could think of. So I never heard from him again.

[52:59] Lisa Daniels: So, could you tell me about some of the people you mentioned in the pre-interview. So, Christie, Christie Swanson and Doris and Jeff and Galen. What is your, Hello? Can you hear me?

[53:20] Gail Jothan: Yes, I hear you. Can you hear me?

[53:26] Lisa Daniels: Yes. Something has happened with my, my computer. Okay, we're still recording. Okay. That was a big piece. So I'll find out. I do apologize. The computer just froze. Yes. Um, so you mentioned some of the people that you've been able to maintain relationships with? What are some stories that you might have from them, some collective experiences that you might have had?

[53:53] Gail Jothan: With Christie, you know, still are really close. We email regularly and she was in the psychology group. She was majoring in psychology at St. Paul. And she said she really didn't feel she was part of the TISEP program., like we worked. Because she was working in an office, in a room, dealing with testing. And it wasn't as socialized as what we were doing. And she wishes she had done something else. But at that time, she thought her major was psychology, so she would be in the psychology group. And she's been very active in liberal causes. Well, actually, most of us are still very liberal. We, I live in a community that's quite conservative. Elijah Cummings was our senator here. And I'm sure none of my neighbors voted for him, but I did. And Jeff Strait, was ver—has been very active in—he's a photographer, and he's done a lot of photography for TVS for news, and he went, both Christie and Jeff went to the Peace Corps. I think a lot of these kids, TISEP encouraged them to do other things in their life



besides just get a job and marry, settle down and build a house and have three children and a fancy car. I really think it changed a lot of us to realize that there's more in life than that.

[55:49] Lisa Daniels: So, it sounds like the TISEP program was in line with your family ethos.

[55:53] Gail Jochen: Yes. My, my parents, I think they had no clue as I didn't, how fearful Alabama was at that time. But they expressed no fear of my going there, except my mother thought, said: "Oh, I hope you don't marry a black." But she didn't say you couldn't. She just said I hope you don't. But she didn't know blacks any more than I did. And when I look at today, I don't think it's, it would have been bad. It just would have been difficult because where would we live? As I wasn't from the south. I wouldn't want live in the south. Too hot.

[56:37] Lisa Daniels: Do you have—if you don't mind me asking the question. Why do you think your mom said: "I hope you don't marry a black man"?

[56:45] Gail Jochen: She was probably racist. Probably, you know, most white people were, a lot of people still are. Actually, I remember her saying that. Jokingly, my grandfather had a grandniece, who—we were all Norwegian, and she married a Danish man. And her father wrote her a letter and said: "Wow, did you hear Charlotte married a Danish man? Isn't that awful?" And then he said, "Just a joke". But even marriage between Danish and Norwegian was not considered healthy, although they had a good marriage and was fine. And things have changed today. A lot, fortunately, in some ways.

[57:37] Lisa Daniels: So, as you know, we finished this particular part of the recording. What are some key takeaways you'd like to share with anybody who's going to listen to this, or anyone who's going to watch this?

[57:55] Gail Jochen: I think it's very important that nobody, nobody, judges somebody without knowing a lot about them. And that we always remain open to knowing other people, no matter how they disagree with us, or how they look, or how they act towards us, that we must always remain open to loving everybody. And that phrase, walking in somebody's shoes for two weeks, two weeks, I think is a very important statement for anyone to live. And that you can't put people in boxes. Even my mother, who had so much depression, I could not tell you exactly what she was like. She was a very complicated person. And I think a lot of people are much more complicated than we give them credit for. We're not just simple physical beings. We're a result of our family and our nurturing and genetics and our own choices. And we just have to remain open to whatever people are and not be critical of them.

[59:15] Lisa Daniels: Thank you. I'm going to stop the recording. It is 2:47PM Central Standard Time, February 6, 2021. This is Lisa Lisa Daniels as interviewer and Gail Jochen is interviewee.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Narrator: Michael Jochen/Maryland
Interviewer: Lisa Daniels/Birmingham AL
Date: January 30, 2021
Transcriptionist: Kevin C. Holt

Michael Jochen was born in Abington, PA, but grew up in Decorah, Iowa, Waterloo, Iowa, and Joliet, Illinois. After graduating from high school in 1962 and a couple of years in junior college in Joliet, he graduated from St. Olaf College in 1967. Jochen began his career as a music teacher in Newaygo, Michigan and Ashland, Ohio school systems. He received his master's degree in 1972 from Case Western Reserve in Cleveland, Ohio and then his doctorate from Ohio State in 1978. Michael Jochen became Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado, Supervisor of Music in the Baltimore County public schools, and later, Associate Professor at Towson University in Towson, Maryland, retiring in 2011.



Michael Jochen

[00:04] Lisa Daniels: Okay, it is January 30, at 1:06pm, Central Standard Time. We are here with the TIS/CEP program, interviewer Lisa Daniels interviewee, Michael Jochen. Thank you for being with us today. Could you go ahead and state your name for the record?

[00:26] Michael Jochen: My name is Michael Jochen.

[00:29] Lisa Daniels: And could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

[00:34] Michael Jochen: Would you like it from the beginning of my life or would you like it from the last three years or?

[00:40] Lisa Daniels: Yes, you can start at the beginning.

[00:42] Michael Jochen: Well, I was, I was born in Philadelphia, Abington, Pennsylvania. And my father was in service at that point in time, but my parents are from Wisconsin. And so as soon as they could they moved back to Wisconsin. So I was an infant. And I grew up for the first couple years of my life, including when my parents, they owned the general store. And we lived



in the back of a general store in a town of approximately 50 people. And what happened was, was that my father ultimately had gone to college before the Second World War. But he never finished college because he went into service. So, when I was approximately five years old, four or five years old, in the late 1940s, he went back to college, graduated from college, Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. And at that point in time, we moved to Waterloo, Iowa. But I had gone to kindergarten in Decorah, and I went to first second third grade and Waterloo, and then we moved to Joliet, Illinois, where essentially, I grew up in Joliet from approximately 1954 until approximately 1964.

But with my parents having grown up in Wisconsin, my parents were the only people in our immediate family that ever moved away from Wisconsin. Essentially, everybody else still lived in that area in Wisconsin. So Christmas time, Easter time. In particular, in summers, I would go back up to Wisconsin and I'd work on my uncle's farm. I'd stay with them maybe for a month at a time or something like that, and bale hay and drive the tractors and—which is stuff I didn't get to do when I was obviously growing up in a in a city of 50-, 60-, 70,000 people outside Chicago. Then, after graduating from high school in 1962, I spent a couple of years in a junior college in Illinois, Joliet, Illinois. And then I went to St. Olaf College, where I graduated in 1967. And in 1967, I married—That summer, my wife and I married, and we met working in Alabama in 1965, in the TISEP program, and then from 1967, until essentially 1969. I taught public school grades K through 12. Music in a very small school system in Michigan, Newaygo, Michigan at that time, and then in 1969, we moved from Newago, Michigan to Ashland, Ohio, where I taught junior high school music grade 7, 8, and 9.

And then in 1974—and I also completed my master's degree in 1972 at Case Western Reserve up in Cleveland, and then in—but in 1974, we went to Ohio State. We moved to Columbus, Ohio, and I went to Ohio State completing my doctorate program in 1978. And in 1978, then I accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado, which is where we stayed until approximately 1984-1985. In 1984, I was on a leave of absence and I—a friend of mine who lived on the east coast. He and I were in the process of accepting a contract to write a book for Prentice Hall. And he lived on the east coast, and I was on a leave of absence. So I came to the east coast and I got offered a job in East Coast. And I took the job. And so long story short in approximately 1985 or so, my wife and I and we had three children at that time. We all moved to the east coast, which is where we live since. And I, I taught in the I taught I was an administrator, a supervisor music in the Baltimore County Public Schools in Maryland, from approximately 1985 until about 1992-93.

At which point in time I took an associate professor's position at Towson University in Towson, Maryland, and remained there until approximately 2010-2011. In which I was I was full professor at that particular point in time. And the university was having, experiencing financial issues and offered senior faculty members an opportunity to retire early with a stipend, which I did, because I was going to retire about that anyway. I was 65, 66, 67 years old. And so I retired in 2010 2011. And had remained retired since that point in time up until up until now. And as far as my professional activities during that time period, I was fortunate in the sense that I received a lot of assistance, both overt and covert. And so that in 19—during my doctoral program, as a



matter of fact, at Ohio State in the 70s, I was fortunate that local musician John Ness Beck was starting a publishing company. And he offered to publish some pieces that I had just kind of played with a little bit. And ultimately, that got me into publishing.

And so at this point in my life, I probably published somewhere right around a hundred choral compositions primarily. And—but the book contract that I went out to the east coasts with in the—in the mid 80s—What happened there was that with Macmillan McGraw Hill, that book, those books resulted in being published in 19, I think 1987. And then we wrote another textbook series, grades K through eight. We wrote another textbook series in 1995, another textbook series in 2005, another revision of that in 2015. And meanwhile, I work with professional organizations Music Educators national conference, now it's called NAFME, National Association for music education, and choristers guild out of Dallas, Texas in particular. And was, was honored to be president of the chorus' guild and led major national standards writing with the music educators national conference National NAFME, and so on. So that, that's kind of a quick overview of various things in my life, personal and professional.

[06:53] Lisa Daniels: Thank you. Could you tell us about your experience when you first entered the TISEP program and why you chose to be a part of it?

[07:03] Michael Jochen: Well, that's kind of interesting. I had gone to St. Olaf in the fall of 1964. In the spring of 1964, at the end, conclusion of the spring semester, and going into the summer of 1965, what was happening was, was that I didn't have a clue what I was going to do in the summer, quite frankly. And what happened was, was that a friend of mine, at St. Olaf College, said, "Hey, I'm considering doing this particular thing" and I won't say it was one of those "Well, if you do it, I'll do it" type situations. But it was one of those, "I don't have anything else to do. This sounds kind of interesting" and, and being that I think I was fortunate from the standpoint. And other people might say the same thing. But I was fortunate from the standpoint that growing up in Illinois, we were always traveling, Ya know, I was used to taking the train from I was maybe 10, 11, 12 years old, and I'd take the train from Illinois, up to our farm in Wisconsin.

So I was used to going places and staying with relatives, and walking into a situation that was—it wasn't uncomfortable, it was just different. And so here it was, it was the summer of 1965. And we had an opportunity to go south, and to work with Tuskegee students. And to work in a different environment or something like this. I always liked working with people teaching type situation, which I'd done a little bit of that in the early 60s. And so consequently, what happened was that I said, "Sure, why not?" So I signed up and went down. No, no preconceptions of what was taking place. To some extent, I was really naïve about the Civil Rights Act that took place, I think in 1964. Selma had just happened, and so on. But, you know, we were living, I was living as an undergraduate student with no television set, no radio, didn't read daily papers, various things like this. So I was really kind of sheltered about those kinds of things. But this was an opportunity to do something in the summer of 1965 that sounded kind of interesting. So off we went.



[09:08] Lisa Daniels: You talked about being sheltered. Can you tell us a little bit more about what that means in regards to after the program? What did you know about the world that you didn't know before?

[09:22] Michael Jochen: I think what I knew more than anything was, was that—people are people. And the fact that there are tall people and short people and wide people and narrow people, and the—understand my relatives are not rich by any means. But they weren't poor, like some of the people that I saw living in houses in Alabama at that time. But I wasn't shocked by that. Because I was used to, like I said—One of my earliest memories, as matter of fact is going to my great grandfather's house, which was a log cabin with dirt floors in Wisconsin in the winter, I may—I was born in 1944. So this was either the winter of 1945, or the winter of 1946. So I was one year old or two years old. But I vividly remember that—sitting in a chair, in a highchair, and log cabin walls, you know—trees that were cut down by my great grandfather and his children to make this cabin that they lived in. And later on, I learned it, one of my aunts, one of my favorite aunts, one of those that I would stay with in Wisconsin, as a matter of fact, she said—"Well, I guess I never told you", she said, "but when I was first married, we lived in that house. We lived in that house from about 1947 until about 1952." And so when I went to Alabama, and I saw houses like that, that has stayed with me. It has always stayed with me and not feeling comfortable or uncomfortable but just saying, "this is an aspect of life, these people, their lives are rich, but they certainly are different." And I've carried that with me, I think most of my life.

[11:04] Lisa Daniels: To—to follow up with that. When you made the decision to go down to Tuskegee, and of course, you might have shared that information with various people. What were their reactions when they—when you asked—when they told—when you told them what you were doing for the summer?

[11:29] Michael Jochen: That's a very good question. I—I don't remember, any reactions for my parents. It was—my parents were always basically very supportive of the things that—I have three sisters, they were very supportive basically, of anything that we did. So the idea that I was going to go to Alabama, given what was going on in Alabama at that point in time—George Wallace, etcetera, etcetera—given what's going on, I'm sure they were apprehensive about this, but I did not sense that whatsoever. And I didn't sense any of that from any of my relatives in Wisconsin, at that particular point in time. Now, I've learned later, that my youngest sister who's approximately eight to 10 years younger than me and was living at home at that time. She has told me, she says, "I do remember dad, in particular being really concerned, at one point in time, because something he thought something had happened to you." And I don't know what that was, nor how that word got back to my parents, because I've never been—I don't think I called my parents once when I was down there. I don't think I wrote them a letter because I'm just not a letter writer. And so how they found out something that might have been going on in my life down there, I have no idea. But I do remember, again, my youngest sister saying something to the effect that dad was very concerned about that, but they never expressed that to me. It never was a part of that experience at all.



[13:06] Lisa Daniels: So as you participated in the program, what was your role? And how did you impact the lives of people during the TISEP program?

[13:20] Michael Jochen: Well, I'm sure you're going to have some discussions with other people too, about the structure of the TISEP program. But my recollection goes something like this. There were multiple things that were taking place. There was a group that was going to teach on satellite places, they're going to live with people in the community. There were groups that were going to support them in terms of academic support. There were transportation groups, there were maybe physical education groups, I can't be sure about that. But definitely there was going to be an arts group or a music group. And being a music—music major, I was—I thought, "well, well, I'll be—I'll be a member of the music group." And so it just—you just kind of did what you had some strengths in, I guess, at that particular point in time. And so I joined the music group. And that's where I happened to meet my wife, as a matter of fact, my future wife, because she was in the music group also. And even though we had gone to the same college, we in a sense, we didn't know each other until we got down there. But anyway, if your question is, "How did I end up in that particular group?" it was just, I thought, that's where my strengths were and I certainly didn't want to be in—if there was a physical education group, I wasn't going to be in the physical education group. And I wasn't going to be in the psychology group or the whatever, or the math group. I'd be in the music group.

So I ended up in the music group. And the experience there was one basically of doing the kinds of things—I played the clarinet. And I also played and sang. And so as a clarinet person, there was another clarinet player there. He was from Mississippi. William Henry Nelson was his name, I believe he's from Mississippi. And then there were two St. Olaf students there who played French horn. So I helped arrange, if you will, and we had a little quartet, but I arranged some music that the four of us could play together. And then what that group would do is, is that we would live on campus in Tuskegee, on Tuskegee Institute's campus. We would practice at Tuskegee but then we would go out to these campuses, where—the sites in which other people were teaching. And we'd have sort of an enrichment day, if you will, in which we taught—I remember a teaching some lessons using a—record players and things like this. And then we'd live perform some vocal music. We'd perform live, we perform some instrumental music, and so on, and we'd interact with people that way.

[15:49] Lisa Daniels: How were the songs chosen? And, yes, let's start there. How were the songs chosen for your group?

[16:01] Michael Jochen: Well, at that particular point in time, there was a person who was more or less—Steven Fuller, who was more or less in charge, if you will, of this particular group. Now, how Steve—he was the St. Olaf student—how Steve came about in terms of doing that I'm not exactly sure. But Steve was in charge of it, and he did a good job of being in charge of it. And I believe primarily, I believe he selected the repertoire that—I cannot recall whatsoever on my part, or anybody else's part that I knew of basically saying, "Oh, I think we should do this piece here," etcetera, etcetera. He—but he selected a repertoire, and he rehearsed the group too, and—I think they know the instrumental stuff, that I selected because I'm the one that had to arrange it. You usually don't find two clarinets and two French horns being in a, in a quartet, if you will. So



I had to do some rescoring or rearranging of the piece to make things happen, so that we could play together. If that makes some sense.

[17:07] Lisa Daniels: Okay. So do you remember any of the songs that you played during the program?

[17:13] Michael Jochen: Yes, I do. Remember, "Comin' Thro' the Rye" was one. For some reason, I remember that. My—"if a lassie needs a lassie coming through the rye—" [scatting] you know that—but that's about the only one—we may have done "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" but I honestly can't—I honestly can't say that I honestly do remember—but "Comin' thro' the Rye" seems to be one that for some reason sticks in my head as being one that we did.

[17:47] Lisa Daniels: What is the meaning of that song?

[17:51] Michael Jochen: Well, that—as best—I mean, I've never reflected on the meaning of that song, quite frankly. But rye is a form of oats. And so something's coming through the rye, if you will, somebody who's running through the rye. My lassie's coming through the rye coming out to meet me. It's a—it's a—maybe a couple's song or something like that. I don't know. It's an old American folk song, I believe.

[18:17] Lisa Daniels: And "Every time I Feel the Spirit," what's the meaning of that song?

[18:22] Michael Jochen: Well, that was a—William Dawson is well known as a person who created if you will arrangements of African American black Negro spirituals. He was the choir director at Tuskegee Institute. And so I believe that a song like that, if that was the one, I believe a song like that was one that we would do both to honor him. Because I remember—and I have recollection of this, because he signed some stuff for me—that we went to his house, and we met him. It was something that, as a musician, we're going to meet Mr. Dawson, which we did. But he was very instrumental, or vocal, I guess you'd say, but very instrumental in recording and making arrangements of Negro spirituals for essentially choirs all through the United States, if not the world. Now that as to the meaning of that, "every time I feel the spirit, I will pray." So again, it's almost like a worship song, if you will.

[19:30] Lisa Daniels: What was your experience with William Dawson? So what was that like?

[19:35] Michael Jochen: I don't honestly remember too much about that. Reflecting back on it—and my wife, and I've done this a little bit, ironically, about maybe four years ago, three years ago, four years ago—I was—McGraw Hill called me up about some stuff to do and part of that was to write a lesson, if you will, or write some educational materials. Dealing with Tuskegee and dealing with integration. And the piece that they wanted to use was, "Every Time I Feel the Spirit." Well, I have a recording again of the Tusk-, of William Dawson conducting the Tuskegee Institute choir. And he signed that. That was that experience of going to his house. And, you know, as a 21-year-old person coming into contact with somebody who's like a god, I mean, I'm just kind of flattered that he would even take time to let somebody like me come in there. And so



in terms of memories of that particular experience, I thought he was very gracious, humble, and very courteous, to the kind of questions that we asked which probably looking back were very simplistic questions, and the kind of dialogue that we were trying to have with him. And I don't remember going over there with like, 100 people, it might have just been a couple of us that went over there at that particular point in time. But it was a—it was a warm—frankly, the whole Tuskegee experience in summer of '65 was a, an open sharing of white lifestyles, black lifestyles.

[21:19] Lisa Daniels: So what are your most fond memories of that summer?

[21:31] Michael Jochen: I think—you know, you're asking me questions that I haven't reflected on—they're good questions—that I haven't reflected on. For, gosh, 50-something years now. I do think, going beyond the fact that I had an opportunity to meet my future wife. That certainly was a fond memory. But at the same time, I think perhaps the most fond memory was one of—in order to go—in order to go from Tuskegee to some of these satellite places in which what happened was—is that we would teach, we had to have transportation. And the transportation that we had was essentially a Ford Econoline van. Now, you're probably too young to recall that, that at one point in time, there basically weren't vans. And this was sort of an intermediate thing. So here it was the summer of 1965. Hot as blazes at times, in Alabama. And I was one of the people that could drive the van. And in the van, what would happen would be, we would have all the instruments, all the chairs we needed, we'd have a piano, and they didn't have portable pianos at that point in time this—So this was a little spinet piano upright that we'd have to load into the van every time we went someplace. We'd have music stands in there. We had, we had record players, in there. We had anything we needed in order to teach it wherever we were going to go. And there was always somebody who rode with me. And that was William Henry Nelson, an African American gentleman who played clarinet. But what I remember about the program was African Americans were not allowed to drive some of these cars. So I had—I drove, and William Henry Nelson was the passenger with me. And we would have conversations, and we would talk about things. And I think that was a very open—it was a very open dialogue. From my viewpoint, and I would hope from William Henry's viewpoint also, that it was a dialogue in which we just talked about this, and we talked about that. And it was—it wasn't as if rich or poor, or tall or short. It was just two people driving 50 miles or something like that, talking, having a conversation, laughing a little bit crying a little bit, sweating a lot, and just kind of going on with our lives. And that—that is one of the fondest memories again, besides—I have to say this because of my wife—but dealing—meeting my wife, it's the conversations we had with William Henry Nelson. I think that was really profound.

[24:20] Lisa Daniels: So tell us about the meeting your wife, how did you meet her at Tuskegee?

[24:27] Michael Jochen: Well, it was one of those proximity issues, probably more than anything else. It was simply she was in the music group, and I was in the music group. And so consequently, when we went back to St. Olaf after that particular summer—she—when we left, I guess I should say it this way. When we left Tuskegee, she needed a ride someplace. So I gave her a ride. Now this was after she got back to, I think Chicago or something like that. And—But anyway—and when we got back to St. Olaf, St. Olaf had a cafeteria and St. Olaf had music rehearsals essentially from about 4:30 until six o'clock, I believe it was. And after those music



rehearsals, we would get deep. Well, we were together—well we'd go off and we'd go—have supper together and stuff like that. So it was just proximity more than anything else, kind of thing. I'm not saying there wasn't perhaps some attraction there. But I will say that it was proximity that led to other kinds of things, if you will, and it's led to us being married now. This is our 54th year of marriage. So—

[25:31] Lisa Daniels: So, to transition back to William Henry Nelson, are you still in contact with anybody from the program?

[25:42] Michael Jochen: Well, umm—yes, yes, and, and, and, no, if you will. We still have good friends—Kristy Swanson, who lives on—she lives out in Oregon at this point in time, which is where my wife's from—Kristy was a member of Tuskegee, of that program. Jacob Bock Jake was how—Jake lived in Southern Illinois. I lived in Northern Illinois, and Jake was driving down to Alabama. So I took the train from Chicago down to Southern Illinois. He picked me up, and we drove together down to Tuskegee. So we have contact with Jake. What was it two years ago when we had this little reunion? At Tuskegee—you know about that one?

[26:34] Lisa Daniels: No.

[26:35] Michael Jochen: Well, at Tuskegee, there was a reunion of people that worked in that summer program. And I'd have to check my notes on this but I think it was two years ago. And the idea was that people that worked in the TISEP program at that particular point in time, were invited to come back to the Tuskegee campus and visit and—and retrace some of the memories and retrace some of the areas that we went to and various things like this. Now, in my judgment, not many people came back. But my wife and I went back, Kristy went back. Umm—Trying to think—I think, oh, and [cough] excuse me, a couple other St. Olaf people went back too. Cheryl Anderson. Um—gotta think, Chuck Larsen—So we've made contact with each other, but we haven't stayed in sustained contact with each other. And, at the same time, St. Olaf had—when—when Dean Phillips, an individual who put this program together at Tuskegee, when he put the program together, St. Olaf a couple years ago, honored him with an honorary doctorate degree.

And at that particular point in time, St. Olaf also held some sessions, bringing people back to talk about the Tuskegee summer—Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program. And there I made contact. As a matter of fact, and so did Gail, we made contact with several other people who were in the program. Peyton Hoffman, who also played French horn. It was in the music group, and his former wife, Maria Zuttz, "Z-U-T-T-Z" I believe. She played French horn in that group, too. She was there. So there's about a half a dozen people that remain in touch. Galen Brooks lives down here in Washington, DC and Galen was in the program. Jeff Straight was in the program. He lives up in the Twin Cities, I believe. So, so do we stay in touch? We stay in touch. But there isn't—There isn't a daily contact with anybody with the exception of Kristy Swanson, who my wife talks to basically about every other day email or something like this. And so we stay in touch with her quite a bit.

[29:04] Lisa Daniels: So two years ago will put us in 2019?



[29:12] **Michael Jochen:** For—for St. Olaf or for the Tuskegee—

[29:14] **Lisa Daniels:** For the TISEP reunion?

[29:18] **Michael Jochen:** Let me if you can bear with me a second here—[computer keyboard clicking] The St. Olaf reunion was in—um—2015.

[30:12] **Lisa Daniels:** And to be specific, the St. Olaf reunion for TI-, for the TISEP program?

[30:20] **Michael Jochen:** Yes, that was, I believe that was when—I believe that was when Dean Phillips was given an honorary degree at St. Olaf, P.B. Phillips. And at that particular point in time, there was a session in which what happened was—I've got the—there was a, there was a panel discussion. I got that one in my notes here. And I think that was in September of 2015. But more recently—was he—I have to make sure I say something to my wife so we check this out. I think it was in October. [throat clear] Let me try one more thing here. Yes, it was in October of 2018. And what that was, that was put on and organized at Tuskegee. And then again, we went around to some surrounding counties, because the TISEP program itself was not just on the, the Tuskegee campus, but it was in those surrounding communities.

[32:48] **Lisa Daniels:** What was it like going to those communities? What are some—some things that you remember?

[32:55] **Michael Jochen:** Well, what I remember is, again, I drive a van. And I remember going to sites in which we were asked to teach. Some of those sites did not have electricity. Some of those sites did not have running water. And these were the places that we were supposed to teach. And they, the students on a year round basis, were supposed to go to school, I believe in some of these sites. I also remember that there were places in which what happened was Viola Liuzzo, I believe was shot and killed in the spring of 1965. She was a volunteer civil rights workers from Detroit, Michigan. And when she was shot and killed, the people that did that, I believe were on trial in Lowndes County, Alabama. Now, I could be off-base on this, but, and I remember going into that county, and we definitely knew that that incident had taken place. And we went into that particular county and as I recall, people would say things like this: "There's the courthouse in which this trial is taking place." And, you know, I personally don't recall ever being discriminated against, or ever fearing for my life, in terms of any activity that I was doing. And, and then I saw this going on, and I was like, "Hmm", and one time, William Henry and I, Alabama, the places we would go in many instances, the road was sort of like this.

And so this van that we had was loaded down with stuff. It had no air conditioning, we had the windows open and everything. And our van would go down a hill [vroom], and then it would go up the hill [pfft] like this, and as I recall, the highway was two lanes. And so I had a pattern as we're going up the hill of saying, "Come on and pass, pass us. Pass us." So I remember this one instance, in particular, in which I did that, and a pickup truck goes by us. And the person in the passenger seat, what that person in the passenger seat does is the person says "thanks" waves her hand "thanks", and then they saw that there was a white person in there. And he saw that there was a black person in there. And then the person jokingly, I, we believe, jokingly went to the gun



rack that was behind the head of the driver and himself. And jokingly, you know, kind of went like this with their hands. [Imitated firing a gun] And mean, I remember that very vividly. And I remember in a couple of instances driving and what happened was, was that people that I was driving would say, "we don't go down this road." People saying, "we got to get back by five o'clock." Not because something was going to happen at five o'clock, but it wasn't safe to be out in a mixed car. That was that was the perception. Those are the things that I remember most about that. And I'd never given any thought to it. We don't stop at this place. If somebody has to go to the bathroom, if somebody wants something to eat, we don't stop at this place. And that, I mean, those were, those were experiences that were very powerful.

[36:32] Lisa Daniels: So I have a lot of questions to ask after—after that story. And thank you for that. Umm—

[36:38] Michael Jochen: Well, I can tell you one more too—

[36:39] Lisa Daniels: Please.

[36:40] Michael Jochen: —about this driving. I was driving a car. Well, let's back up a second. When we talk about transportation, there's a couple—there's a couple things about transportation. One of them was we needed a lot of transportation to make this program work; not just the music group, but the group as a whole. So they had to rent automobiles. Well, if I'm not mistaken, the Alabama politics, – the Alabama policies, whatever you want to say – what they did was that they passed and approved something that basically said, any program that's receiving federal funds – now this is how I remember it –Any program that's receiving federal funds, and is operating in the state of Alabama, cannot use—cannot use Alabama funds, or—any- anyway, you couldn't rent cars in Alabama and use them. Well the cars, the cars I believe were rented. That's—that's wrong. The cars were—the cars were rented, and we had to take them back. The program had to take all the automobiles that were rented back to Atlanta, Georgia. And in order to do that, there was—there were caravans of cars.

I was again, a driver. So I can remember driving at least two, if not maybe as many as three cars from Tuskegee, Alabama, back to Atlanta, and getting rid that that was what the that's what the thing was. Any program operating in Alabama could not use automobiles or materials, if you will, from out of state, they had to be given in state. Well, Alabama wouldn't rent them cars. So they were rented from Atlanta. We had to bring the cars back to Atlanta, and so on. And so, I mean, that was an issue. Another issue was I drove a car and I had three women in the car with me. They were black. And at that particular point in time, I got stopped by the Alabama State Police. And in getting stopped—in fairness, they were stopping other people too, so I wasn't the only one. But they came to me in the car and they said, "Would you please get out of your car, go back and sit over here on the side," which I did. So, I sat on the grass on the side of the car; the three women stayed in the car. Then what happened was, after a period of time, the Alabama police formed a line and told everyone to go back to your automobiles.

There were a couple trucks in there, as I recall, but mostly automobiles. And there was state police at the front of the line [of cars] and state police at the back of line [of cars]. They said



"Follow us." So we drove and we drove to—and I don't know what the town is. Maybe it was Tuskegee, I don't know. But anyway, what happened was we drove and we got to a gas station. And then they said "Drivers get out." So I got out of the car. And they said "Go in here and sit down." So I went in the bays for the gas station. As I recall, there were two of them. And he said "Stay here." And then one by one, we got called into a back room at this gas station. Getting called into the back room in the gas station, I walked into the room and here was a desk and I remember the desk very vividly.

The desk had two flags on it: a confederate flag on one side and American flag on the other side. Behind the desk was a picture of George Wallace. Seated behind the desk was the gentleman in a suit and on each side of the desk, were Alabama State patrolman in full uniforms. And so what happened was, was that I walked in there. As I recall, they shut the door. Then they said, "How do you plead?" to which I responded and said, "Not guilty," at which point in time, the person seated behind the desk, looked at each one of the patrolmen. The patrolman put their hands on their gun belts, shook their gun belts. And he asked me again, "How do you plead?" And I said, "Not guilty." I—I'm sorry, I said, "Guilty" and at that point in time, the interview stopped. And they let me go back.

Now we had been instructed, more or less if anything happens, make sure you don't put up a fight or anything like this. Well, I was saying, "What was I guilty of?" And as best I could figure it out, was essentially, I was guilty of driving a car that had three black women in it. That's the only thing I could come up with, because they never accused me of any charge, per se; it was just "how do you plead?" And so within roughly 24 hours or so I was out of there, because the program found out about it and got bailed out, if you will. But you know, those were things that just—what impressions the program made on me were those kinds of little things that kind of added up, William Henry Nelson, as a person, and William Henry Nelson as a black person, and me driving a car and people taking potshots, if you will, or simulating potshots at us, and driving a car and being arrested, "Don't go down this road" and "Don't do this," going to a church service with two or three other white people, and walk—and seeing people outside, outside the church. And as I'm walking to the—as we are walking to the church, what happens is, is that the people that see us coming, they run inside the church, and lock the doors. So when we get to the church, they won't let us in the doors. And they're standing inside laughing at us. That was an everyday—every Sunday, if you will kind of—kind of occurrence at that environment.

[42:29] Lisa Daniels: So tell me about the three black women in the car. And when you got back to the car, what happened?

[42:35] Michael Jochen: I mean, after I got stopped initially.

[42:39] Lisa Daniels: Yes. So after you all survived the encounter, what happens next?

[42:44] Michael Jochen: Well, basically what happened was, was that they just kind of they let us go. I mean, I think, I think—I don't, I don't honestly know. I was kind of by myself and in my own little world at that point in time. Once I went into that back room and came back out, I had



to stay as I recall in that little area until you're free to go, which meant that they paid something more or less to get me out of there. Now as to what happened to the people that were in the car at that point in time. I'm not exactly sure if somebody came and picked them up or something like that. Because these weren't necessarily people that were part of the music group. These were people that I may just have been driving from some other place, but I know there were three people in there plus myself.

[43:27] **Lisa Daniels:** Okay, so they're not part of the program. Okay, gotcha.

[43:30] **Michael Jochen:** Well, they're part of TISEP. They're not a part of music. Excuse me a second [sneeze].

[43:43] **Lisa Daniels:** So were you—Were you able to talk to the women after y'all survived that encounter?

[43:52] **Michael Jochen:** Oh, I don't—I don't—I have no recollection whatsoever of having any conversations with—with them.

[44:00] **Lisa Daniels:** So, after the state patrolman stopped you, and you had to plead guilty, of course, you survived that. How did that impact your view of Alabama and the South?

[44:21] **Michael Jochen:** Well, you know, my view going down there was really naive. I mean, there's no question about that because St. Olaf at that time was probably 99.9%, Scandinavian white, fair haired middle class, upper middle-class individuals. And although coming—coming from Joliet, Illinois, which was a mixed-race community, Hispanic, black, Caucasian, Catholic, predominantly. I mean, I grew up with kids with Eastern European names and—so I was used to interacting with a wide variety of people, but I was not used to interacting with African Americans. So going to Alabama and seeing a culture in which was only on TV. Again, Selma didn't mean, it didn't mean a lot to me in the spring of 1965, because—because we didn't have a TV, and we may have caught glimpses of it, but I didn't read a daily paper or anything like that. But it certainly went on. And so how did it impact me? Well, it impacted me, I think more than anything, in terms of giving me some depth of understanding of what it means to be human, and how that humanity in Alabama is being questioned. Not because of smartness or again because of height or anything like that. But because of the color of a person's skin that I relatively was beginning to be discriminated against, because I was associating with people that were black. And that was a big change.

[46:11] **Lisa Daniels:** With the—with this viewpoint, of course, seeing the depth of understanding that you gained after the TISEP program, what do you think you brought to St. Olaf? Were you able to do a presentation once you returned? Did students learn about the project from you?

[46:35] **Michael Jochen:** Well, that's—that's a—that's a fair question. And it was a question that was raised at that – what was a 2015 thing when Dean Phillips received the honorary doctorate degree, and there was a, there was a discussion in the room – what did—what were we, TICEP



participants, able to bring back to St. Olaf as a result of that, that collectively had an influence, perhaps on St. Olaf as a whole? And I would say "Nothing." Because—because what happened was, was nothing. St. Olaf didn't make a big deal about going down there as an institution. It did not make a big deal about following up; oh, we went down there. There was, relatively speaking, no recognition of us having gone down there. It was more or less simply a program. And you're, depending on whom you're going to interview in the future, you'll find out more about this. But essentially, I believe, there was really no real systematic, intentional recognition of St. Olaf participating in that particular program. And that was true in 2018. When we got back together in a little informal discussion group in terms of this 2018, TISEP thing of trying to organize something systematically about Tuskegee and trying to get participants together and—and I remember – I don't know if I said it, or somebody else said it – but, you know, the—the idea that we came back to Northfield and there were big banners across the street, basically saying "Welcome home TISEP participants" or something like that didn't happen. Just didn't happen. It was in a sense, it was almost like it was just another summer job. And everybody's coming back to campus. And "What do you do this summer?" "Oh, I went to Alabama." "Oh." But there wasn't any—you know there wasn't any systematic way to get that information back together.

[48:45] Lisa Daniels: So I know, we have about five minutes remaining. I wanted you to talk about the church services that you were able to attend.

[49:00] Michael Jochen: My recollection is we weren't able to attend any. The recollection is one of basically saying, I remember the most prominent one was Peyton Hoffman myself, perhaps Gail Peterson, my future wife, and perhaps Maria [Zoots], the four of us walking to this church. And within – because, again, we lived on the campus – walking to the church with people outside the church, and we never got into the church because they went back in the church and locked the doors. That's, that's my basic recollection.

[49:40] Lisa Daniels: What would you like to share—if we were to remember anything about this interview, what do you want us to remember?

[50:02] Michael Jochen: Times were different. The...the—the chasm between whites and minorities in the 1960s was wide. It was fraught with—to some extent, with fear. I mean, the Plessy vs. Ferguson issue, it only happened roughly 10, 12 years before that: the integration of schools. The gap between thinking about what the constitution means: "We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union." That understanding of everything – that all men are created equal, all people are created equal. I think that began to become a flame, if you will, or at least it lighted a flame on the part of many, many people that went to—in that Tuskegee program at that point in time. We may have been kind of closet, you know—"what's going on here?" but it brought it out into the open for us, I believe. And I think it's—it's still bringing it out into the open Black Lives Matter today. To some extent, I think we can make a case and trace it back to that. They didn't matter at that time. Minority issues didn't matter at that particular point in time. And it was just kind of like we had our heads in a rabbit hole or something. And we've kind of pulled it out. So that I think, if anything, to remember that I was a naive person. There's no question about that. I think I'm much more diverse at this particular point in time, I'm certainly not without biases. But specifically—remember that this is a process



and it's been institutionalized. It has been challenged at various points in time. But each time it comes back the challenges that we face, it comes back with a little more fervor, a little more faith, a little more understanding. And that—that—that that's something that that I think my wife and I and our children have grown into. I mean, our grandchildren at this particular point in time, as well as our children certainly have a whole different concept of, of who they interact with. And we didn't. It just wasn't the case.

[52:57] Lisa Daniels: Have you been able to—[throat clear] I'm sorry. Have you been able to share your experience in the TISEP program with your family members since that time?

[53:07] Michael Jochen: Yes, we actually we, we do share things like that. Ironically, this COVID thing has been a blessing in several different ways, as well as a bane in several different ways. But what it's done is, is that it's forced us, my wife and I specifically, to stay home a little bit. And from the standpoint of staying home, one of the things I just finished was I digitized – I have a little machine and I digitized approximately 1000 slides that belong to my wife. And in those slides, were pictures, probably no more than 10 or 15 I have to admit, of Tuskegee, of the summer education program, being on site and being places and people etc, etc. And we've also donated a whole bunch of the, my wife is better at this than me, but she was cleaning out some stuff as we get a little bit older, and many of the things like the Tuskegee Institute, there was a summer education newsletter, a paper if you will. And we donated a whole bunch of materials to the archives at St. Olaf College, about the summer education program. So do we share this with our kids? Yes, we do share this with our kids. We've shared pictures. Matter of fact, there's one—there's, there's one that's right. Here's . . . see that. These are things that we've shared with our kids. This one—that, I don't know if you can see that, but that's—I guess that's me on the, on the left. William Henry Nelson is the guy on the right. And that little—and that's the choir, that's part of the music group back there. But, you know, kids have asked us, our children have asked us "Where do these things come from?" And we've tried to answer that question. We've also— we've also—Well, our oldest son, as a matter of fact, he and his wife, he teaches at St. Olaf College now in the religion department. And his wife teaches at St. John's College in the English department. And so obviously, we talk about these things because we go back there and have interactions with them on these. And our grandkids that live out here, we have three of them that live within 20 miles of us, that we try to take them and do things that—in terms of working at at soup kitchens, and various things like that in this in Baltimore City, and in disadvantaged areas and so on, and trying to say, "You know, this is what, this is a people thing. This is—" we're fortunate and so on. So, yes, we do try to share attitudes, actions, moments, if you will, memories—

[56:07] Lisa Daniels: Well, thank you so much for participating in this interview. It is 2:02 Central Standard Time, January 30. I'm going to stop recording now.

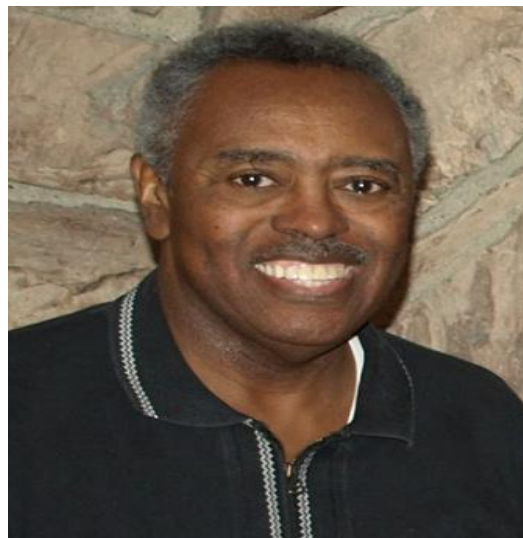
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TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Ed B. Massey/La Palma, CA
Interviewer: Guy Trammell/ Tuskegee, AL
Date: June 26, 2021
Transcriptionist: Kevin Holt

Ed B. Massey was born in Birmingham, Alabama, February 13, 1943, to Ed Boyd and Essie Malan Massey. He grew up in the Birmingham, Alabama area. He lived in several Birmingham communities: Ensley, Edgewater, Dolomite and graduated from Westfield High School. Massey attended Tuskegee, studying electronic engineering. After graduating, he served in the military for 20 years as an engineer and data analyst. Post military career, Ed worked for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a NASA center, as manager of the Voyager project.



Ed B. Massey

[00:05] Guy Trammell: Okay, it is four o'clock on Saturday. And this is June 26, 2021. I am Guy Trammell in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, here to interview Ed Massey who is in La Palma, California. This interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. Go ahead, you do yours.

[00:59] Ed Massey: Oh, sorry. I'm Ed Massey, located in La Palma, California. It's 4:00 PM on June 26, 2021. I'm being interviewed by Guy Trammell who is at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama.

[01:19] Guy Trammell: All right. Well, let's start. Where were you—where were you born? And tell us about where you—and your parents.

[01:31] Ed Massey: I was born in Birmingham, Alabama, February 13, 1943. To Ed Boyd and [Essie Malan] Massey. Do you need more than that?

[01:48] Guy Trammell: Yes. Okay. And okay, where did you actually grow up?

[01:54] Ed Massey: Oh, I grew up in the Birmingham area in several locations. In Ensley, Edgewater, and Dolomite.



[02:02] Guy Trammell: Okay, now, at that time, just tell us a little bit about that. Where did you go to school there for high school and—

[02:12] Ed Massey: Westfield. The high school I went to, Westfield High, located in Westfield, Alabama, which is next door to Dolomite.

[02:21] Guy Trammell: Okay, now we're talking about an area in the south now. Okay. And a lot of things going on there. You had the main insurance company downtown, which I think was supporting somebody named Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Booker T. Washington was that the business school downtown? And a lot of civil rights things, Shuttlesworth—are any those—Did you intersect with any of that coming up?

[03:00] Ed Massey: Mostly not in a civil rights way. You know, I, of course, I knew about A.G. Gaston—A.G. Gaston Funeral Home, the Citizens National Bank downtown. And I had—I had knowledge of Reverend Shuttlesworth and all the bombings that had happened to his house and his status as a civil rights leader. Matter of fact, one of my friends out here now is one of his cousins.

[03:39] Guy Trammell: Wow. Okay. Okay. Did you know any of the four little girls in the bombing or any of the others with that church? Was that familiar church with you?

[03:51] Ed Massey: Yes. The church I was familiar with, but I didn't go to that church. Matter of fact, he was—it was located downtown Birmingham and I was in the suburbs.

[04:00] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now, what—tell me a little bit about what life was like there? Going to the store—who owned the stores there? Or where you played, you know, how was that? Was it all black? Mixed? How did it go?

[04:25] Ed Massey: We mostly went to A&P, which was of course white owned but mixed clientele. And I played mostly with black kids until I was in seventh or eighth grade I guess, growing up in Dolomite. We—the communities were integrated. I'm sorry, segregated, but they were like next door to each other. So, we ended up playing with white kids a lot until we got to an age where I think their parents thought that we might be a threat to their daughters. And all of a sudden, we couldn't play with them anymore.

[05:10] Guy Trammell: Okay, and were there any kind of community centers or were things centered around the church as far as activities with the children, or was there playgrounds, or were there ball fields and things like that? Anything like that?

[05:28] Ed Massey: That was the—matter of fact there was, even when I lived in proximity, there were up parks, but they were segregated. There were activities there like, the baseball teams, for instance. Yes. But they were all at segregated facilities.



[05:48] Guy Trammell: Okay, okay. And in school, tell me was there any difference, elementary versus high school as far as the ones that attended there? Were they all pretty much in the same neighborhood, in the different schools you attended?

[06:06] Ed Massey: Except for high school. I went to a county elementary school. But I went to a city of Birmingham school, from fourth through sixth grade. I—then I moved to Dolomite, which was a basic country elementary school again. And even then, there were kids being bussed from remote locations to the seventh and eighth grade there. And, of course, Westfield was—had many, many feeder communities, and we, I happened to live in one that was next door. So, I walked to school, but there were probably mostly students there were bussed.

[06:53] Guy Trammell: You said there was a county elementary school. That's what you said?

[06:57] Ed Massey: Right.

[06:58] Guy Trammell: Okay, gotcha.

[06:58] Ed Massey: [Kitchen Water] was the county elementary school. But then I also went to city school in South Pratt, and then back to a county school when I was in the sixth grade.

[07:13] Guy Trammell: Okay. And did you come across anything at that time while you were there? As far as either hearing about Martin Luther King coming through or Shuttlesworth speaking or any activity with any of the SCLC or anything like that?

[07:36] Ed Massey: I knew about it when I was in high school. But while I was in high school there was no participation by us. My high school did participate though, when King came to Birmingham in 1963. I was away college by then.

[07:54] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay. All right now in school, especially in high school. How were your class classmates, and other schoolmates? How was the concept of education past high school? What? What, um, what was on people's minds as you were, like, say, getting to junior high—as a junior in 11th grade and in 12th grade? What were your classmates—and what was the general idea about education beyond that, within your community and in school?

[08:35] Ed Massey: Well, again, in high school, there was an emphasis on going past high school. My teachers pretty much encouraged me to take a lot of the tests that I needed to do to get scholarships. So that was a that was a big emphasis. As a matter of fact, I would say about at least half of my high school class went on to college.

[09:04] Guy Trammell: Mm hmm. Okay.

[09:06] Ed Massey: I don't know how many graduated, but they did go.



[09:09] Guy Trammell: Yes. And was that like the general thing that you'd seen that look, like from other classes before you graduated or anything like that?

[09:19] Ed Massey: I know, that was a lot of participation, but I don't know the number. The classes before me. Yes. And even at other schools like in the Birmingham area. There was a scholarship offered by the Birmingham chapter of Omega Psi Phi and—probably about seven or eight schools that participated and got scholarships. Of course, it wasn't much I came in second, I only got fifty dollars but fifty dollars is fifty dollars.

[09:56] Guy Trammell: Amen! [phone ring] Even back then, yes. And I want to, I just thought about—I'm going to go back a little bit to coming up and even in high school, did you all go downtown much at all? Or was your main—most of your life, most of the activities and things pretty much around your community?

[10:24] Ed Massey: Yes, we went downtown every once in a while. I had relatives that lived in the Birmingham area. And my father worked in Birmingham area so— And we had one bus that came through our community and went to the next community where we can catch city buses. And also, in high school, I worked for a guy who had a cleaners, picking up clothes, so—and he was located in Bessemer. So, I was down there quite a bit. And also, the routes where we picked up where it was in quite a bit of the—the parts of the county.

[11:00] Guy Trammell: Now, tell us about your parents. Now. What did they do? And was there ever talk at the table or around the family about any racial matters?

[11:11] Ed Massey: Yes, my mother died when I was five, so I didn't really get to know her, but my father was a coal miner. And later in life, after a strike at the coal mine, he was one of the ones that did not go back. So, he worked as a—as a gardener for like, a dollar an hour. And we talked a little bit about Civil Rights activities, but it was mostly outside the house though.

[11:41] Guy Trammell: I just have to ask you, did you ever actually meet Mr. Gaston, or? Or actually come in the presence of Shuttlesworth at any time?

[11:50] Ed Massey: No, I didn't.

[11:52] Guy Trammell: Okay, okay. Yes. Okay, so now, your senior and—how did how did you discover where you'd want to go to college? And would you actually go?

[12:08] Ed Massey: Well, I had scholarships for several schools. Most of them will lead to a degree in education and a teaching career. And I didn't think I was—would be good at that. You know, during TISEP I did. Well, that was later though. But I decided that where I wanted to go to school was somewhere where they had arts and science or engineering. And I ended up going to Tuskegee for that reason.

[12:43] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now, was there any particular thing that piqued your interest in engineering, by the way?



12:51] Ed Massey: Well, I chose electrical. Yes. Probably like most kids from the rural schools at that time, I didn't know much about engineering. I just knew that was—that was preferred by me more than education was. And I had scholarships like to Talladega, Knoxville was the school up there. Is it called Knoxville?

[13:20] Guy Trammell: Yes—I'm not sure. Yes, I know—.

[13:24] Ed Massey: Fisk! It's called Fisk.

[13:25] Guy Trammell: Yes, yes. Okay. Yes. Well, that. So okay. So now you, you know, you got your major now. Now, did you pick your major before you got to Tuskegee or after you've been there for a little bit of—

[13:42] Ed Massey: Nah, I picked it right away.

[13:43] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay. So how did—tell me a little bit about the transition, because here you're going from high school and coming from, you know, Birmingham is like the largest city in the state. Okay. And you come into Tuskegee. Had you been in Tuskegee before by any chance?

[14:02] Ed Massey: No. No. No. My first time was when I got in there for registration.

[14:06] Guy Trammell: Okay, did they— they drove you down? Or did you take the train or anything?

[14:11] Ed Massey: Yes, I drove out. One of my neighbors actually that I was helping his wife through high school. And he had a brother that lived out in that little village that I think, what, was it called—

[14:25] Guy Trammell: Greenwood,

[14:28] Ed Massey: No, it was a—it had been a military housing area during World War II.

[14:35] Guy Trammell: Mitchell?

[14:36] Ed Massey: Mitchell.

[14:37] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[14:38] Ed Massey: And so I got a ride there. And then he took me over to Tuskegee on registration day.



[14:53] Guy Trammell: So you got a good meal before you got to Tuskegee there. Okay. So okay. What were your—have any remembrances of, you know, getting into campus for the first time? What—what was your impression and everything?

[15:12] Ed Massey: Yes, well, my first time was sort of strange. In 12th grade, I was the manager of the debate team. And we debated Fairfield. And I had a very heated discussion, I'll call it with the Fairfield guys after the debate was over. They won. But then they started trash talking. Yes, of course. Of course, we trash talked back. And then when I got in line at Tuskegee to register, three of those guys were in front of me [laugh].

[15:54] Guy Trammell: Oh, my goodness.

[15:55] Ed Massey: So we started our trash talk all over again. That was my introduction to Tuskegee [laugh].

[16:03] Guy Trammell: Oh, wow, y'all following each other there? [laugh]

[16:06] Ed Massey: We became good friends. Like, matter of fact still friends today with two of those.

[16:12] Guy Trammell: Yes, I'm trying to remember now because I don't know if Tuskegee ever had a debate team that y'all—

[16:18] Ed Massey: Nah.

[16:18] Guy Trammell: Y'all would have made a good one [laugh]. That's alright. Okay, well, and did you, you know, you're able to kind of transition into the campus life pretty good.

[16:32] Ed Massey: Yes, I did. Turns out also that three of those guys, yes, also lived in the dorm with me.

[16:43] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[16:44] Ed Massey: One was upstairs in Emery with me and the other two were downstairs. And so we are faced with each other quite a bit.

[16:53] Guy Trammell: Excellent. You had a taste of home right there. Excellent. Okay. All right, well. So you're at Tuskegee now. How, how did you learn about TISEP and tell us which TISEP it was the—you were in the summer program or the community education program?

[17:12] Ed Massey: I was in the summer program and quite honestly, I don't remember how I learned about it now. It was probably because some of my other frat brothers were in it as well. But I also worked—after the at the summer, I worked in the office as assistant to this statistician who was. I don't remember her name now.



[17:37] **Guy Trammell:** Now, what, what year were you in TISEP? You remember that?

[17:41] **Ed Massey:** Yes. I was in the summer program in 1965. And I worked in the Birmingham area at my own high school and at Praco, which was out in the sticks. And I worked in office. From the fall of '66 through the spr— '65 I'm sorry, through spring of '66.

[18:11] **Guy Trammell:** Praco? Could you spell that? What? And tell us a little bit, What is that? Is that a center?

[18:17] **Ed Massey:** Praco? P-R-A-C-O was a high school. It was another county high school.

[18:26] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, and they went all out? Did it go from nine to twelve [grade]? or eight to twelve [grade]? Were the grades—

[18:34] **Ed Massey:** Yes, I know what you mean. I'm thinking it was high school only, nine through twelve [grade].

[18:42] **Guy Trammell:** And so you were an assisting with the paperwork with both programs?

[18:50] **Ed Massey:** Oh, no, I was an instructor.

[18:51] **Guy Trammell:** An instructor? Oh, so Okay. What now? What did you teach? Yes.

[18:55] **Ed Massey:** Mostly the sciences. You know, I was fairly good in engineering, but I was good enough in science so I could help in that area too. I said engineering, I meant math.

[19:06] **Guy Trammell:** Math. Okay. All right. And—and that was good. Now had you been to Praco? Had you been to that school before?

[19:15] **Massey:** I heard of it, but I had never been out there.

[19:18] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay. And they pretty much what? Just gave you so many rooms that TISEP could use?

[19:28] **Massey:** I think we only had one room.

[19:31] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[19:32] **Ed Massey:** There might have been two, because there were four of us out there. And I don't remember now if we talked serially or in parallel.

[19:45] **Guy Trammell:** Alright and the others, other teachers, had they been—were they—did they know anything about Alabama by any chance?

[19:54] **Ed Massey:** They were all from Alabama.



[19:55] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, okay.

[19:56] **Ed Massey:** They were all from the Birmingham area as a matter of fact.

[19:59] **Guy Trammell:** Oh boy. Okay, excellent. So y'all were back home that was good. About. So, the students that you had, were they all—did it seem like they were like high school age or middle school or—

[20:14] **Ed Massey:** You mean the instructors or the people that we taught?

[20:17] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. The pupils. Pupils yes.

[20:21] **Ed Massey:** Pupils? Yes, they were all from the local area. At Westville and Praco.

[20:28] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, but they, were they high school or junior high or—

[20:33] **Ed Massey:** They were high school.

[20:34] **Guy Trammell:** High school. Okay. Okay. Excellent. Okay, and what are some of the things you remember about that? How did they take to the training to the classes and focus things like that?

[20:49] **Ed Massey:** Yes, I thought they were pretty good. We got people who were interested in basically improving the courses that they had already had. And some were interested because they had heard that they might get a scholarship out of this.

[21:06] **Guy Trammell:** Alright now. So, they were very much interested education. Okay.

[21:10] **Ed Massey:** Right.

[21:11] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, that's good. Okay.

[21:13] **Massey:** Matter of fact, one of my Praco students actually came to Tuskegee but she only lasted a year.

[21:21] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay. Excellent. Yes. And were you able to see any of the parents along the way? Or is mainly the other children there each day? But did they ever have a chance for you to see their families?

[21:37] **Ed Massey:** At Praco we did. Matter of fact, the schools were sitting almost right next door to houses, you know. At Westville, not quite so much. Most of the students who actually came were not the kids who were bussed. But the kids who lived in the neighborhoods that were next to school.



[21:56] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, so pretty much all of them just walked to school, walked to classes each day.

[22:01] **Ed Massey:** Right.

[22:01] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. And any outstanding things that you remember, during the summer that maybe something that you had not known about before? Because now you were not sitting in the classroom, but you were, you were up front? So in any differences, any moments like that came about?

[22:26] **Ed Massey:** Oh, yes, I got an appreciation for what teachers go through. Yes. Before I could go in the classroom, I had to study up myself, especially on the sciences. You know, that was, like I said, I was pretty good in the math. But I was familiar with the sciences having been an engineer, but not quite as familiar as I was with math. So I had to cram myself before I came into the class.

[22:50] **Guy Trammell:** And now—were books provided at that point or did you pretty much use the chalk board and other materials, things like that to teach or did they provide you any resource materials for the children?

[23:07] **Ed Massey:** I don't think we had any.

[23:08] **Guy Trammell:** Yes.

[23:09] **Ed Massey:** Pretty much what we—our own material, you know that we had plus the chalkboards.

[23:15] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Yes. That's good. And did any—some of the students kind of stand out to you to say that they were really picking it up a little bit better? Or maybe getting interested, maybe for the first time, that type of thing?

[23:33] **Ed Massey:** Yes, I think there were quite a few students who understood it a little better than they had, like I said, because it was the second time for some of them for the same subjects. They got a chance to ask questions that they may not have asked when they were in a classroom that were 30 people or more.

[23:56] **Guy Trammell:** And I'm curious because I'm thinking, you know, here they are seeing somebody from the area. And here you are in college. Did you get any idea about them maybe seeing maybe that's a possibility at this point? You know, other words, they seem like they kind of took to the idea that maybe college could be open to them? You know, I know you mentioned the young lady, but did any of them seem like, you know, they would talk about it a little bit differently? That type of thing.



[24:32] **Ed Massey:** Yes, I did. Some of the kids were not much younger than we were. And they seemed interested in our experience at college and what we—what they might be able to do when they got there. And like I said earlier, there were some who were there because they—they knew about the possibility of getting a scholarship to Tuskegee or getting an admission that they may not have gotten before.

[25:06] **Guy Trammell:** Amazing. Okay, and I'm sure that when they're asking questions and things that definitely, like you were saying, had to go back and study a little bit more [laugh]. Any of them bring anything about science that you had kind of, you know, do a little bit more research for?

[25:29] **Ed Massey:** Especially in chemistry. Yes, that was never one of my strong suits. Yes, I was, I was pretty good in physics and even biology, but chemistry was never my strong suit. I had to sort of brush up on that or pass it off to one of the other students who—one of the other instructors who were there.

[25:53] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, now I want to ask, because I know we're talking about the '60s okay—We talked about the south and we're talking about Alabama. And I know that there was a little bit more going on in the community and in the south at that time. During the time, especially with TISEP, and I'm sure Tuskegee period, by any chance, did you hear about anything going on with the Civil Rights movement?

[26:23] **Ed Massey:** Oh, yes. You know, in '63, when, when King was in Birmingham, I was at Tuskegee, and I didn't go up, but a lot of kids from my high school did, and in a lot of kids in Tuskegee did who from Birmingham and went back home, you know, to participate in it and knew about it. But I was not one of the ones that went back. And course I was at Tuskegee when Sammy Younge got killed. And we hit the march downtown, you know, to protest, you know, that killing and the way it was done.

[27:06] **Guy Trammell:** It was in the rain too I believe.

[27:08] **Ed Massey:** Yes, it was in I was in ROTC so I was told that I, you know, as an ROTC student, I should not participate. But we did serve as spotters, you know. A couple of us, I remember, went downtown, ahead to scout; see what was going on. And [maybe] report back. And what this lady's name at the hot dog, chili dog, especially the footlongs, down on the highway?

[27:42] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. [Mrs. Story's] Dairy Bar?

[27:44] **Ed Massey:** No, it wasn't Dairy Bar, she was independent. And we were sitting in there, you know, looking around and trying to see what we can see. And she came up and said "What's going on? I know something's going on. Why don't you guys tell me?" And we couldn't tell her [laugh]. But it all whet peaceful though. It was fairly peaceful.



[28:13] Guy Trammell: Leading up to that now. Did you know about the march that they did after Bloody Sunday? Down to Montgomery? Did you hear anything about that?

[28:22] Ed Massey: Oh, yes. Again, you know, I was trying to think about the other day, you know, when they were talking about Selma quite a bit again, it's—I don't know how we get down there. But we joined the group at the edge of Montgomery and marched up to the Capitol with them. Quite a few people from Tuskegee did that. Maybe I got a ride with somebody, one of those people.

[28:45] Guy Trammell: Yes. I understood you all actually ended up having to stay in one of the churches, I think, overnight, because y'all were there several days weren't you? Or a couple of nights?

[28:54] Ed Massey: Some people were but my buddy and me only joined on the morning of. And the day we marched up to the Capitol, and we went back somehow, that afternoon. I don't know how we got back either.

[29:08] Guy Trammell: All the different ways. Now. I understand that a group from Tuskegee went to the pool downtown. Do you know anything about that?

[29:19] Ed Massey: No, I don't know about that.

[29:20] Guy Trammell: Okay, how about those churches? I understand that there was a group that went down there with, I think it was, black armbands and I think they dressed in black?

[29:32] Ed Massey: I don't remember that either, but I do know that even before Selma there were a bunch of people from Tuskegee that went to Montgomery and joined in some of the protests at the churches.

[29:49] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[29:50] Ed Massey: And I was thinking about this the other day at Joe's: "Why didn't I go to that?" And I think is probably because most of the people who went had cars or had friends who had cars, and I was not in that group.

[30:05] Guy Trammell: Now, I understood during that time that I'm sure you ate in the cafeteria at Tompkins Hall, right?

[30:13] Ed Massey: Oh, yes.

[30:14] Guy Trammell: Yes. And I understood that they said if they ever had a civil rights meeting, that they had some kind of stomp that they would do. And once they did that everybody knew to meet. You know? Did you experience any of that?

[30:32] Ed Massey: I missed out on that. I don't remember that at all.



[30:34] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, okay. Did you go to any of the meetings on campus? Any of the civil rights meetings?

[30:39] **Ed Massey:** No.

[30:40] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, okay. So they, so basically, they would announce things what in a dorm or whatever, to let people know when they were going to have a protest march or anything?

[30:52] **Ed Massey:** I think we only had that one in Tuskegee. And that was the Sammy Younger. I don't remember another one.

[30:59] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. And now, when you march with—for Sammy Younger, y'all actually marched all the way to the bus station, right?

[31:07] **Ed Massey:** Yes.

[31:08] **Guy Trammell:** Wow. And you all ended up? Where'd y'all end up downtown after that? Was it—did you go—because I understand you might have gone to the town hall?

[31:23] **Ed Massey:** We might have. I wasn't actually in the march. I was spotting.

[31:29] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, okay.

[31:30] **Ed Massey:** I do remember when they passed us and went downtown. I know they went to the bus station. And they may have gone to the town hall too because it was very close.

[31:39] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. Because it said it, what was that, about two thirds of the students went downtown? They said it was about, what maybe 2000 or something like that, the March.

[31:50] **Ed Massey:** It could have been. It was a long line, I can tell you that.

[31:53] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay. Yes. And you remember anything about later on when the verdict came back on from the trial with the with Marvin Segrest? When they—when they redecorated the statue downtown? Did you hear about that?

[32:17] **Ed Massey:** No. When was that?

[32:19] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, yes, that fall? Okay. Yes.

[32:22] **Ed Massey:** The fall of what '65 or '66?

[32:26] **Guy Trammell:** That was '66. Yes '66.



[32:28] **Ed Massey:** Yes. I was gone then.

[32:30] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, okay. Okay. Okay. Yes but you—Did you have anything to do—They said, some of the students helped to campaign to put a new sheriff in that summer of '66?

[32:49] **Ed Massey:** There was a Black sheriff during my senior year already,

[32:53] **Guy Trammell:** Hmm. Okay, okay. Must have got in early then. Okay.

[33:00] **Ed Massey:** I've forgotten his name.

[33:01] **Guy Trammell:** You talking about Amerson? Lucius Amerson?

[33:05] **Massey:** No.

[33:06] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[33:07] **Ed Massey:** Somebody else.

[33:08] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. might have been maybe because I know there was a deputy sheriff who'd gotten in and—

[33:15] **Ed Massey:** This guy had been a student at Tuskegee at one point.

[33:18] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, yes. Okay, well, that sounds like Amerson actually. Okay. But that was—yes, he got elected they say as a direct result of Sammy Younge. Yes. Now did you know Sammy, or did you know Wendy or Simuel Schutz or any of the others? Gwen Patton?

[33:35] **Ed Massey:** I knew Gwen quite well.

[33:38] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Yes. Did you do any work with her with the student government association or any of the activities on campus?

[33:48] **Ed Massey:** No, I was not in the student government. I know she was active, but she became more active when I, you know, much later. Like, I didn't even know she had a doctorate until I read it somewhere.

[34:01] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[34:02] **Ed Massey:** She was one of those people who was least expected to become a doctor.

[34:06] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Saying that did you come across any ones that work with SNCC like George Ware? George—

[34:16] **Ed Massey:** Forman. George Forman.



[34:19] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Oh, James. Okay.

[34:21] **Ed Massey:** Yes. James Forman and—SNCC used to be on campus quite a bit. Forman was one. Even Carmichael was one. In yes, I came contact with them, but not—not very close contact.

[34:40] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, did you get a chance either talk with Forman or hear him speak or anything like that?

[34:47] **Ed Massey:** Yes. Yes.

[34:48] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, what were some of the places that ones with SNCC with speak on campus?

[34:54] **Ed Massey:** Mostly in the Student Union.

[35:00] **Guy Trammell:** That was right up under Tompkins Hall.

[35:02] **Ed Massey:** Right.

[35:03] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay. And did you know, George Davis?

[35:10] **Ed Massey:** Yes. He was my frat brother.

[35:12] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay.

[35:14] **Ed Massey:** One of the guys I made, matter of fact.

[35:16] **Guy Trammell:** Did you, did you ever? You didn't run with him, did you? [laugh] I know he liked to run.

[35:22] **Ed Massey:** No. Well, no, I didn't

[35:24] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[35:24] **Ed Massey:** I remember we used to call him the Black Jesus.

[35:27] **Trammell:** Okay [laugh]. I know. I know he loved that track. He'd be out there working out. Did you ever see Stokely or Willie Ricks?

[35:38] **Ed Massey:** Stokely. Not Willie Ricks though? Not to know in any way.

[35:43] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Did Stokely come through campus often or did you see him speak or interact with the students?



[35:52] **Ed Massey:** He came quite a few times. And this other guy. Yes. Forman, what was his first name?

[35:59] **Guy Trammell:** James.

[36:00] **Ed Massey:** James Forman, he came a lot too with his overalls. And—

[36:03] **Guy Trammell:** Mmhm. That's—and so they basically, you know, just what interact with people in the Student Union or would they? Kind of—

[36:13] **Ed Massey:** And on campus. Yes, on campus too, you know, just—

[36:18] **Guy Trammell:** Yes.

[36:19] **Ed Massey:** They were there so much that after a while, you know, it wasn't unusual to see them.

[36:24] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Yes. Okay. What? And any of the teachers stood out as far as working with the civil rights movement too on campus?

[36:36] **Ed Massey:** Oh, of course, we had heard about Gomillion when we got there. And I saw him a few times, but I didn't. I never had a class for him either. One of the teachers. Oh, our dean was who helped start TISEP. Phillips.

[36:54] **Guy Trammell:** Bertrand Philips. Yes. Yes. That's, that's amazing. Yes. I'm gonna say Gomillion probably was on a whole nother part of the campus most of the time.

[37:05] **Ed Massey:** Right.

[37:07] **Guy Trammell:** You were closer to the agriculture part down in engineering. But—

[37:15] **Ed Massey:** Well, no, agriculture was quite a bit further on. We were—we were at that gate that was near the block.

[37:22] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, okay. You were in trades. You were in the trades?

[37:26] **Ed Massey:** No. school. School of Engineering. It was next door to the Emery's.

[37:31] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, gotcha. All right. Okay. Yes. So that Yes, well, that definitely was a little bit ways from Huntington Halls. I'm sure—

[37:41] **Ed Massey:** Yes but, especially my freshman year, we had a lot of classes in Huntington Hall.



[37:45] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Yes.

[37:47] **Ed Massey:** Scavella was one of the ones that stood out.

[37:51] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, that's, that's the name in Civil Rights also. Okay. Did you hear him? talk much?

[38:00] **Ed Massey:** In the math classes, so—

[38:02] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. But then, okay, then did he ever venture off into the civil rights? Talk about that anytime?

[38:10] **Ed Massey:** Not in the classroom.

[38:11] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[38:12] **Ed Massey:** I don't remember him talking about it. I remember him for two other things. One was, he announced at the sports games and not quite sure how he did it, because from what I understood, he couldn't see very well. And the other one, he was an omega. And he recommended me to [the red] chapters to become a member.

[38:38] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent. Excellent. Yes. Well, that's now did you ever come in contact with any of the activities with the community as far as civil rights was concerned?

[38:55] **Ed Massey:** Not really, I came in contact with quite a few of the people at the—Veteran Administrations you know. We volunteered to work over there. You know, with the— several of the departments mostly taking patients to activities such as bowling and to the movies, things like that.

[39:20] **Guy Trammell:** Were you surprised there was a bowling alley at Tuskegee. And by the way, that's the Tuskegee Veterans Hospital too right? Okay.

[39:29] **Ed Massey:** Yes, I didn't—I didn't realize it until I start working with it with the patients. And then there were guys like McDonald and Junior, who were working with us, you know, in the Veterans Administration Volunteer Service.

[39:44] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. And those are some big names, right there. Yes, Junior. Yes. Did you see his closed-circuit television station he had?

[39:54] **Ed Massey:** No, I did not know he had one.

[39:56] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Yes. Veterans Hospital had one. I don't know if he if he installed it or not. Yes. Okay. Yes.

40:04] **Ed Massey:** But Junior was big time and so was McDonald.



[40:07] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, yes, yes. Yes, that's—that was the Veterans Hospital for the whole country for black veterans.

[40:16] **Ed Massey:** Yes.

[40:17] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Well now, as you had gone through that now, what—After you graduated, what became your occupation? What did you end up doing?

[40:33] **Ed Massey:** Well, I was in ROTC. And so I got commissioned at graduation. So I ended up serving in the military for 20 years. As an engineer, a data analyst, operations, Space Operations, and engineering management. I ended up as, what was my last title in the military—Oh, I was in testing operations for an operation Test and Evaluation command. And after I left the military, I went to work for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which was a NASA center. Started out in administration in and up and project management. So, my last job I was manager of the Voyager project.

[41:35] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, okay. That's good. So you got completely into it. And they—just tell real quick about your family, too. Did you? Did you ever get married? And—

[41:52] **Ed Massey:** Yes I married [Margaret Crumb], who was a year ahead of me. She was a nurse. We were married for 48 years. And she died about almost seven years ago.

[42:08] **Guy Trammell:** Oh okay. I'm sorry.

[42:10] **Ed Massey:** We ended up with two daughters. And all four of us had advanced degrees.

[42:23] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, now, was she at Tuskegee or—

[42:27] **Ed Massey:** Yes. She was at Tuskegee.

[42:28] **Guy Trammell:** Oh okay. Okay. Alright. So you, you got a couple of things in Tuskegee. Okay. Your degree and a wife. Okay [laugh].

[42:36] **Ed Massey:** Right [laugh].

[42:36] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent. Yes. And have you gotten involved in the community or anything since that time?

[42:51] **Ed Massey:** I—yes. But it's all been through frat. I'm in the grad chapter and the whole fraternity has a big emphasis on fatherhood. And so, we're doing a lot of that. I think that came about because of President Obama. You know, he had an emphasis on fatherhood. And the fraternity was one of the first to say, "let's join in on that" and so we've been doing it ever since. Even now that he's out of office, we're still doing it.



[43:23] Guy Trammell: Excellent, yes. Now, we look back at your time in TISEP and that work that you did. Could you tell us how—has any of that impacted what you have done since then?

[43:45] Ed Massey: Yes. We were at Tuskegee during my summer jobs, and also because the interchange program we had at St. Olaf. I ended up working with a lot of people of other races and feeling comfortable around it. So, when I went into the military—oh also in a ROTC summer camp. I think there might have been four of us from Tuskegee. And one of the first things they did was give us an exam. And I was there with people from Albany and Alabama. LSU and, and another school in Louisiana. I can't remember it now. But of all the people there, I score number two on the test. And so that made me feel like "Hey, Tuskegee education is no worse than anybody else's." Yes, a lot depends on you.

[44:53] Guy Trammell: Exactly.

[44:55] Ed Massey: And so when I went into the work environment, I had already has been around a lot of white folks, so it was nothing new to me, you know?

[45:04] Guy Trammell: That's—

[45:06] Ed Massey: That's one of the things I think that was really good about preparing me for the outside world. I had already been around the outside world, if you will. So it wasn't, I wasn't thrown into the briar patch. I was already in the briar patch.

[45:22] Guy Trammell: That's excellent. Yes. And by any chance along the way, did you ever get a chance to do any more teaching? We, you know, either in the military or later on?

[45:37] Ed Massey: Primarily for on-the-job training for people who work for me, you know. That's a form of teaching, but it's a whole lot different, you know. I also learned that it's—you have to leave it up to them, for instance, you don't guide them all the way, you point in the right direction and then they have to guide themselves more so than—than what they do while you're in—in elementary and high school and college.

[46:06] Guy Trammell: You know that sounds a whole lot like what Dr. Carver, George Washington Carver taught.

[46:13] Ed Massey: Oh really?

[46:13] Guy Trammell: Looks like, you caught a little bit of that at Tuskegee too [laugh]. Alright. Well, starting to wind down; just want to—want you to just think about, again, the concept of TIS/CEP and everything. Do you see any of the things that you saw in the program or you were involved with? Or the concepts at least that could be applicable to today? In other words, is there any aspect of that, that you might think could be of any assistance to our society today, to our youth today? To, you know, especially interactions with college students?



[46:54] **Ed Massey:** Yes, I think so. Yes, one of the things that the summer education program really did was tutor students, and that's very apropos today, you know, if, if there was some way, not just in the summer, but maybe year round some of the Tuskegee students could go out and tutor maybe on a weekly basis, you know, kids in the, in the local high schools, and maybe during the summer kids in their hometown area. I know that during the school year, they're not going to be going out to Lowndes County and to Birmingham and places like that. But if they could do it, like at Tuskegee Institute High or whatever it's called now then that might be something that could be a boon to the teachers that are at those institutions.

[47:54] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent. Actually, that brought about one more question that because I think you already kind of said it, but some of the strengths of the program the outstanding what, what do you think maybe some of the outstanding parts of TIS/CEP were you know, in other words—

[48:15] **Ed Massey:** Well, off the top of my head, let me just say the tutoring aspects. The examples that the people who are tutoring become to the students that are being tutored and the—for the tutors themselves some satisfaction in knowing that they are paying back.

[48:45] **Guy Trammell:** [Inaudible] So basically, even the teachers, the tutors got some out of it in addition.

[48:51] **Ed Massey:** Oh yes. For sure.

[48:53] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent, excellent. Okay, well, any other thoughts you might have or anything else about TISEP or any other things you—anything come to mind?

[49:08] **Ed Massey:** Well, I wonder, are they doing something like that now? I know we're celebrating what we did, but are any of those things going on now?

[49:17] **Guy Trammell:** Well, I think right now, there's some talk about you know, some things and next steps, you know, because Dr. Phillips is not standing still, you know, he's continually in motion. And I think maybe, you know, there's been thought about what can happen and some of the feedback, you know, that we get, probably can add into that too. And so, yes, so Okay.

Well, again, thank you so much. And Good to see you. Okay, I understand you might have known a little bit about somebody named Trap too [laugh].

[49:54] **Ed Massey:** I don't remember that name. I do remember, I think there might have been an instructor— Was your father? Or somebody in your family—

[50:03] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, my father taught electrical—

[50:06] **Ed Massey:** Over in the Trade Center.

[50:07] **Guy Trammell:** Absolutely. That's right. Yes,



[50:09] **Ed Massey:** That's what I remember. Okay.

[50:11] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. Yes. Were you in any of his classes?

[50:14] **Ed Massey:** No, I was in—I think all of the electrical classes over there were separate from the ones in engineering.

[50:24] **Guy Trammell:** Right. Exactly. Exactly.[Because that was I'm building construction]. Yes. That's excellent. Yes. That's—that's alright. We saw the part of it. And I don't know if you realize that Tuskegee actually had the first colored owned, operated and developed electric company in the world.

[50:45] **Ed Massey:** Oh, I didn't know.

[50:47] **Guy Trammell:** Back in the 1890s, yes. So you're part of—and they had the electrical engineering department back then, too. So yes.

[50:56] **Ed Massey:** So we were the first electric company.

[50:57] **Guy Trammell:** Absolutely, yes. And you carried it on. Did you ever look into getting your own company?

[51:05] **Ed Massey:** No, I was, like I said, I was 20 years in the military. And then when I get out with a family and two kids, wife and two kids, I was looking to continue to make money.

[51:22] **Guy Trammell:** Certain other certain other priorities. I got you.

[51:26] **Ed Massey:** So I went into—I had been in space military space that whole time practically. And so I was looking for something in space. And that's why I ended up at JPL. So I had a good run there and ended up like I said, being a project manager. So if one of the most well-known projects that there still is, and that's Voyager.

[51:51] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent, excellent. Okay, well, thank you so much for your time. Thank you for serving with TIS/CEP because you all paved the way for so much even during the Civil Rights Movement. So I appreciate that. And we're going to end our recording at this point and thank you so much. Okay.

[52:12] **Ed Massey:** Okay. Thank you.

[52:14] **Guy Trammell:** Be in touch. Okay.

[End of Session]



**Interviewed in 2017, prior to the
TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project.**

Narrator: Arthur Nelson

Interviewer: Joan Burroughs

Date: August, 2017

Transcriptionist: Alissa Rae Funderburk

Arthur Nelson, a resident of White Hall (Lowndes County), Alabama attended TIS/CEP as an elementary school student. After graduating from Hayneville High School, he attended Stillman College and received a Bachelor of Science Degree from Alabama State University. He enjoyed 26 years as the Lowndes County Board of Education's Director of the Lowndes County Head Start program and served as president of the Region IV Head Start Association. Arthur Nelson also directed Adult Education and Community Education Programs. A lifelong member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Mr. Nelson, husband of Margie Nelson, is the proud father of eight children.



Arthur Nelson

NOTE: Arthur Nelson, a TIS/CEP tutee, participated in the following interview prior to the TISEP/TICEP History & Impact project.

Arthur Nelson: My name is Arthur Nelson, I'm from Whitehall over in Lowndes County, Lowndes. I was a member of the TISEP TICEP movement back in the day when we offer the service down in the Mount Zion Christian School. And I remember being there as a youngster, receiving all the good information from TISEP, from the students who came from Tuskegee University to work with us. Of course, it was Tuskegee Institute during that time. And we would catch the bus that was driven by Miss Pearl Stewart, that would pick us up from our communities. And they would bring us over for a couple of days a week, I think it was like three or four days a week for the TISEP program. And there were a lot of cultural enrichment activities that we were taught while they were there. It was a joyous occasion. And I'm just so excited that I will be with you guys during this celebration, because I really want us to go back and look at those things that were important to us. So that we were able to develop to where we are now. Of course, I won't be there this year. But when you're planning for next year, I want to be able to work with work with you guys so that we can bring all of those students that we can round up from the area to be a part of that. So they can tell that stories of how TISEP made difference to them in their lives.



Joan Burroughs: Can you talk about the Lowndes County Friends of the Civil Rights Movement?

Arthur Nelson: Yes, in Lowndes County, we have an organization called the Lowndes County Friends of the Civil Rights Movement. And we're working to honor those heroes and sheroes, who paid the ultimate price for the Selma to Montgomery march. Of course, when you mention Selma to Montgomery, they always leave out Lowndes County. And there is a dash, that's between Selma and Montgomery. And we always say that dash between Selma and Montgomery made the difference in the movement. And that's what will work, to honor those folks who, who really paid the price for the, for the sacrifice of the Selma to Montgomery March.

Joan Burroughs: A lot of those people lost their homes

Arthur Nelson: They lost their home, they were kicked off the other folks property, and all that stuff. So, we're just trying to honor those people who had the courage to be there and to stand up and pay the cost, they paid the ultimate price for that sacrifice.

Joan Burroughs: Talk about your career

Arthur Nelson: Oh, I've had a wonderful career. And it's basically because of the civil rights movement, the TISEP program. I started out, in fact, I went to Central Lowndes County of training school, and something was just missing. And of course, we had just integrated Hayneville High a few years for that. And somehow another I wanted to go to I wanted to go to Hayneville, because when I got there, I saw a difference. It made a difference in our lives. [phone call: Let me call you right back.] And that made a difference. Because when I got there, I didn't know how to study and all that good stuff. But I knew there was something inside of me that I needed to do a little bit more. So I left home in . . . August 23 1973 in Tuscaloosa to go to Stillman College, didn't even know where Stillman College was located. But I had to do something different. But anyway, God be it known, I went to school at Stillman, then left and went to Alabama State University. And after finishing in Alabama State University, I became employed by Tuskegee Institute, as a community education coordinator. And I worked there for three or four years. And I must, I must admit that I'm, I'm connected to Tuskegee because of their opportunity. But I didn't go to school there. But of course, they gave me my real first job. And after that, I became a classroom teacher, taught in the school system for three years. Then I became a Head Start director in Lowndes County, and I worked there for like 27 years, retired from Lowndes County Board of Education in 1908. And then I went to work for Kaplan Learning Company. Worked there, I promised them five years later and 10 years later, I'm still there. But I'm just kind of, I'm transitioning now out of Kaplan, and I want to do some community service. And I want to honor those heroes and sheroes who paid the ultimate price for me being able to do the things that I was able to do in my career. So I give it all to God who's headed by life and also to the movement for being there to help us see the light.

Joan Burroughs: Thank you.

Nelson: Thank you

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP: History & Impact

Narrator: Lee Norrgard

Interviewer: Lisa Daniels/Birmingham AL

Date: June 24, 2021

Transcriptionist: Kevin C. Holt

Lee Norrgard received a Bachelor of Science degree from St. Olaf College. His post-college career includes working directly with government ministries in different countries, among religious leaders, parliamentarians, legislative committees, federal, state and local Agencies. His work buttressed humanitarian efforts both in the United States and abroad. Central to his work with several non-governmental and nonprofit organizations are peace building, refugee resettlement, anti-trafficking and capacity building with religious organizations, civil society and governmental bodies.



Lee Norrgard

[0:04] Lisa Daniels: Good afternoon, it is 1:23 on July 24th, this is Lisa Daniels interviewing Lee Norgaard with the TIS/CEP program. Good afternoon.

[0:16] Lee Norrgard: Good Afternoon.

[0:17] Lisa Daniels: Thank you so much for joining us today.

[0:20] Lee Norrgard: You're welcome.

[0:21] Lisa Daniels: Yes, we know that you participated in the 1965 TIS/CEP program. Tell us about your reason for joining this program. And what was it like to participate?

[0:35] Lee Norrgard: Well, I was an exchange student in 1965 at Tuskegee Institute and saw it from the start with the ideas that Dean Phillips had. And you know, there was always the volunteer program before that, which I also participated in. And it was a natural extension. I wanted to be part of the TIS/CEP program because I knew so much about it. I had also helped during my Easter break, when I went home, to recruit students from St. Olaf to come. And I sort of shepherded some of them around when they first arrived, coming and, you know, tried to keep



in contact with them to some extent and integrate them into the program and into the Tuskegee environment, you know, telling them about what the city was like, around the Tuskegee Institute. The reason I stayed is that obviously, I saw a lot of what was going on the south at that time. And the segregated education that was terrible for so many students in the black belt of Alabama, and I wanted to contribute in the way that I could. I worked as a photographer for the TIS/CEP newspaper. And so I got to travel around all over in all of the counties that TIS/CEP was taking place.

[1:56] Lisa Daniels: So when you applied to this program, what was the response from your family and maybe some of your friends?

[2:03] Lee Norrgard: It was positive for most of my friends. I'm thinking about my St. Olaf friends when I was talking about it. There was, you know, my family. They wanted really me to come home; they weren't real pleased that I was in Alabama in 1965 with everything that was going on in the south at that time. But they agreed that I could stay and I told him what the program was about and why. There was also a financial benefit. I mean, we were paid a good salary for that summer. It was good for saving money for returning to college in the fall. So that was part of the incentive that needs to convince my parents that it was okay to for me to stay. I don't think I could have done it if there was no pay. Just I had to have money to go back to school because I was paying for my expenses. Not so much the tuition but my expenses.

[3:00] Lisa Daniels: So you get accepted to the program. You are now on your way. Of course, did you fly? Did you take a bus? And if you took a bus, what was that experience like?

[3:10] Lee Norrgard: Well, I was already there. So...

[3:12] Lisa Daniels: Okay, well, from St. Olaf. So you know, your transition. So you know, what was it like going from the north to the south?

[3:18] Lee Norrgard: It was amazing. I grew up in Minnesota. At that point in time [it] was like 95%, white. I lived in an all-white area. You know, parts of Minneapolis were having an African American population, but it was very small at the time. It was very isolated. I had not been outside of the Upper Midwest very much. And we had a car that was to be delivered from Minneapolis to Florida. And there were four of us that drove south: two were students, exchange students, one was at Spelman one was at Morehouse. And then there was another student who joined me as an exchange student. And I remember going driving into Corinth, Mississippi, and sitting at a diner. And just one of the people looking at us, like, "What are you doing here coming from Minnesota with Minnesota license plates?" It was like, you know, I was a stranger in my own country at the time. I felt that very much going through much of the south at that time. But then, when we dropped off the students in Atlanta, the two of us returned to Tuskegee, and what was a wonderful, warm reception that we received from, first of all meeting with Dean Phillips, but also with other students. And I felt very comfortable being there. We were the only two white undergraduates at the time. But even though I was a minority, I felt like I was well fully accepted as a person.



[5:02] Lisa Daniels: So to clarify the four people who are in the car were white, and they were exchange students for the HBCUs, Spelman, Morehouse, and then two Tuskegee.

[5:13] Lee Norrgard: Correct.

[5:14] Lisa Daniels: Okay. Okay. So you mentioned feeling like a stranger in your own country. Did you feel like that when you were traveling with the non-white students around the states? As you mentioned, we'll talk about a little bit later, but you mentioned that you were traveling a lot as an exchange student with the choir.

[5:35] Lee Norrgard: Yes. The bus drivers were all white. And they kind of looked at me strangely. And, you know, there were times, thinking. There was a school in Memphis where we had our first concert. It was strange getting there, going through part of the white sections of Memphis. But it wasn't strange going to the black part of Memphis, when we sang at school. I'm trying to remember what the name of it was, but I don't at this point. You know, yes, it felt strange in the south. It got different in Chicago, which was much more accepting of different mixtures of races, enough that subcategories of Greek has its own segregation stories as well. But it didn't so much, I felt more comfortable in the north than they did in the south traveling with an integrated group.

[6:37] Lisa Daniels: So we're going to shift back to the summer part where, you know, what was your role in the TIS/CEP program? And how did you help students in the Tuskegee area?

[6:50] Lee Norrgard: My role was to be...I worked as a photographer for the newspaper. And so I would go around with, you know, to have pictures of events that were taking place in different places, with students and teachers, with the drama group, with the musical group, you know, just to record it, to take pictures of the teachers themselves, you know, for the newspaper. And so that was my role, you know, and just getting that information out, or getting the visual part of it. And not only taking the pictures but developing them to size and so on. I remember those hot summer nights. This was before digital cameras, so you had to use you know, you had to develop film and you had to develop the pictures themselves. We had in one of the chemistry buildings, there was a photography laboratory, and the other student who was also a photographer with me, when we worked at night, it would get so hot sometimes with chemicals, we had to get ice to put in the chemicals so that they wouldn't be too hot to overexpose things. Because summers, because there was no air conditioning. This was an un-air-conditioned building. As you know, being an Alabama the Summers are hot.

[8:06] Lisa Daniels: Yes, I do. Yes, I do. So, as you mentioned, being a photographer, you also were an English tutor at some point?

[8:15] Lee Norrgard: That was before TIS/CEP began.

[8:19] Lisa Daniels: Mmhmm.



[8:19] Lee Norrgard: I'm trying to think of the exact name of it. TICEP [TICAC} was the program, that volunteer program with students at Tuskegee, before the TISEP summer program.

[8:33] Lisa Daniels: So what was it like tutoring students in the south, tutoring students in Tuskegee, Alabama?

[8:39] Lee Norrgard: I think the student that I worked with, I think he was frightened of me, because I was white, you know, and understandably. He was very reserved. But you know, I think we did have something of a relationship that developed. It was, I don't know, it was a positive experience. I'm not sure I'm the best teacher. But it worked, I think.

[9:05] Lisa Daniels: So you mentioned that the student was frightened because you were white, why? And we can assume a number of different things, but I'd like to hear from you. You know, why do you think this student was frightened?

[9:19] Lee Norrgard: Because of what was going on in the south at that time, in terms of violence against blacks. And because he's probably never had an experience with some young white kid teaching him or being with him, or spending time with him. It was in rural Alabama. I mean, it wasn't, you know, he wasn't...It was a small farm. And it was just outside of Tuskegee. So it was in rural Alabama, which is pretty rural at that point in time.

[9:52] Lisa Daniels: So I've spoken to a few people and they mentioned the fact that the TIS/CEP program was to allow so students, young children to prepare for the integration of their schools. Do you think that the TIS/CEP program did that in some way?

[10:14] Lee Norrgard: Could be. I mean, that's a question I've never been asked before. I mean, Tuskegee, never the county never had a very successful integration, I mean, that it fell apart. You know, there was a time when it sounded like, this I learned later by reading, but, you know, there was a time when Tuskegee was going to integrate at schools. And somehow it just didn't work. It didn't. It fell apart. And, you know, the private schools started and so on. And the schools remained pretty much segregated in Tuskegee County, Macon County, excuse me. That's the county, the schools. But it could have been in other areas that this was preparatory to integration. But I have nothing to back that up other than what you're asking a question about.

[11:00] Lisa Daniels: Understood, understood. So I'd love to know a little bit more about your experience in the choir. Tell us a little bit about that.

[11:08] Lee Norrgard: Well, I was surprised that I was going to be accepted into the choir to begin with, but I've always been involved in choir, choral works and singing. And I applied, and they sent me back to the B grade, if you will, to the lower, the ones that are preparing. And I think that was to test if I was willing to do that. And I did for several weeks and then they promoted me back up to the A level and asked me if I wanted to go and I was excited to go. I mean, this is a great time with group number one, to learn the songs that they were singing. The



music was new in some ways to me. And the choir was a really great expression of music with a lot of good singers and fun people. It was a fun time all around. [inaudible] and people.

[12:10] Lisa Daniels: Okay. Could you share about your experience in, I think you mentioned, Memphis and your concert in Chicago?

[12:20] Lee Norrgard: Yes, well, Memphis was the first one and it was an all-black audience that was watching us. And it was like it was interesting to see the reaction to me, you know, from the audience. But other than that, it was not very, it wasn't memorable. Chicago. We were in Chicago when Bloody Sunday occurred. We sang a major concert there. And then two days later, we sang in Gary, Indiana. And because many of the students were from Selma area or most of the other choral members were from Alabama, they were very distraught because of what happened during Bloody Sunday. We went to Gary, we sang the first half of the concert, which were always classical music, Bach, Beethoven, etc.

We were terrible. Our emotional feelings as a group were really negative and our mind wasn't on concentrating. The conductor had to stop on several occasions, to make sure that we were not flattening, we were back on tune. And unbeknownst to me, and any of the other members of the choir, Mahalia Jackson was in the audience at this church. And she came down to the basement after the first half when we were sort of trying to recover. And she made this long speech to us about how we were singing for the pride of our race. And what was interesting at the time that, to me is that she said that and then her eyes locked on mine. And it was like saying to me that I'm acceptable there too, you know, after she said that. And we did great in the second half, which was all spirituals from Tuskegee's choral history, and it was perfect. And then she invited us to her house for a reception afterwards. And we got to talk to her personally. As well as you know, just got to know something about her in a personal sense. I had always liked her songs because I listened to him long before I went to Tuskegee. But it was just, it was a wonderful experience.

[14:42] Lisa Daniels: Did you know a lot about Mahalia Jackson before you went to Tuskegee?

[14:46] Lee Norrgard: No, I did not. I mean, I did not know a lot about her. I knew of her songs and recordings. But no, I didn't know that much about the history of her. I learned later when I lived in Chicago a lot more about her but not personally, just knowing where she started and how she got on Studs Terkel's radio show in Chicago. And that was sort of how she really got started getting a national audience.

[15:13] Lisa Daniels: And you mentioned something about John Beecham in a connection that he made with her in the Civil Rights Movement.

[15:20] Lee Norrgard: Well, he has a podcast. I mean, he's obviously a prolific writer, but he has a podcast on great speeches. And I enjoy listening to him. So I enjoyed the speeches that he put together. And one of them was the "I Have a Dream" speech of Dr. King from the March on Washington in 1963. And the anecdote that he mentions in that podcast was that when Dr. King



started, you know, he was giving sort of a boring speech and it wasn't getting much response from the audience. But it was Mahalia Jackson that said, "Let's talk about the dream, Martin." And apparently, they were always very close, which I did not know at the time. But that's because she had heard him before give the "I Have a Dream" speech and another audience. And so he switched at that point, and that changed everything and made that "I Have a Dream" speech so memorable to everybody, so many people in the United States, around the world for that matter.

[16:22] Lisa Daniels: So you had an opportunity of traveling with the choir to a number of different places; did you meet any other people on your way there? Any famous people or people participating in the movement?

[16:34] Lee Norrgard: Not there. Of course, during the year, Selma was going on, the march from Selma to Montgomery. You know, there was a huge concert with all kinds of people coming to sing and entertain the marchers, which I participated in. Malcolm X spoke at Tuskegee when I was there. That was the time that he visited Selma and met with Mrs. King in Selma. Dr. King was in jail. Martin Luther King spoke at the graduation, Walter Reuther are from the United Auto Workers was there. And, you know, I should have gone up to talk to shake Reuther's hand, because my father was an auto worker, but I, I passed on that for some reason at the time. In any case, so there were a lot of people. And of course, there was there were Civil Rights demonstrations in Tuskegee proper for and subsequently, one of the leaders was murdered in Tuskegee. I'm forgetting his name right now, but in any case, that was going on. And there were students going to Selma from Tuskegee, SNCC visitors coming. There were also major demonstrations going on in Montgomery.

[17:58] Lisa Daniels: So did you participate in these demonstrations? Were you just mostly up? Because of course, you're still a student. So you know, how did you manage being in the choir, being a student, and then seeing all of what's happening around you?

[18:11] Lee Norrgard: I mean, the reason I went to Tuskegee was that I wanted to see and feel part of what was going on in terms of democratization of the South, and the dignity of all humanity. However, given you know, the violence that was occurring, my parents were not exactly excited about letting their 19-year-old son go to Tuskegee for a semester is what the original agreement was. And so I had to promise that I wasn't going to demonstrate, you know, participate in demonstrations. I didn't always honor that. But I did to the main. I never went to Selma, for instance, and I didn't march from Selma to Montgomery. But I stayed away from a number of demonstrations.

[19:04] Lisa Daniels: So, could you tell us a little bit more about your work in the newspaper as a photographer? What are some things that you were able to see on your journey as a photographer for the newspaper?

[19:18] Lee Norrgard: The wide variety of schools in the sense of the construction in Lowndes County, Alabama, the teachers; there wasn't a school that they could go to. They had to erect essentially, like tents in order to teach. Students came and there was a program that went on



in Lowndes County. But then there were others where there were things, you know, fairly nice buildings. They seemed to be well equipped. But for instance, in the laboratories, one of the teachers pointed out to me that there are nice gas nozzles for Bunsen burners, but there's no gas connection. So why are they even there? So I mean, it was like the physical facilities may have been great, but the connections weren't there. So it was just this whole change of variety in what was going on. And then the stories that people would tell about their background and what their fears and what their hopes were. I didn't get the one to one, I got more connection with the teachers who were colleagues, if you will, fellow students, from different colleges and universities, not only Tuskegee, and St. Olaf, but others as well. Those stories were amazing to listen to.

[20:36] Lisa Daniels: Could you share one of those with us?

[20:41] Lee Norrgard: It was just the stories about discrimination that people felt, the indignities that they went through, their families, how they were hurt. Trying to think of if I can come up with an exact story, and I can't at this point, but I mean, it was just, you know, what people have gone through in their lives, whether they were students like me, or whether, you know, they were talking about their families.

[21:10] Lisa Daniels: Okay, we'll come back to it. You mentioned that you were taking pictures of a number of schools across the black belt; were they only predominantly black schools? Or were they pictures of all sorts of schools across the Black Belt?

[21:28] Lee Norrgard: No, it was predominantly black schools, because that was where the program was operating. They were either operating in schools if they got the cooperation from the school district, or in churches, or makeshift buildings.

[21:44] Lisa Daniels: Okay. Wow. What did some of those makeshift buildings look like? I know, you mentioned tents in Lowndes County.

[21:51] Lee Norrgard: Well, it was like two-by-fours holding up a platform and there was a tarp over it. And that was where it was outside teaching. There was the teacher. In this case, the photograph that I remember the most, who happened to be white, and then there were like fifteen students that were sitting on the ground, or in some cases, you know, on logs or something, that was not desks not, they were not chairs, but something very makeshift. But there was a blackboard that he had in the background too.

[22:27] Lisa Daniels: Did any students have books available to them? At any of the schools?

[22:35] Lee Norrgard: I'm sure that they did to some extent, but I don't remember. I can't answer that specifically.

[22:42] Lisa Daniels: Okay. Okay. What was it like to see these things? I know that you were coming from Minnesota, so you might have gone to a different type of school in comparison to



maybe your elementary school to what you saw down in Tuskegee? What were some of the differences?

[22:59] **Lee Norrgard:** The differences were, you know, the facilities themselves. They were generally much richer in Minnesota where I grew up. There were more broader, they had, you know, better playgrounds, they had lots of green grass outside as different structures. Inside, there was certainly better facilities in terms of books in terms of the kinds of things that you would have in school.

[23:33] **Lisa Daniels:** Okay, understood. Okay. I want to talk about, let's see, your work after the experience. How did your experience at Tuskegee shape your ideas moving forward and your career path?

[23:49] **Lee Norrgard:** I didn't have a singular career path in the sense that I've never...I mean, I had different ideas of what I was going to do. But what, what Tuskegee taught me more than anything else was, it introduced me to a very different kind of culture in a different way. It gave me a feeling of learning more about the history of the United States that I never saw. And you know, that introduction to John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, you know, picking Negro history courses, [what they were] called then. That was a great introduction. It enabled me to feel that I could mix in with other cultures and learn from other cultures, you know, and be successful.

After college I was in the Peace Corps for several years in South America and Ecuador, working with indigenous population in the highlands of Ecuador. From there, I went to work with different non-governmental organizations and I've always worked for non-governmental organizations. I've worked in journalism, investigative journalism. I was executive director of Common Cause in Illinois. From there, I went to Washington, D.C. and was an editor of the magazine for Common Cause for a while. I was with the Consumer Affairs Office of the American Association of Retired Persons. And then, because I had done work with the Illinois legislature when I was with Common Cause, two former supervisors of mine asked me if I wanted to work with the Parliament of Malawi in Africa. And I was, at a point where, I was, you know, I would like to change in my life.

I always wanted to return to international work after the Peace Corps, but I never found the right vehicle. But I took up on that opportunity and spent several years in Malawi, working with a parliamentary system that particularly strengthened the committee system of Malawi. And once you're in international work, it's easier to find other jobs. And from there, I was in Kosovo, and worked on anti-trafficking projects. Kosovo still got Serbian population, Albanian population. [I] tried to work on a peace-building project between the Serbs and Albanians in the city of Mitrovica in the north of Kosovo. And from there,

I went to Serbia for a while and returned to Kosovo to work on an anti-trafficking project. And then I was in Damascus, Syria for two years, particularly during the Iraqi War, when there were thousands of Iraqi refugees who were in Syria, and worked in humanitarian program providing assistance to the Iraqi refugees in Damascus who were not in camps, but were living in urban



areas, sometimes, you know, in the back of the shed. But then from there, and then I was in Swaziland for two years, and returned to Kosovo working to...

Following the war, in 1999, the Roma population was put into refugee camps. They fled north from Mitrovica. They were put next to lead slag heaps. The children were coming up with lead poisoning because they were playing in areas with a heavy lead concentration, leftover from when there were smelters active in that area. They were there for thirteen years and we worked on a project to one: build row houses for them in a lead-safe area of the Mitrovica city, as well as to provide treatment for the kids for lead poisoning, to provide social facilities for the families, provide industrial training for those to try and find employment, and just really make a change in the lives of the rural people who had been ostracized and been forced to live in those terrible conditions. It's strange, the UN was the one who sent them there, which, when you work abroad, you don't have as high a positive feeling about the UN as you do looking at it from here.

[28:23] Lisa Daniels: So, this is a question I'm kind of coming up with, you know. Let me know what you think. Did you notice any connections between what you saw in Alabama and what you saw in your international work?

[28:37] Lee Norrgard: Yes, connections of one: humanity, you know, that no matter what the conditions are, in terms of economic or poverty, the conditions, that people are people, that there's a worth to them. And that it was like, the other connection was that I wanted to see, when I went to Alabama: to feel part of what was going on. And that was my reason for going abroad or doing the other things that I did. I wanted to be part of change, social change for positive social change.

[29:19] Lisa Daniels: Awesome. I want to roll it back to your semester at Tuskegee. Could you talk to us about the classes you took and possibly some lessons you learned from your professors?

[29:34] Lee Norrgard: Ah, what did I take? Well, I had English of course. I mean, I tried to keep it you know, so that I would match what the requirements were at St. Olaf with the courses I had to take with the courses I took at Tuskegee. English I took, Minority Group Relations, a Sociology course which was fantastic in talking about the sociology of groups, whether it be African Americans or Hispanic or Jewish. It was a real introduction to the sociology of groups that I'd never seen, would not have gotten at St. Olaf ever. Negro history, as it was called at that time, which gave me a real zeroing in now, like, this year, because it's the anniversary of what happened to Tulsa in 1921.

You know, it was like, this was something brand new, which I can't understand. You know, it was very much . . . John Hope Franklin was born there. He knew. He grew up in Tulsa. He wrote about it. Why didn't anybody else ever know about this? That was always shocking to me. But I learned about it, you know, the whole summer. From 1918 to 1921, everything that was going on post World War I with the riots, both of big cities and small cities. And that stuck with me, even I learned about Springfield, Illinois. When I spent a lot of time there with the state legislature, I went back and went through some of the history of the riots that occurred there,



which Springfield is a small town comparatively. Well, so I took an American History course because I had taken the first semester in St. Olaf and so I wanted the second semester there. Those are the ones I remember taking. Those were the ones that made an impact on me.

[31:37] Lisa Daniels: Okay, do you have any particular lessons that you learned from your professors that you'd like to share? Or maybe a moment with a study group?

[31:59] Lee Norrgard: Trying to think. There was a, I mean, I'm thinking there were great discussions in the English class. As we were going through different classics and 19th century English American . . . It was also . . . I remember, I wrote a paper. This was 1968, I was following the 1964 elections. And I did a research paper on the impact of George Wallace's campaign in 1964, in the primary where he got votes in the state of Wisconsin, which was at that time, a fairly liberal state, which is obviously not true at this point in time, but it was at that time, and what parts of Wisconsin it was, was the southern parts of Wisconsin, where he made the biggest inroads. I didn't get a really good grade on it but I found it to be the most interesting sociology, political analysis, you know, research. Analysis is not the right word. It was the research that I put together; I found it fascinating. And it stuck with me in terms of politics has always been interesting to me. And it added a different dimension or racial dimension that I hadn't considered before.

[33:39] Lisa Daniels: You mentioned that you took a Negro history class. Had you had a chance to learn Negro history before? Were there any things that you had already known before you took the class?

[33:53] Lee Norrgard: No, I knew very little. I mean, there was simply no connection in my community, in my household, in terms of, of African Americans. It was, you know, there was, I think, as a child, my mother used to read to me, you know, Uncle Tom's Cabin and that kind of thing. You know, but no, it was it was blank to me, most of most everything. I mean, certainly, I took, you know, an advanced placement history course. And there we certainly studied the Civil War, we studied the slave economy, and, everything that went on that led up to the Civil War and the reconstruction. But no, I didn't really get in-depth into anything about who some of the leaders were, or about, very little about Frederick Douglass, very little about what was going on after post-reconstruction with Jim Crow when Plessy v. Ferguson, sure, but nothing about what the impact was on people in the south, very little.

[35:04] Lisa Daniels: So I wanted to go back to one of the questions I asked earlier about the groups that you spent time with. And they shared stories about their experiences with discrimination. Do you remember anything that they might have said or shared with you?

[35:25] Lee Norrgard: One thing that really struck me. A very bright man, fellow student who I got to know quite a bit and he told me a lot about discrimination that he felt as a kid. And he asked me to call him by the N-word. And it astounded me that he would even ask me to do that. And I refused. And I'm not sure if he was pleased with me for doing that. Or if he was, you know, he really what he wanted to or he was testing me. That's what I think. That was my interpretation at the end, that he was testing me, you know? Why don't you do this. But he asked



me several times to do that. When we were having a beer together. What else? I can't, I'm blanking on giving you a specific example. I'm sorry. It's fifty years ago, so. . .

[36:39] Lisa Daniels: I completely understand. I completely understand. So for the viewers, what would be a major takeaway from that program that you would like the viewers to keep with them moving forward?

[36:55] Lee Norrgard: It was a great program for advancing education. It was a great program for bringing together new kinds of things for students. I'm speaking, not the college students, but I'm thinking of the elementary and secondary students that were taught. You know, it was an enlightenment. Enlightenment, it's too strong a word, but it was a real extension of their education, in bringing different things, different things like drama and music. And, you know, it was trying to strengthen them for going further. When I was at Tuskegee's reunion, TIS/CEP reunion at Tuskegee, there were former tutees that were present, who told us about the things that they really felt and learned and what that inspired them to go on. That I think, you know, is...those stories are the most powerful. I think also all of us who worked on the program, thinking more of the St. Olaf people, it was a real change in our lives in terms of broadening our horizons, learning things that we never saw in the privileged northern communities that we all grew up in. So it was very strongly positive from that perspective as well.

[38:20] Lisa Daniels: Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for joining us for this interview. It is 2:01 on July 24, 2021, and I will go ahead and pause the video. This was Lisa Daniels interviewing Lee Norrgard.

[End of Session



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

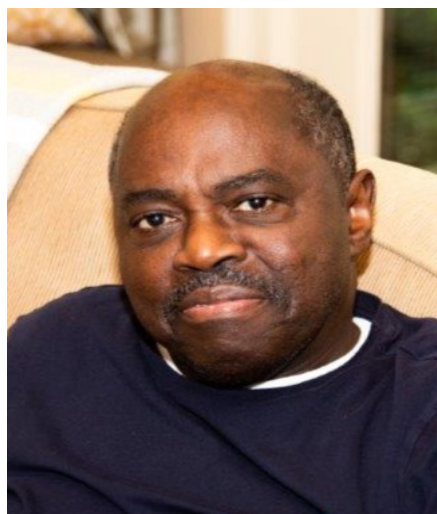
Narrator: Roy Nunn/Auburn, AL

Interviewer: Guy Trammell/Tuskegee, AL

Date: May 11, 2021

Transcriptionist: Kevin C. Holt

Roy Nunn was born in Opelika, Alabama, Lee County, on August 7, 1947. A 1965 graduate of Darden High School, Roy became an engineering student at Tuskegee Institute (now University) receiving a Bachelor's degree in 1971. Post graduation, Nunn was by the U.S. Corps of Engineers and later, among other major corporations.



Roy Nunn

[00:00:09] Guy Trammell: Alright, here we go. Okay, I'm gonna do mine. Okay. It is— Well, it is actually 2:58 on Tuesday, May 11 2021. I am Guy Trammell in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. here to interview Roy Nunn, who is in Auburn, Alabama. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committees TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Okay, go ahead.

[00:01:02] Roy Nunn: I'm located in Auburn, Alabama. I'm being interviewed by Guy Trammell. And today is May 11, 2021.

[00:01:15] Guy Trammell: Okay. All right. And okay, let's open up. This. Tell me again, where you're from originally and what—just tell me a little bit about your background.

[00:01:34] Roy Nunn: Sure. I was born in Opelika, Alabama, Lee County, born in August 7 1947. I lived in Opelika through my formative years, through elementary, High School and graduated from high school at Darden high in Opelika in 1965.

[00:02:03] Guy Trammell: Okay, and I just asked you, by being from Opelika, Alabama, did you see anything as a child, or coming up before high school or leading into high school as far as, I'll just say, race relations or anything like that in Alabama?

[00:02:31] Roy Nunn: Yes. Opelika obviously [is] one of the, I guess, is the heart of some of the segregation and some of the discrimination that went on when I was living there. Certainly,



blacks were constantly marginalized, and blacks in Opelika pretty much held what I'd call the menial jobs that were available in Opelika, for example, in the textile mills that were there, pepper mill and Opelika mills, they were all textiles, up and down that Interstate 85 corridor actually were textile mills. And my dad worked for the Opelika manufacturing company, Opelika Mill for many, many years. And he had to actually roughly resign when one day it just got to be more than he could take. He—I think he had been there, Guy, something like 30 years or something. And they did something one day, and he never said what it was, but he actually quit that job and fortunately, we had some contacts and my uncle who got him a job at Ampex Corporation in Opelika.

[00:03:52] Guy Trammell: Yes, and also in just tell us a little bit of like in your school, was it a mixed school was it um, you know, how was demographics as far as ratio in school, in the elementary coming up into high school?

[00:04:12] Roy Nunn: My elementary school, middle school and high school were all segregated and all black. I didn't experience any integrated schools until I was in college.

[00:04:29] Guy Trammell: Okay, all right. And?

[00:04:31] Roy Nunn: Darden High was the name of that school, and it was named after the first black doctor in Opelika; Dr. Darden,

[00:04:43] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay. Okay, and then—what was your motivation in, say, going to college and where did you go to college?

[00:04:56] Roy Nunn: I attended Tuskegee University. It was Tuskegee Institute at the time. And I knew that I wanted to be more than I could be in Opelika. And so, I had— fortunately I had a guidance counselor at Darden named Ms. Milam, who was from Tuskegee, actually, M-I-L-A-M. her husband was a doctor at Tuskegee. She took a special interest in me and walked me through the process of applying for and all of the paperwork, the SAT, and the other tests back then it was, um, I don't remember what it was. But I took the SAT. I did well and passed it and I ended up with two scholarship offers one from Talladega College and Talladega, Alabama, and the other from Tuskegee. I chose Tuskegee.

[00:05:51] Guy Trammell: Okay, now, I just want you to kind of look back a little bit, look around your classroom when you graduated or around the school. How many of the others— you know, you had that motivation and everything. How was that among say other, I'll say, schoolmates. You know.

[00:06:12] Roy Nunn: We had a good class. We had, I was like, in graduation, I was— although I was number four, a high percentage of our students attended college. We had students who attended Tuskegee, Talladega, Alabama A&M. In my graduating class there, it turned out, we had two physicians who, who I knew very well, in high school, we had one mathematician who taught at Talladega. The two physicians actually had their own private businesses not in Opelika. One in Ohio, and the other was a military doctor for a few years. His name was Joseph Jackson.



Joseph became a gastroenterologist in the final analysis and moved to Montgomery, and he lives in Montgomery today, we talk quite often. And so we had a smart class, the students were motivated, you know, they wanted to do more than they, they saw their parents do. And so it seems like the high schools though, Guy, were—the instructors were much more likely to take you on and help you do whatever was required to do what you want to do. That doesn't happen today.

[00:07:44] Guy Trammell: So that's like the mentoring process. I want to ask you, as you got to Tuskegee, at what point along the way—what was your major? And then what? At what point did you decide on your major? And how did you—You know, how did you settle into it? How was that experience? Both deciding on your major and also, how was that experience studying Tuskegee on that?

[00:08:14] Roy Nunn: Well, I am, I was always kind of a mechanical minded person and, you know, play with blocks and different things. And as I grew older, that never—that never left me. And so, when I applied to Tuskegee, I applied to the School of Engineering, as a—to be a mechanical engineer. Now, I never really knew exactly what mechanical engineers did. I didn't know, you know, what their role was, I didn't have a clue. So when I started at Tuskegee, I was competing out for Opelika, Alabama, most people have heard of it, but they knew it wasn't, you know, about 20,000 people at the time, maybe. And so, I had competition from some good schools and Birmingham, Mobile. I'm talking to black students now. And also, we had some foreign students, called them foreign students at that time in the program. Some from India, some from other various places. And so, the competition was stiff and from time to time, I was, you know, not feeling very well about being able to compete against them.

The dean of engineering was—was Dr. Dybczak. Most of all of our students were—all of our faculty members, excuse me, were international faculty members. And more than that, most of them could not speak good English. And so, we found ourselves as students in that class, just, I mean, having a very difficult time because they didn't have, you know, good verbal skills. And they move very quickly through the technical outline in the book. And you know, so to make that long story short, in the end, not only was our class having that problem, I learned that the upperclassmen and everybody was having that problem in college. And so you may remember when the revolt started on campus. The engineering building is where it started. We actually, because we could get nobody to listen, we actually took over the engineering building, and it ended up and you know, not so pretty a picture. But the result from our perspective was that they hired more faculty members who could speak English. These faculty members who was there, they I had to figure out how to, you know, your class, if you can't get through the class, you know, you're not serving any purpose. So that happened then—school was shutdown. And it was just a big mess. This was in—I don't remember the year, but it was in the '60s.

[00:11:04] Guy Trammell: Right, right. And you're saying, because you're in the process of learning these new terminologies that are already probably a little bit difficult to pronounce because, you know, it's a new concept. And then you can't even understand it in the classroom on top.



[00:11:20] **Roy Nunn:** Right.

[00:11:21] **Guy Trammell:** So that. That, yes. And that, that movement I believe it led all the way to the Board of Trustees being locked in the [laugh] [inaudible].

[00:11:33] **Roy Nunn:** Yes, you're right. That's what it led to.

[00:11:37] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, yes, that. Yes, that is amazing. Because I understood it actually took place right around the time of Martin Luther King's assassination, too.

[00:11:48] **Roy Nunn:** Mmhmm.

[00:11:49] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. That. Okay, so you, you were right in the midst of—

[00:11:55] **Roy Nunn:** Right in the midst of it—

[00:11:57] **Guy Trammell:** —the Black Liberation Movement.

[00:12:00] **Roy Nunn:** Yes.

[00:12:01] **Guy Trammell:** Do you remember some of the—some of the ones on campus was—Wendy Paris there at the time or Sammy Younge or—

[00:12:10] **Roy Nunn:** Yes. Sammy Younge. I don't know if you knew Fred Stone or not.

[00:12:18] **Guy Trammell:** Mmhmm.

[00:12:20] **Roy Nunn:** There's a bunch of guys that I didn't know but— but then I was like a freshman when they were seniors. And so I was to do the dirty work like go put the chain on the door lock the door. Yes. But in the end, I think we all benefit from it.

[00:12:41] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. Cause I understand was very coordinated effort. was Gwen Patton President at that time?

[00:12:47] **Roy Nunn:** Gwen Patton, yes.

[00:12:48] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay.

[00:12:50] **Roy Nunn:** She was just a dynamic—she is the best president that we've ever had at the school. Bar none. Very outspoken. I mean, she was— she was a good president. And I understand she lived in Montgomery or did live in Montgomery.

[00:13:08] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, yes. She actually recently passed away about a couple of years ago.



[00:13:13] **Roy Nunn:** Okay.

[00:13:14] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. And did you meet James Foreman or any of the other ones that came in with SNCC?

[00:13:25] **Roy Nunn:** Um, I don't remember meeting them at Tuskegee.

[00:13:28] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay.

[00:13:30] **Roy Nunn:** I would have the opportunity as we go down the road, of meeting, Stokely Carmichael, and Thomas Jackson and all those guys. I got—somehow, I ran into them in Lowndes County.

[00:13:43] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. All right. Well, this Okay, let's continue on now.

[00:13:46] **Roy Nunn:** Okay.

[00:13:47] **Guy Trammell:** So now you're at Tuskegee. And—and then this program is there; TISEP. Now, how did you find out about that? I mean, was there any—I don't know. I was it publicized? How, how did you find out about it?

[00:14:09] **Roy Nunn:** We had an office at Tuskegee, that was called Work Study. Staff, they managed all of the students who were on what we called work study programs. And I knew I needed to work that first summer. So I contacted them. And they said, "Here's—here's an opportunity for you if you're interested. We want to have as a program this summer, TICEP Tuskegee In—Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program is what it was. And so I say, "Oh, yes, I'm interested." And so I signed up for it based on that, not really knowing, you know, what the—what the task was, at the time, I knew we were going to be tutors somewhere in the state of Alabama for students who need it. And I knew that and I knew I could do that. So I signed up on that basis alone.

[**Note:** The first program, was TISEP--Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program]

[00:15:02] **Guy Trammell:** And did they have like an orientation or something like that when you came in to meet the others.

[00:15:08] **Roy Nunn:** Absolutely.

[00:15:09] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[00:15:10] **Roy Nunn:** Absolutely had orientation programs and, you know, programs to further define what we were gonna do.

[00:15:16] **Guy Trammell:** What buildings were these held in? When they had the meetings or any training or anything that you had on campus? Was it—



[00:15:28] Roy Nunn: I'm not sure. I'm not even sure those buildings are there now. They may be. I'm not sure.

[00:15:33] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay. And what was your specific assignment area? Where did you—where did you go? in the county.

[00:15:44] Roy Nunn: I was assigned to Lowndes County, Alabama. And never I never heard of it until—I had never, never been there. And not only was I assigned to go to Lowndes County, Alabama, I was also assigned to live in Lowndes County in the community. Where I would be working

[00:16:06] Guy Trammell: Could you, could you real briefly, just, you know, say if I didn't really know, Lowndes County, but say if I did know Opelika, how would you? How would you get— is it right next to Opelika or—

[00:16:20] Roy Nunn: Oh, no. You leave Tuskegee and you go, Montgomery. And you go 65, South, I believe in Mont-, out of Montgomery. And then there is an exit to Lowndes County, somewhere there. And so we— none of us had cars, by the way. So we had to depend on the university to get us there the first time. And so we all got in— and it's probably an hour and a half ride. But it was a different community than Opelika for it was in the Black belt. Lowndes County in the Black belt. And so this town was predominantly black. A lot of a lot of blacks. It's just at that time, during that time in history, blacks had very few rights. And, you know, even at that point in time they had, you know, voting rights. Thing is voting was— voting obstructions that you saw then probably—or these that are happening today pale in comparison to what happened then.

[00:17:34] Guy Trammell: Okay, now was that a town?

[00:17:37] Roy Nunn: Actually, the community, it was Lowndes County, but the community was Mosses, the Mosses community. And it was named after, if you go into the community, all the trees are covered with this stuff we called moss.

[00:17:52] Guy Trammell: Spanish moss.

[00:17:53] Roy Nunn: Mhmm. The Spanish moss and so it was called Mosses, the Mosses community. At that time, a lot of people had no running water. A lot of people had no running water. And so I stayed with the Logan family. They were just a super family that lived in Lowndes County in Mosses community. And I stayed with them. And I learned so much from, from Mrs. Logan, who was an educator. And it turns out that while I was there, Stokely Carmichael and some of those, Thomas Jackson and several others were there trying to help with the voter registration and that whole piece. And so back in the day, they would meet on Sunday evenings after church at the church. That's where they held their meetings. And so I would go to some of those meetings just to see what was going on. I wasn't a part of it, but so it was really an experience for me.



[00:19:05] Guy Trammell: Now, okay, back up a little bit to Mosses compared to Opelika. Um, how was the population?

[00:19:14] Roy Nunn: Opelika was probably 10,000 more. It was Opelika was at that time. It was about 30,000 had grown from the 20 that had lived— where I lived when I was a kid but Mosses was— I'm not even sure Mosses was 20,000. But the thing about it that that I didn't— you know, none of the roads were paved. You know, it was a . . . it was a tough community.

[00:19:48] Guy Trammell: And so now you're saying there were a lot of blacks there. And what about— Could you maybe say black versus white population and then about how many of the blacks were registered versus the white population, that type of thing?

[00:20:09] Roy Nunn: Well, there were, I would say, black white mix was probably 70/30. Something like that. 70% Black, but they, blacks didn't control anything. Um, but I would also say that they were aggressing. And it took these, Stokely and other folks, I don't know what it was called at that time, to come in, and really have these meetings, and— but you know, even after that effort that summer, you know, where Hayneville is? Right? It's a little town. Close by,

[00: 20:55] Guy Trammell: Yes, county seat.

[00:20:56] Roy Nunn: Yes, that's the county seat. They didn't get enough votes. And when they got the right to vote, they never got enough votes to win. I mean, that summer—I mean, after that, certainly they did. But there's so much voter fraud. And I mean, it was just awful.

[00:21:19] Guy Trammell: So it was made more difficult for them to actually get out there. And how about the—did you experience any of the literacy rate outside of the Logan family with the black adults?

[00:21:39] Roy Nunn: Well, there were very few—there were those who were teachers in the community, you know, and there—just a few people who have—had positions in that town who were influential. and Mrs. Logan was one. And there were there were some others. I can't recall their names, but there were a few. There were a few.

[00:22:05] Guy Trammell: Were they—they were actively organizing—where were where were they meeting, did you see any of those the meetings and things?

[00:22:12] Roy Nunn: Most of them were in the church, either on at night, or on Sunday at the church. And that was, that was the—what they did back in the day. That's where they met. They didn't have anywhere else if you think about it. They met in the church, and everybody knew there's gonna be a meeting, on after the church, blah, blah, blah. So it was—it was interesting, but the way they— the thing that they had to do just to—just live and , you know, be comfortable and unscathed was difficult. It really was. I can remember that Mrs. Logan taught me about the water supply as an example. She said—she said, "Roy I'm gonna tell you about the water supply now." And what they had was in the eaves of the house, they had these big 55-gallon drums,



wherever there was an eave to catch water. And so that was the good water. That was a good water. And so— then they had a pond, they did have a pond, and they had wells. The wells was the best. The water off the top of the house was next. And then there was this other water down in the pond. And so, you were to cook with one, bathe and clean yourself up with the other, and do the other thing with the water from the pond. But it was—it was kind of rough.

[00:23:41] Guy Trammell: Yes, and that. And what—do you have any idea or just a little sense of what most—a lot of them were doing for a living?

[00:23:51] Roy Nunn: Farming.

[00:23:52] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[00:23:54] Roy Nunn: Most of them were farming. There were those who had custodial jobs, a few down painting buildings, and everything, but most of them were farmers, sharecroppers and not sharecroppers but just farmers.

[00:24:09] Guy Trammell: Okay, that's it. Were you able to actually attend any of the meetings that they had at any time or—

[00:24:16] Roy Nunn: I did on—on occasion, on Sunday evening. I attended a few meetings and got a feel for what they—what they were doing. And, you know, that Sunday meeting was one to kind of get together and review the plan. What is the plan? You know, they were—they were planning the marches and all that. And it was really, really interesting.

[00:24:40] Guy Trammell: Was it—was it a good participation or was it just—

[00:24:43] Roy Nunn: Oh yes. It was full. It would be full.

[00:24:48] Guy Trammell: And some of the ones helping the leaders—you mentioned a couple of ones. Were there any others that you remember that came out?

[00:24:59] Roy Nunn: Those are the two that I remember because I met them and talked to them, you know, on and off and don't remember any of the others.

[00:25:07] Guy Trammell: Did you ever hear the name Hewlett out there?

[00:25:10] Roy Nunn: Oh, yes, absolutely.

[00:25:12] Guy Trammell: Okay. I understand he was running for office too.

[00: 25:16] Roy Nunn: Yes. Good. Yes.

[00:25:19] Guy Trammell: Could you kinda elaborate on?



[00:25:22] **Roy Nunn:** Yes, I don't know that much him, but that name Hewlett rings a bell.

[00:25:28] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, cuz he was—Yes, I believe he was the one that eventually became the first sheriff out there.

[00:25:35] **Roy Nunn:** There's another gentleman that was sheriff when I was there. My mind won't let me—I can't, I can't remember it. But—

[00:25:45] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, now, okay. Back to your day job. Okay, well, where were you going? For? Now? What did you do with TICEP?

[00:25:57] **Roy Nunn:** I was a math and science tutor. I tutored the kids in the community who needed help with math, math, and science. And we would have those meetings in a local church there in the Mosses community, that's where I taught. It was, I think it was good for two reasons. One is I took the time, you know, enough time with the students, all the time they needed to make sure they understood. But two, they saw, they looked at me as a person who is, you know, is doing something is achieving something, and I didn't particularly intend to be a role model. But I was, you know, and so I talked to them about, you know, what it takes. You got to get these books, you got it, you got to do this, you got to know the basics. And I dare say, I don't know, I affected a lot of kids that summer.

[00:26:55] **Guy Trammell:** And they—did you get any sense that they'd seen, you know, college students before? Or how did they seem to take to that?

[00:27:04] **Roy Nunn:** Well, you know, Ms. Logan was a—was a graduate of—was a college graduate. And so she was—well, they looked up to her. She was something else. But she probably was one of the few that they had seen. They hadn't seen any, you know, younger people like myself. And so they were impressed. They asked a lot of questions. And more. And they were motivated by what we were trying to do. Quite frankly, that—we need that today in the worst kind of way. I mean, students today they—they just—it's the computer does everything for you. It thinks for you if you let it. But you know, they don't—they don't know how you—"This is the answer." Well, how did you get the answer? And you get to know how, how did you develop that equation? How did you do this? And if you don't know that you can, you can be lost? And unfortunately, a lot of our students don't know that. They don't know how—the origin of—they know, well, we'll go here and do this. And—no, that's not the way we did it. Now I understand, it's a different world now. And we're gonna never go back to that. However, there's still a lot of value in understanding how you got here.

[00:28:29] **Guy Trammell:** And that—now, and children themselves, did they seem like they lived within—do they walk to the church, or did it seem like they were a long way off, I was trying to—

[00:28:43] **Roy Nunn:** They had buses, they had trucks, and a few walked so those were the three modes of transportation.



[00:28:55] Guy Trammell: And toward, toward the end of the program, did you all have any kind of like culminating type program? Or did you have some special, you know, just say, celebration, any type thing along the way that the children experienced?

[00:29:15] Roy Nunn: We had, you know, at pro— in the program, and we recognized all the students and of course the students thanked us for what we had done and, you know, it was—it was really really—I was—it took me a while to get accustomed to it because, you know, I didn't—it was hard for me to convert to—to that. And, you know, I understand now, how difficult it is for a lot of kids, you know, in a lot of levels and maybe not because they don't have—. But what I—what I see is as a race of people we have gotten to the point where we don't—don't reach down enough to bring another brother or sister up with us. And that's what I see a lot of the immigrants that come here doing. That's what we were doing back in the day. But they do it now. I mean, they do things that we didn't do even to get by.

[00:30:19] Guy Trammell: And in the church, were there other classes going on too?

[00:30:23] Roy Nunn: Yes. Mmhmm.

[00:30:23] Guy Trammell: All right. Okay. And how did y'all split that up, they just split up the—the—I'm trying to think of—the sanctuary into different parts, or were they different rooms?

[00:30:37] Roy Nunn: No different rooms. We didn't have—So you sit in this section here, you know, all in one big building. And, um, you know, you can do it, it's not that—and then when the weather was appropriate, we went out, you know, go outside, you know, under the tree and whatever.

[00:30:56] Guy Trammell: And, okay, and the—some of the others there, do you remember any of the others that you worked with from TICEP?

[00:31:07] Roy Nunn: I hate to admit it, but I can't remember a one. But they were all Tuskegee students. If I had time to think about it, I would probably come up with it, but I can't remember any of them.

[00:31:20] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay, now, um, you did not actually just go back to Tuskegee. Something else interrupted your college education after TICEP. And so what happened? What happened along that line?

[00:31:40] Roy Nunn: Well, I went back as a big-time sophomore, my second year. And I got through those years with a lot of difficulty and—which meant that I wasn't going to graduate in four years. There were very few people graduated in four years. And so I—I did well, and I got to 1969, which was my fourth year, and at that time, the Selective Service would give you a four year deferment. And if you didn't get your degree in four years, they had the right to draft you



into the military. Well, guess what, I didn't graduate in four years. And I got my letter from the Selective Service drafting me into the military, which interrupted my education, and I went to infantry. The Vietnam War was active at the time. Okay, and it was—it was—they were over the halfway point, but it still was a lot of fighting going on, it was—So anyway, I dropped out of Tuskegee and went to the military and went to Fort Polk, Louisiana, which is probably the worst infantry training base in the country, in terms of the people, the temperatures, environment. And so I did my six months. After six months, they evaluated—the warden evaluated all of these things and said, "we can let a certain amount of these people go back since we are ramping down" and so they ramped down, and I was fortunate enough to get an honorable discharge with a six-year reserve obligation; an inactive reserve. But that set me back in my college quest to finish college so I went back and could not immediately join. I mean, get back in school, so it's interesting. I looked for a job in Opelika and I got a sales job at a school called Montgomery Fair. You—do you remember that by any chance?

[00:33:58] Guy Trammell: Oh yes. Oh yes. Downtown Montgomery. Yes.

[00:34:01] Roy Nunn: Well, they had one in Opelika. Had a Montgomery Fair. And they were getting some pressure to hire blacks and so they hired me as the first black salesperson on the floor, selling and ringing up things. And man, I tell you, I had people tell me they wouldn't. They don't want me to wait on them. They don't mean help—help them. I'm talking about some of them white brothers and sisters. And it was—it was—And then they had the old cash registers then. You know—you know the one I'm talking about?

[00:34:35] Guy Trammell: Right, right. Before the electronics, oh yes.

[00:34:36] Roy Nunn: Oh, yes, that's what they had. So I just, you know, took it for what it was. But people was amazed. I mean, blacks were amazed they said, "Well Roy, now what, what's working the fair on the floor? Yes." So they come and they peeping around, you know, but, but I worked there until I got back to Tuskegee. It was a way to make money. That's the money that I needed. And I finally graduated in '71, and I had some job offers, none of them were great, but I had a—as country boys, I don't want to go to Cincinnati. I think I had a job offer in Cincinnati and a couple other places and I said "I'm gonna stay south." So I went to work for the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Corps of Engineers. And it was the worst job I've ever had in my life. The prejudice and just downright, it just—Yes, here's the book, read the book. And, you know, we got work to do kind of thing. And the thing that broke my spirit is that we were all in a big room as engineers, and everybody had your drafting board, you had your computer in you had the desk and stuff. And you could look out and out the window and see. So when you look at the window on the day, you see blacks maintain the lawn, cutting the lawn.

And one day I heard one of the, one of the guys say as he looked out the window "Look at them stupid niggers." I said, "Oh. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa!," that's what he said. But that's he said, I remember that. And so I knew I was gonna turn my resignation in. And so I said, "I can't stay here but I want to turn in now." They said "Well, why don't you let us send you to Eglin Air Force Base and let you do a turn down there and see if you like that." And so they got me an apartment on the beach and sent me to Eglin Air Force Base. And I did some work there. It was



my first opportunity to really do something. But when that assignment ended, you know, my time with the Corps of Engineers ended because I was headed back to Mobile. And I wasn't gonna stay in Mobile. The only good thing coming out of Mobile is my wife. That's where I met her. And I went to work for, for Monsanto Chemicals after that in Pensacola. And that was a much—a better—a better situation still the same. racism, sexism. It was there, I mean, big time. So, I stayed there for about four years, four and a half years. And I learned a lot of the basics that I knew I had to have in order to move forward. How do you size a pump? How do you do the heat exchanges? You know, what, uh—when you—when you when you're doing this, what are the factors and so I wanted, I said I know— just to show you how bad it will I don't, I can't, I can go back to my college books. But I shouldn't have to do that.

I learned that—this is years ago—that there are these basic manuals that you can buy yourself or the company can furnish, that shortcuts it for you. And so nobody would give me one. So, I made, had made friends with everybody there that I could. I wouldn't say friends. I'd say allies. And one of my best allies was a custodian who cleaned up the building that—where my office was. And I, so I asked him I said, "How long do you stay here at night?" And he said to me, "Oh, well I stay sometimes nine o'clock, you know, takes me a while." I said: "I'd like to come over one, one night and I'd like—I know I'm incriminating myself, but you determine—I said "I'd like to get access to certain areas so I can write down the titles and author for these books" I said "I'm not gonna take anything but I want to write it down." So, he did. He—he let me in the room where they kept these books. I got in and I wrote down the titles and authors of every one of them and I had them sent to my home. I had then because there was one called "Crane Fluid Flow." It teaches you how to design pumps and all and how to do all this. And then they provide—they skip some steps that we had to calculate in school, because they do this do this and you get this big cost up here. So I learned how to do that. And then they were absolutely amazed. "How did this nigger get—" you know—

[00:39:44] Guy Trammell: You weren't supposed to know. You weren't supposed to know.

[00:39:49] Roy Nunn: I didn't take not one. I didn't take any of them to the office [laugh]. I didn't have to go when I go—I mean they didn't even tell me they existed. And I was in the room, then I—okay.

[00:40:07] Guy Trammell: Keep, keep, keep you back, I need to ask you. And I meant to ask you back. When were, were talking about college too. The—I know, on campus—Now there's several different levels of engineering organizations. Everything from each individual area of engineering, all the way up to the black engineering, you know, all the way—Were there many societies or organizations at that time for blacks, also? I know that there was probably the American I'm not sure the name of it, but American Engineering Society, whatever. But were there others at that time?

[00:40:48] Roy Nunn: Yes, there were. For example, Tuskegee had an ASME chapter: American Society of Mechanical Engineers. And, you know, it—it began to function, you know quite well, because they had faculty and staff members who made sure it was going to function and we get what we're supposed to get from it. But I was a member of ASME as my primary, you know, and



so I—I learned a lot from it. I got to go to certain, you know, conferences and conventions, and just tons of information started to flow. So I, um, I grew and I learned and at some point, I was in Montana. I was promoted and went to senior engineer status. I heard one guy sent a note to another guy, and they didn't know they got sent to me. He said, "Yes, Roy had—Roy solved that problem!"

[00:41:55] Guy Trammell: You weren't supposed to be able to do—

[00:41:55] Roy Nunn: No. I wasn't even supposed to know how to do it. But—But you know, you had to struggle—now, today it's quite different. It is quite different today. However, most of our engineers who graduate don't want to do the technical work. They want to go in as an engineering manager. Well, you can't just be an engineering manager, unless you do— because if you do, you're gonna get in trouble. See? You're gonna get in trouble with the—if you go in like that, they're gonna—they're gonna make sure you fail.

[00:42:02] Guy Trammell: You don't know that all the jobs that are up under you and you don't have the experience. Yes—

[00:42:41] Roy Nunn: Exactly! Exactly.

[00 42:44] Guy Trammell: That's the thing. Now, were there any—I'll say because, again, you're in Ala—you're in the southeast. You're basically in the heart of the beast. So were there any, I guess—I don't know, that there's like a black Alabama or black southeast engineering association. Was anything like that in those early days? You know—I don't know. Any networking type situation with engineers?

[00:43:18] Roy Nunn: I would say so. Yes. And in fact, most of the networking outside of Tuskegee happened during some of the IEEE and ASME and all these conferences and—and that was a clear source of networking between blacks.

[00:43:39] Guy Trammell: Like a necessary—necessary tool?

[00:43:42] Roy Nunn: Absolutely necessary tool. Absolutely necessary tool and—and I think that many of our guys, we—I didn't appreciate it as much as the engineers who were a few years ahead of me, because once they got it, then you got it inside of your—of the school. And but you know, I don't know what we would have done without it. I mean, in my class in '71, there were—there were four or five engineers that graduated in mechanical engineering. And so you see, we weren't graduating many students back then. Today it's different. They graduate quite a few students. They really do. And these students go on and they get— they gets huge job offers. When I talk to some of them after they're there "Well I think I want to be an engineering manager. I'm not" you know, saying you know, You got to—You have to learn something first. Cause really when you—when you come out of school, you really don't know a heck of a lot, you know, other than carrying that book. And I'm ca— Even today, Guy, I'm tutoring and coaching some engineers who are out there with Exxon. They call me. And not—they don't ask so much a technical question, but how you deal with some of these people, you know. People are



hard to deal with. "My boss don't like me and he says—" Okay, well, let's, let's talk about it a little bit. And I hate to tell them what, you know, he is who he is, or she is who she is. Let's figure out, you know, what you need to do to be—to get where you want, need to go. And so I—and I tell you they call me, you know, quite often, just because I'm—I'm open to discussions with them, you know, and I will give them everything I've got.

[00:45:51] Guy Trammell: What you would say, you know, basically, that was the name of the game back in the day anyway. Because there were no other alternatives. Like you said, you had to figure out how you say, either sink or swim, there was no other choice in the matter of finding, finding ways to go on and deal with what the circumstances were and go on and achieve. Anyway.

[00:46:15] Roy Nunn: And I—One of my assignments, Guy, and I don't want to belabor it in my time with Procter and Gamble was up in a town called Grand Prairie, Alberta, Canada, where it gets to 50 below in the wintertime. So my, my assignment was to go up there as an engineer, and learn all the practices that they used for filling and trucking the wood out of the forest. We use that at Procter to make diapers and the end of the day paper towels and toilet tissue. That's, but I had to go back, you know, to figure out why we were having certain problems with strength in the paper, you know. So I went up there, and I was the only black in the town—in the town. And, you know, man, it'd be cold. My wife and kids didn't go because I didn't want them to go. Not like that. So I went up there and I would stay for—go once a month, come home once a month. But—But and then people were curious and never seen a black person, many of them, and they look at you and they'd do this. But I made some friends up there. But the interesting thing is, one day I was about to travel back to Memphis. I was based in Memphis at that time. And so I got I got my stuff together and got a rental car and went to the rental agency turn to the car in so I had to jump on a little airplane. But um, as I got to the air, the rental car agency was located inside of a—auto—auto sales place. It was a—auto parts store. And so we had a contact there. So I go in the store and I stand in line and wait. And finally, I got there and these—the guy behind the counter asked me, "Can I help you?" I say "I'm here to see Doug." I said "I would like to wait on him because we had a little plan, we—I will pay for my car. And I will take the car to the airport and leave it at a certain spot, and I'd get on the airplane and then Doug would go get it. And so these— apparently this guy got—he didn't like that. Well, I'm waiting on Doug. So he asked the other white guys and he said "It's a good day for a nigger whipping isn't it?" That's what he said. He says, "It's a good day for a nigger whipping." He said yes, he said, "There's a tire iron out back. Why don't you go get it for me." He was talking to his buddy. Why don't you go get the tire iron.

[00:48:56] Guy Trammell: You—This was—oh my goodness!

[00:49:00] Roy Nunn: Now I was the only black in the town. You have to understand what I'm saying. So nothing happened. They didn't kill me because Doug became available. But I got back to Memphis, and I did write a letter to management of Procter and Gamble. And I said "Hey, you know here's what



happened." So they in turn wrote letters to the rental car place, petrol car and they wrote a letter to the local auto parts store. In terms of what they expected. Well, that never happened again. But I still had to keep going back.

[00:49:40] Guy Trammell: I'm sure if Procter and Gamble speak, they definitely had to listen but—

[00:49:45] Roy Nunn: They listened. They listened, but even—even then, you know, it was still very difficult to survive.

[00:49:53] Guy Trammell:
And you were a long way from Alabama. You were—Wow.

[00:49:58] Roy Nunn: The guy at the airport, he said " Oh, You're from Alabama, huh?" He says, this is one of the Canadian guys, "Is that where they pick cotton using the ladder?"

[00:50:06] Guy Trammell: Oh.

[00:50:12] Roy Nunn: So what you have to understand is you got to pick your battles.

[00:50:18] Guy Trammell: And that kind of translates into what I was going to ask you because I know what you've been doing since then in the community. And I wanted to ask how much of that, as you tell us about that, and how much of that relates—did any of that come from your time with TIS/CEP? Was any lessons you got from TIS/CEP that carried on what you were doing with the work you have done in the community?

[00:50:46] Roy Nunn: Yes, my phone's going off. I have always wanted to get involved with the community and helping other folks. And I, that's, that's my thing. So when I worked for P&G, I became a coach and a mentor to not only other engineers, but kids in a community. You know, I, big, big brother, big, big sister organizations, I belonged to those, the Y, you know, things like that. And so I've always wanted to do that. And the, the thing that I just—my heart aches to see our kids just waste their lives. I mean, just smart, good kids just waste the lives because they had no father in the household to do what needs to be done. And so, I mean, I've spent a lot of my time and money just doing that, because I think there's a payout for it. And so whatever they needed, that's what I helped with. I mean, you can name that kind of a problem—kinds of problems they had whatever it was. In a lot of cases I couldn't do it so I found somebody that could do it. And so I am— what I did, Guy, I—within the last two or three years, I didn't expect to live—to be living now, cause I got double cancers. And so I decided, I knew I want to do a memoir. And the memoir was not to be published, but it was to—it was to go to my relatives, my little—my grandkids, my little nieces and nephews and I'm going to show it to you quick. Can you see this?

[00:52:55] Guy Trammell: Come over to your right, a little bit, just a little bit more to the right, a little bit more and turn it down, turn it, turn it, put your left, forward and right back. Just put—push your left hand forward and the right hand back. There you go. Okay. A little bit over to the



right, a little bit more. There you go. Okay, perfect. Yes, just hold it there for a second. Yes. Yes. That's good.

[00:53:19] Roy Nunn: See what the subject is?

[00:53:21] Guy Trammell: Yes, let's see. It says "Overcoming the Odds"—this, pull your—pull your right hand back a little bit and put your left hand forward. A little bit more. Ah, yes, there you go. Okay. And just push it push it a little bit closer to the camera. Okay, there you go. Like that. "A memoir." Ah okay. Yes. Excellent.

[00:53:41] Roy Nunn: And what I saw happening to me, is my mortality, I thought about the clock out. So every morning, I got up every morning, five o'clock. And put together— this is full of incidents, things that happened to me and how you overcome them? How do you overcome. You know, you don't lay down and die, you do whatever is required to overcome them. And it's not published. And so I got copies and sent every one of my relatives, and friends or friends who had kids who, you know, would benefit from this. And so I—that's been my—my life's work has been more dealing with helping people than it has engineering. It really has.

[00:54:37] Guy Trammell: And what you seem to be saying is, you know, in other words, when your back is against the wall, that maybe there are a few options. It's not like the end of everything. There are ways, you know—and if you get a little help from somebody who's already been there, maybe—.maybe you can make it. Is that like the message you want to get across to them?

[00:55:02] Roy Nunn: Absolutely, absolutely. If you're not down, you're going to get up because nobody's gonna—and our kids, you know, they're not. That's not where they come from these days. I'm afraid that we have not gained at the rate that we needed to here in the last 30 years or whatever. I mean, we've just not taken advantage of some of the things that have been available to us, although I know it's difficult. You know, people look at me, and they think, "Oh, you know, it's easy" but it's not just the technical stuff I had—you have to deal with. It's the people stuff.

[00:55:46] Guy Trammell: Do you think that if children today were in a program like TICEP, and they saw somebody like Mrs. Logan, who, like you're saying, in a situation where everything's against them as far as voting, but yet, they didn't just give into it? They didn't just complain about it. They actually, you know—do you think that that would be apropos? Today?

[00: 56:11] Roy Nunn: If you see something, do something, and there are those examples out there. What's the lady's name? Who's in Atlanta who had the voting?

[00:56:27] Guy Trammell: [Stacey]Abrams? Yes.

[00: 56:28] Roy Nunn: Yes, she's an example of somebody who—she worked miracles. But she's focused on that, and she's done all this other stuff that goes on and kind of go on. And she's focusing on what she what it takes, I think they're good organizations, but just, just not enough. Just not enough. I, there's so many kids who just finish high school, and you know, they don't



have a clue about what they're gonna do. They don't have, I mean, they—. You know, back in Opelika, back in the day, I tell you we were poor.

And we didn't have much, but I didn't know a family that didn't have a father in my, in my little neighborhood. I didn't know anybody who didn't have two people. Seriously, everybody in Opelika over on Burke Street, or wherever it was, had—and if one of the people have passed, and then there was somebody else, it was a grandmother there. And they you know, but I see us in trouble, especially, and I love my international brothers and sisters, but they got more energy and more reason to do what they're doing. You know, we think we've got it made so you know, we don't have to work as hard. But Asians, Indians, Mexicans, you know, they—and, you know, I don't have a problem with that. But we lost some steam, and I'm afraid I'm going to die without seeing that turned around. And that's what I was saying. "Gee I got to do something." But I still, God ran me, you know, a little bit more time. And so I mean, I've been using it wisely. The best I can.

[00:58:22] Guy Trammell: Sharing it with the ones—and by the way, did you ever hear anything about the Black Panther Party while you were there? Or—

[00:58:29] Roy Nunn: Yes. You know, Stokely, Stokely Carmichael, led that. He—you know, people, you see people you don't know him, and you talk to him really—you know, he got some goals. He's trying to do something. And people don't like him because of what he represents in their minds. But they are the ones who came to Lowndes County, Hayneville. The little town of Hayneville. They organized. In this book, I talked a little bit about that. And they organized people, and they got them to the point where even though they didn't win the election that summer, this set them up to win the next one. If you google Black Panther Party, you'll see where Lowndes County Hayneville, Alabama, was one of the key spots in this state.

[00: 59:25] Guy Trammell: Let me just ask you this because again, the in Southern California that started in 1966. But from what I understand what you're talking about took place before that

[00:59:40] Roy Nunn: It was around the same time because I worked in a program in '66. They came to Tuskegee in August of '65. And then you go through January of '66. To the summer of '66, like May. You're in school and then May you find a job. So in May of 1966, May, June. If you look at history books, they'll tell you that that's where they would concentrate and that's where Stokely Carmichael concentrated in May of '66. So you know, I was right in the middle of it, that was right in the middle of it. They weren't just doing Lowndes County. They'd leave Lowndes County, and they'd go somewhere else.

[01:00:25] Guy Trammell: Because I understand actually started right there. I think it was Eldridge Cleaver.

[01:00:31] Roy Nunn: Yes. Yes.

[01:00:34] Guy Trammell: Did you see him down there?



[01:00:36] **Roy Nunn:** I saw him once. Yes. You know, Fort Deposit? You know where that is? That little town? I was trying to think of—Fort Deposit, Alabama.

[01:00:47] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. Yes. And so they, and they called the Black Panther Party to go against that other party at that time because I know, Alabama was democratic at that time.

[01:00:59] **Roy Nunn:** It was.

[01:01:00] **Guy Trammell:** So that that became an alternative party to vote for?

[01:01:04] **Roy Nunn:** Yes, it did.

[01:01:05] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[01:01:06] **Roy Nunn:** Yes, it did.

[01:01:07] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. And a lot of support for it. So that that was the beginning of the very first Black Panther Party.

[01:01:18] **Roy Nunn:** And people were threatened by that, you know, Black Lives Matter. People are threatened by that whole statement, black—and that's a fact. White—we're not saying white lives don't matter. Right now, we're talking about black people. Black Lives Matter. When I leave Auburn and go to Atlanta for my chemotherapy, my meetings, I stay in an area in DeKalb County out near Emory University. And it is a totally different world. When you compare it to Auburn and here's how. You got 20% Asians, 15-20%, black, you know, 25% white, and if you go through the neighborhoods during the elections, you know what kind of signs you see? You see nothing but Biden—you see—that's what you see, that's what you see. And then you also see people doing what they got to do. I own a condo there in a high rise. And in that condo, it's all, people do, they help each other. I mean, it's very few. Because you're not gonna stay. If you're a bigot, you're not gonna like it. So, you gonna leave. But there are some—there's hope. There is hope.

[01:02:49] **Guy Trammell:** And that's in a red state. You're seeing that.

[01:02:52] **Roy Nunn:** Red state.

[01:02:54] **Guy Trammell:** That's, that's amazing. One of them want to do I know you. You knew about Sammy Younge. Did you ever see any of the work that he did or anything?

[01:03:10] **Roy Nunn:** I certainly remember Sammy Younge's name. I'm not familiar with the—He was—his name was out there, popular. I came along when—I'll tell you who came out to Tuskegee at the same time I did: Al, not Al Joyner, but uh, Tom Joyner. He—they were in my class, and so they know why I remember those guys. Because freshman year, that was something but—anyway, that was an interesting thing.



[01:03:45] Guy Trammell: Okay. Yes. And, and probably Skeet or Lionel Richie was?

[01:03:52] Roy Nunn: Yes. Sure.

[01:03:57] Guy Trammell: Okay. Well, any other thoughts that you—as far as again, what took place with TIS/CEP, and again, for this new generation, and in, even forward to the future? Any just general thoughts on that?

[01:04:17] Roy Nunn: Yes, I do. I really have some thoughts. You know, if you go on campus now at Tuskegee, you know, on a nice day, when you'll be outside, you see, you know, you hardly see anybody, students. And somehow, we need to learn how to organize our resources, not just after we leave school, but at all levels. How do you organize your resources so that people can learn from each other? And you go there now, you don't see. You don't see students socializing. You know, they got these things and they're, you know, they're in the dorm, I guess, I don't know. And so we're not, we're not doing what we need to do to move up to where we have to go. We're just not right now. And it seems like, you know, police don't hesitate to kill black men, and you go out to ghettos they're killing at a faster rate in our own ghettos. And it's, you know, and it's—you got to give people reasons for hope, and we got to organize so we can encourage each other and get a plan, put a plan out there, make a plan. And have goals and all.

And I'll say this, one of the things that I walked away from P&G with. I'll end with this, is, is this plan I'm talking about can anything you want to do they made you do something, they'd go, "O-G-S-M": What are your objectives? You know, you know, not too many, but just a few key objectives. What are your goals? Goals have to be—they have to be measurable. So, you know, when you got there. S, probably the most important part. What's your strategy? You know, how are you going to do that? How? So, "O-G-S" objectives, goals, strategy, and then the M, is measured. You have to kind of go back and go back and look and see how you've done, you know, and there may be a reason to make an adjustment somewhere. You know, am I too—have, I been too optimistic? But they taught me to think like that, and that may sound crazy, but it applies to anything. And so that's what I try to do, and I—my kids call me anal and all this in a positive way, joking way. But I know how to get results.

[01:07:05] Guy Trammell: I kind of wish you could have a introductory course as children get into high school, because maybe junior high, because if they're—like you said, start thinking that way early, maybe there would be a difference. And, like you said, in the output. Because, again, just how—what is it, more perspective, because I guarantee, I'm sure, even with the civil engineer, different ones, when you see a particular situation, you have to deal with, you're looking at it a little bit differently than the ones that keep knocking their heads up against the wall all the time trying to figure it out. And—

[01:07:43] Roy Nunn: Exactly.

[01:07:44] Guy Trammell: They'd have to call you.



[01:07:46] Roy Nunn: There you go. There you go. They taught me that and I never forgotten it. It sticks in my head. Because when I have an issue here at home, I'm dealing with, that's what I go through. What am I trying to do? What does success—and I don't—you know, not making a big deal, but just the thought pattern. Some things require a big deal when you do that, but some of the things that you do, it's just you have to think through it. Because what you'll find out, sometimes you don't do something different than you thought you would do.

[01:08:20] Guy Trammell: Are you, I mean and you've been kind of in all the different places where you needed that because [laugh] like you said, you know from the community, the startup and then to go into college, you expecting to just go straight on to college and then suddenly just out of the clear blue, here comes somebody, Uncle Sam's hand pulling you—putting you in a place where you, you're going to be tested beyond your [laugh].

[01:08:45] Roy Nunn: Exactly.

[01:08:46] Guy Trammell: And yes, to be able to come out but—

[01:08:50] Roy Nunn: And it matters too, you know. It matters—when I am, I was in the military, and I got to Fort Polk Louisiana. Guy, I'm not sure why but they made me a platoon leader. I was probably the smallest, but I wasn't the weakest. And so that meant I was the third platoon leader. And that means I had all these guys and when we go on the marches and the drills and 105-degree weather. It was hot. So one day we were marching, going to the darn rifle range, this target practicing—a hundred-and-something degrees. And we had a full platoon, you know, a whole bunch of soldiers. So it got so hot, they had—each platoon had an ambulance riding along behind us to pick you up if you feel out. And then it was just guys were just falling out and they were just throwing them and putting them in there. And again, they're trying to get you ready for war I guess but—so I decided on my own, Guy, that I was going to slow the march down because too many people falling out, which was the wrong thing to do. So I slowed it down, I just stopped and this gap between the third platoon, which was mine—four and four—and the second platoon got wider. Okay, the first sergeant comes up and he raises hell in my ear. He curses me for everything. I just kept walking. I knew what the—that was wrong. I knew the consequences of it too.

[01:10:27] Guy Trammell: Mm.

[01:10:28] Roy Nunn: I knew the consequences, but I was willing to do that to try to save people from whatever. We got to the range. First thing he do "Nunn, come here let me see you." Strip me of my rank.

[01:10:46] Guy Trammell: What?!

[01:10:46] Roy Nunn: Oh, yes. Mmhmm. Deprived me. "You just now, you just a soldier like anybody else. We'll get somebody else." And you know, I'm not trying to judge whether that was right or wrong. But you have to make, I had to make a choice. That's making a choice. Was



I going to try to catch up or what am I gonna do? But then I thought about the consequences. So let's—thinking about the consequences of what do you do. What are the consequences? For me, I didn't care about the consequences, because I wanted to get the heck out of there anyway. You know.

[01:11:20] Guy Trammell: And you would look, I mean, that seemed to be more applicable to an officer who would care about the people up under them, you know, and the circumstances because, again, like you said, if everybody's in, in the RX, you know, or, you know, under the nurses care how you're going to be able to fight, you know, I mean, that's—you want to take the proper action, according to the circumstances.

[01:11:50] Roy Nunn: Exactly.

[01:11:53] Guy Trammell: Yes, that's thinking on a different level. And that, you know, and maybe that maybe that's what makes us who we are to be able to get through what we got to do.

[01:12:03] Roy Nunn: Yes, exactly. Exactly.

[01:12:05] Guy Trammell: Yes. Well, again, thank you so much for this opportunity. Thank you so much for being in TIS/CEP.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Elizabeth Shields-Phillips/Silver Spring MD

Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham AL

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Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Elizabeth Shields Phillips born to William Alexander Shields and Senono Franklin Shields, one of three children and lived in Tuskegee until she was 10 years old. She returned to Tuskegee Institute in 1964 and completed two years of undergraduate study finish undergraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania. During her tenure as a Tuskegee undergraduate, Elizabeth was very active in the college's student civil rights organization, TIAL (Tuskegee Institute Advancement League) and edited its publication, *The Activist*. Elizabeth's post academia experience includes work on federal programs with U.S. Government agencies, board member of TransAfrica's Boston chapter, and employment with the U.S. Food & Drug Administration. Elizabeth Phillips, a freelance media producer was also a member of the personal staff of a prominent United States Senator.



[00:09] Joan Burroughs: Today is November 7, 2022, it's 10:00 am, Eastern time. I am Joan Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama here to interview Elizabeth Shields-Phillips, who is in Maryland. This interview is part of the TICEP/TISEP Organizing Committee's TICEP/TISEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. Okay, and you can state your name, please.

[00:58] Elizabeth Phillips: My name is Liz Phillips or Elizabeth Shields-Phillips. Today is November 7, 2022. I am in Silver Spring, Maryland. And I will be interviewed by Joan Burroughs.

[01:16] Joan Burroughs: Thank you, Liz. Do you mind if I call you Betty? Or do you prefer Liz, I suppose?

[01:22] Elizabeth Phillips: You can call me the way you think about me, that's fine.



[01:25] Joan Burroughs: I think about you as Betty because that was what we called you in college

[01:29] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes. Go right ahead.

[01:31] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so the first question that I want to ask is, how did you hear about TISEP/TICEP? And I say it that way, because TISEP, the first one is T-I-S-E-P, and it means Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program. And it evolved into TICEP, which is T-I-C-E-P, which is the Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program. It evolved because after the summer of 1965 it became the community education program.

[02:07] Elizabeth Phillips: Okay, I gotcha. So, I was a student at Tuskegee at the time, and I was already doing some work with TIAL, the Tuskegee Institute Advancement League. And I heard about it that way.

[02:27] Joan Burroughs: I see, and do you remember what you heard about it?

[02:31] Elizabeth Phillips: Actually, I do not remember what I heard about it. I only knew that it was an opportunity to participate in something that was called a Freedom School at that time. And I wanted to do that.

[02:59] Joan Burroughs: What was your understanding of Freedom School?

[03:01] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, I understood that the freedom schools were an opportunity to go into more rural parts of the South and to provide some educational opportunities, summer opportunities for kids who were living in those areas, who may not necessarily have had the opportunity to go to the best schools or to do anything constructive in the summer. And it was an opportunity to make that kind of connection. And also, to get to know—for me, a strong pull was to get to know aspects of the black community that I may not have gotten to know before.

[04:05] Joan Burroughs: I see. Okay, and what was your year in college when you participated in TIS/CEP?

[04:15] Elizabeth Phillips: I think I was a sophomore.

[04:19] Joan Burroughs: I see.

[04:20] Elizabeth Phillips: This was the summer of 1966.

[04:27] Joan Burroughs: Yes. That was the summer that you participated.

[04:30] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes.

[04:31] Joan Burroughs: Okay. What do you remember about what you did in the program?



[04:36] Elizabeth Phillips: Okay, this is embarrassing [laughter]. You know, I did teach. I think the responsibility that I mostly had with teaching what was called Health, and it had to do with, as far as I can remember, it had to do with ideas about eating healthy and about taking good care of physically and things like that. If you asked me to talk about one class that I taught, I would draw a blank, sorry to say.

[05:24] Joan Burroughs: I see. Well, I think most of us were, but some people might find it difficult remember, you know, the things that they taught. But yes, health. That was part of the program, and also part of what I taught in the school, in the center that I was stationed in.

[05:43] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes.

[05:44] Joan Burroughs: What influenced your decision to join the Summer Education Program? The Community Education Program?

[05:53] Elizabeth Phillips: I was working with TIAL, on Tuskegee's campus. And I was just a movement thinking person, you know. Those times were very different from our times now. There were insane things going on, like, people couldn't vote. And there were really primitive ways of trying to keep people from voting. Our whole situation as black people, especially in the South was really insane. And I had grown up with a parent, my father specifically, who had been working in what you could call the long-term civil rights movement of this country – he was a “race man”. And so my head was already oriented to doing whatever I could if I had the opportunity. And so, I did have the opportunity. And I took it.

[07:12] Joan Burroughs: Well, that was a good thing. You saw an opportunity and you jumped right in.

[07:18] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes.

[07:18] Joan Burroughs: I'm sure that that was well received by the people that you were in contact with.

[07:26] Elizabeth Phillips: Let me just say this, Joan, I don't know how well received it was [laughter]. I hope it was, but I can just tell you that this push was coming from me a lot. And I knew that I had a lot to learn, you know. I already had, philosophically, the orientation, but I didn't have experience actually acting on it. So, it was something that I more or less had to do, you know.

[07:56] Joan Burroughs: I agree. I understand, I understand. Let's see now, so where did you work? That summer?

[08:06] Elizabeth Phillips: I worked in Lowndes County in a town called Hayneville, in Alabama.

[08:11] Joan Burroughs: Yes.



[08:14] Elizabeth Phillips: Boy, what an experience. I mean, it was literally jumping into another kind of life, altogether. And, you know, it just was very helpful to me as a thinking, feeling person to have that kind of experience. I chose to go to Hayneville because there had been, you know, horrific things happening there. And just by the way my mind and my spirit work, I was just drawn to that place. Because that's where I saw a great need, you know, for whatever I could do.

[09:08] Joan Burroughs: Do you remember anything that was so horrible that had happened in Hayneville?

[09:13] Elizabeth Phillips: Whoa, yes. There were three civil rights workers, one black and two white, who were murdered horribly there.

[09:29] Joan Burroughs: Not in Hayneville. That was in Mississippi, right?

[09:32] Elizabeth Phillips: That was, yes, that was in—was that in Mississippi?

[09:37] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[09:38] Elizabeth Phillips: Okay, so here I am in my senior years trying to [laughter].

[09:45] Joan Burroughs: Well, there was. There was the summer before, there was a murder too. One Episcopalian seminary student.

[09:54] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes.

[09:54] Burroughs: And one active priest.

[09:59] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes. Excuse me for not remembering correctly. I do know that there had been murders there that were horrible. And I did feel that that was where I wanted to go. And sorry for not remembering which murders, but as you know, in that, in those days, they were murders all over the place. Whether they reached the national news or not.

[10:28] Joan Burroughs: That's true. That's true. So, yes, so that. Yes, Hayneville was a hotspot. And so, I think it was kind of brave to go there.

[10:40] Elizabeth Phillips: Brave or crazy, according to my parents.

[10:44] Joan Burroughs: No, because a lot of good things happen in Hayneville too.

[10:47] Elizabeth Phillips: True, true, but according to my parents, it was crazy for me to go there. [Laughter]



[10:53] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, do you remember any of the names of the people that worked with you? Or some of the community members who participated in TICEP?

[11:03] **Elizabeth Phillips:** You know, because I left earlier than most people did—I didn't stay for the entire program, I remember people, but I don't remember names at all. And mostly, I remember the lady that I lived with when I was there.

[11:24] **Joan Burroughs:** What do you—do you remember her name? You don't remember?

[11:27] **Elizabeth Phillips:** No, no, that's what I'm saying. I don't remember her name. I don't remember anybody's name that I worked with that summer there. But I just remember her. I remember her kindness. I remember her. You know, the way that she carried herself, which was so beautiful.

[11:53] **Joan Burroughs:** Can you describe her at all?

[11:57] **Elizabeth Phillips:** She was like, a medium height woman. And I think she was—okay, so at that time, I was like, I don't know 19 or something like that. But she was, at that time, she was maybe she was as old as forties. To me, she was quite advanced in age person.

[12:23] **Joan Burroughs:** That's how we felt then, right?

[12:26] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes [Laughter].

[12:27] **Joan Burroughs:** Anybody older than us, they were old.

[12:29] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes, exactly. So, but I remember, you know, she was a very sturdy built woman, dark-skinned woman. A wonderful personality and seemingly at ease with herself and with life. You know what I mean? And I don't know I just was impressed by her. You know, every once in a while, you meet a woman who is just taking care of business in a way that impresses you.

[13:09] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[13:10] **Elizabeth Phillips:** And so. Yes. And she was that kind of a woman.

[13:17] **Joan Burroughs:** Can you just kind of recall anything about your daily, how you went about your day? I mean, how you moved through what you have to do on a given day there?

[13:29] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes. I remember that she always fed me. I don't even remember how I got to "school". I do remember walking the roads around in that neighborhood. Because I remember that it was a dirt road. You know, those really hard packed—

[13:59] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.



[14:00] **Elizabeth Phillips:** —dirt roads. And, and I don't know where I would have been going except walking to school, you know?

[14:07] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[14:09] **Elizabeth Phillips:** And I remember passing people on the road and, I don't know, considering that I didn't know anyone it was kind of strange because I felt extremely safe. Even though I was in a place where my parents' feeling was like, please don't go there. But I remember walking and Joan, I must have been walking to where I was teaching.

[14:41] **Joan Burroughs:** To the TIS/CEP center.

[14:42] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes.

[14:43] **Joan Burroughs:** Was your center in a church or school?

[14:48] **Elizabeth Phillips:** It was in a church. I remember there were pews and then maybe there were things going on downstairs. I just don't remember that much about the space.

[15:10] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[15:12] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Joan, I'm so embarrassed. I can't remember a lot.

[15:17] **Joan Burroughs:** How many years ago was that? Many right? I can't remember all the details. But it's, I mean, you can remember some things. So that's good. And it adds to the story, which is great.

[15:31] **Elizabeth Phillips:** It bothers me that I can't answer your questions. But for me, it's a memory that's not really about the details. The memory is about the general learning and growing that I had by being there. You know what I mean? And, sad to say, maybe that's an old person's way of making excuses. But that's what it really always has been for me.

[16:03] **Joan Burroughs:** That's truthful. That's a good answer.

[16:06] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes.

[16:07] **Joan Burroughs:** So how long did you work with the TICEP program that summer?

[16:11] **Elizabeth Phillips:** I think it was very short. Because I was down there for, maybe it's as short as a month or month and a half. My sister got married that summer and I had to leave to be a bridesmaid in her wedding. I went to Atlanta, where my family was living at the time. And I don't remember exactly why but I just didn't go back. It was a very short time.

[16:54] **Burroughs:** Well, it seems that you were there for a good part of it, though. Because I think the program only lasted two, maybe two and a half months during the summer.



[17:01] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Okay.

[17:02] **Joan Burroughs:** So that was a good part of it. And so, within the community that you lived in, do you remember what it looked like? Or what it felt like?

[17:11] **Elizabeth Phillips:** I do because, wow, it was so very different from what I had experienced in the past. I was well acquainted with unpaved roads but in that community, there were no paved roads – at least not in the part where I lived. I imagine some people had, I mean as far as I remember, there was running water. It seems that everybody had a nice house, I mean a neatly kept house, but it was very clear that people didn't really have a lot. But I did feel very safe there. And I think it was just because I was in a black community, you know what I mean. Also, I wasn't really going places, like to town, that would take me out of that community to where I might experience some fear. You know, I would say that people were nice and very respectable and just, I don't know, good people, but people without a lot of American style benefits.

[19:07] **Joan Burroughs:** And so, is there any one experience that you remember having? Any interaction or . . . ?

[19:19] **Elizabeth Phillips:** I remember one time wanting to take a bath. And I remember that I had to do that in a tub, like a tin kind of tub, you know. Hot water was boiled, and cold water was put in and that was my bath. That was a different - new and different. But you know it just felt very natural because whoever my hostess was, it was kind of like, she said oh, you need to take a bath - okay. And then she just set it up, you know, she had no excuses to make or anything, she was just very graceful as a human being. She brought the tub, she put the water there. And I thought to myself, I better do a lot of wash ups while I'm here because I don't want to put her through that kind of trouble. Preparing a bath seemed like a lot of trouble to me. But, you know, she didn't give it like that. She gave it as the most natural thing in the world.

[20:49] **Joan Burroughs:**

So, is this you took a bath in that way. Where was the? Was there no, inside, toiletry? Or toilets or any?

[20:59] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Was there an inside toilet? I'm trying to remember why only the bath stood out for me . I don't know if there was, you know. I knew you were going to be asking me these kinds of questions but, oh, Lord, you know, why am I not remembering this?

[21:21] **Joan Burroughs:** But that was important. So, because I remember. Well, I shouldn't—

[21:26] **Elizabeth Phillips:** No, go ahead.

[21:29] **Joan Burroughs:** I just remember when I was there that there were no indoor toilets, that everything was outside.



[21:37] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Okay, I'm trying to remember. See, I do not remember going outside to the toilet. But it could be that that wasn't a bad thing. I mean, that would have been very new but I can say this (and this is just about me and how I remember things) if that outdoor place had been unpleasant or I didn't want to go there and it was a big problem, I would remember it. But I don't remember anything unpleasant – just different.

[22:11] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. So.

[22:13] **Elizabeth Phillips:** For some reason I do not remember the toilet situation. But I do remember that tin tub.

[22:24] **Joan Burroughs:** Tin tub? Yes.

[22:26] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes.

[22:31] **Joan Burroughs:** Well now this is the last question on that part of the interview? Can you just summarize how the TICEP experience might have influenced you then? And possibly later in life? If it did, maybe it didn't, I don't know.

[22:54] **Elizabeth Phillips:** No, it did [laughter]. It did. You know, anytime you engage in something that is really, completely different from—is completely new for you, it does have an impact. And I would say that, being around people, I guess I was lucky in my life. I had always been around people who were well educated and, as far as I could see, had everything they not only needed, but a lot of what they wanted, you know? I needed to see. I needed to feel another aspect of our community. I mean, even though I grew up in Tuskegee, at least during the earliest part of my life—we moved to Atlanta when I was about ten - I didn't really know a lot about what was going on outside of Tuskegee Institute or in “the country”, because I wasn't old enough to go places where my parents didn't take me. So, I didn't really know too much about how people lived in other parts of Alabama I mean outside of Tuskegee.

So, for me to go to Hayneville and to meet some of the people there and to get the feeling of that kind of a black community, that was quite different from my own experience. It just was. It just opened my head, opened my mind. I studied sociology in college and grad school and that experience made me want a broader understanding of what our community is, was, and what kinds of things we need. And, you know, the fact of all of us working together to get what all of us need, you know what I mean, was important for me. It helped shaped a picture, an understanding, for me. And that's a picture that I carry today. I have, I've always held a view of the breadth of our community. What we need, and what I can do to help address those needs. Things are so different today. So, you know, I have to do a certain amount of struggle to understand the new versions of our needs. But, you know, I think that big picture is what working with TIAL and TICEP gave me. And that's really what I needed, what I wanted. And so it was great. It was. The whole civil rights movement was a great growing up experience for me.



[26:38] Joan Burroughs: So now, we're going to get into the civil rights portion questions. And I'm going to ask you some, well I know it, but so now for the future to know. Did you participate in any activities of the civil rights movement?

[26:53] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, so as a student at Tuskegee Institute, I was drawn to people who were working on civil rights issues. I started going to meetings that TIAL was holding.

[27:15] Joan Burroughs: What does TIAL mean?

[27:16] Elizabeth Phillips: Well, TIAL, Tuskegee Institute Advancement League.

[27:20] Joan Burroughs: Can you talk about that just minute? A little bit.

[27:23] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, so I'm not exactly sure how it got started, or anything like that. I know that it was there when I came to Tuskegee. And there was an issue for Tuskegee students who wanted to participate in the movement. We had ideas very akin to what SNCC was about. And there was an understanding that if we called ourselves SNCC, we could be, you know, put out of school. I remember some conversations about why we had to be named TIAL instead of a, you know, faction of SNCC on campus. So everybody on campus who was drawn personally to the movement, just participated in TIAL and I was one of those people. And, I don't know Joan, there's a thing about me that I always have to learn something. I had to learn a lot even to be in that organization, you know what I mean? And I learned whatever I had to learn and, for me, speaking of the movement in general, it's the best education I ever had. Whatever education I've had since then doesn't hold a candle to, personally, the growth and understanding that I needed and which I got from participating in the movement.

[29:27] Joan Burroughs: That was an excellent answer. Thank you.

[29:30] Elizabeth Phillips: Okay.

[29:34] Joan Burroughs: So, so touching, so real. What were the activities that you participated in with TIAL? What did you do? Yes.

[29:45] Elizabeth Phillips: So, I have to keep claiming my senior citizenship status by saying, you know, I hope I'm remembering correctly. But the big push that we were working on had to do with voter registration. We were driving out into rural parts of Macon County trying to encourage people to register to vote. I remember many times going to church meetings out there and going to individual houses. There, again, you know, people were living such different lives than what I had understood was out there. We were going into houses, talking to people, many of whom were basically tenant farmers, and trying to convince people about the importance of registering to vote. And in my whole life, I'll never forget the kinds of conversations that we had one on one with people. And the houses that we walked into. It seems to me that a lot of them were up on these cement blocks, you know, sort of raised up off the ground. And you go in there into this really orderly house with a picture of Martin Luther King on the wall, a picture of Jesus on the wall, and a picture of John Kennedy on a wall.



[31:59] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[32:00] Elizabeth Phillips: And then pictures of family and everything like that. And people showed that their feelings about what was happening were the same as ours. And some talked about why they couldn't, they wouldn't register. It had to do with keeping their livelihood. And those kinds of conversations had a major impact on me. Just learning and listening to people talking about how this thing called voting would fit into their lives or wouldn't fit because of practical things that have to do with economics, you know?

[32:53] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[32:54] Elizabeth Phillips: So, yes, I also remember riding in the car with some of my TIAL colleagues in the evening going to meetings. Or going to talk with hardworking people after their workday was over. And riding down dark roads where, you know, every once in a while, you see one of those pickup trucks that had those bumper stickers that said, "Martin Luther Koon," and you could see rifles in the rack on the back of their truck cab. So, you know, you have to be young to keep doing stuff like that.

[33:55] Joan Burroughs: Well, you certainly have to be motivated. And, as my, one of my friends used to say, you have to be bent, bound and determined.

[34:05] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, that's pretty much it. But I would say that in those times, I felt the most connected to my work than at any other time of my life. And, you know, I've had some pretty interesting work in my life, but the movement was the most satisfying, the most—giving me the most back. And I felt the most alive doing that than anything I've ever done, you know?

[34:48] Joan Burroughs: So, did you have many friends who were involved in the civil rights movement?

[34:52] Elizabeth Phillips: Well, I had friends who were at Tuskegee. But after I left Tuskegee, I was doing something completely different. And to be honest, I left Tuskegee because another person who had grown up in Tuskegee as I did, Sammy Young, was murdered. And I saw how little his murder meant in the South that we were living in at the time. And I saw his murderer acquitted. And I just couldn't deal with it anymore. I also had another friend—a SNCC friend—who was murdered. I just emotionally had to leave. So, I did. I did leave. But wow, what was the question? [Laughter]

[35:56] Joan Burroughs: So, a lot of your friends were then. I know that Sammy, was involved with voter registration. He visited counties.

[36:03] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes.

[36:04] Joan Burroughs: And so, did you ever help with the voter registration out there?



[36:08] Elizabeth Phillips: I'm just trying to think what I did beyond those very strongly impression-leaving instances of talking with people. So you mean did I take people down to actually register, right?

[36:37] Joan Burroughs: No, it also means, you know, some people needed to be kind of like coached on how to register. How to sign their name. Some people could not write

[36:47] Joan Burroughs: Or read.

[36:48] Elizabeth Phillips: Right. I understand. I don't think I did any of that. I think I did mostly meetings that would be held in local churches, and primarily those house-to-house meetings—you know, almost like canvassing. Just talking to people in their home. And then, you know, in those days, we were always demonstrating about something, you know. [Laughter] We were walking and talking and singing about whatever. So, it was also a lot of that. I don't think I ever took anybody down to register or coached anybody about how to do it.

[37:39] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I know, a lot of people. So, I'm just saying that because some of the people that I've talked to mentioned that some people could not read and write.

[37:47] Elizabeth Phillips: Oh, for sure.

[37:48] Joan Burroughs: That they actually learned to read so that they could register vote and that some of those people learned to read at TIS/CEP programs.

[37:56] Elizabeth Phillips: Exactly. Exactly. And I mean. I knew that a lot of the people I was talking to couldn't read and write. But in terms of human intelligence and being a graceful human being and all that kind of stuff, I—they had all of that. But the reading and writing, you know, I knew that that was not something that a lot of the people we talked to and met with could do. But there were other people who worked on that other end.

[38:37] Joan Burroughs: Yes. So, who were the civil rights activists that you remember who were on Tuskegee's campus? Some of those were students, but some of them were also from other organizations. Do you remember?

[38:51] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, yes. I know that there were people from other organizations who came through. Especially SNCC who came through. But I can't remember which people they were at the time, but there were some “famous” people we rubbed shoulders with. What I want to say—I was in a circle with, but I wasn't necessarily friends with them. So, yes, there was that one SNCC guy, I think he was from Philadelphia, New York somewhere. I had a lot of good conversations with him. But the people that I worked with were students.

[39:51] Joan Burroughs: Students at Tuskegee, right?

[39:54] Elizabeth Phillips: Yes. Mostly, mostly TIAL people.



[39:57] **Joan Burroughs:** TIAL people.

[40:01] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Mmm hmm.

[40:02] **Joan Burroughs:** So, you got that? Because some of those people have been, you know, still active?

[40:10] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes, I'm sure they are. I think I mentioned to you that, well, I know you are still active [laughter].

[40:19] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[40:21] **Elizabeth Phillips:** And I mean, the person that I learned the most from in that whole experience was Wendy Paris, and I know that he's still active. I'm looking forward to meeting with you guys again sometime soon. But I don't know if I can just name everybody. But everybody that I worked with, especially who was connected with TIAL, I have an extreme good feeling and memories about no matter how well I actually knew them. And I know you mentioned that there have been TIS/CEP meetings and get togethers. I just wish that there would be a TIAL one [laughter].

[41:17] **Joan Burroughs:** I think that there, on some level, that there might have been, but I think that they usually associate more as SNCC. Because many of them, many of the TIAL members, joined SNCC full out and—

[41:21] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Exactly.

[41:23] **Joan Burroughs:** —became part of the Black Power Movement.

[41:37] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes, yes.

[41:39] **Joan Burroughs:** I want to read something to you that was shared with me. There was a report, it's called the Southern Education Foundation report of the fall of 1965. And it referred to TIS/CEP in this way, it said Tuskegee: another kind of demonstration in the Black Belt, a new kind of civil rights demonstration. And that's how they refer to TIS/CEP.

[42:11] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Oh, okay.

[42:12] **Joan Burroughs:** And it was a part of that kind of—it demonstrated, I guess, educationally and community work. That was how it was defined. Had you ever seen a report like that?

[42:26] **Elizabeth Phillips:** No.

[42:27] **Joan Burroughs:** That referred to TIS/CEP in that way?



[42:29] **Elizabeth Phillips:** No, no, because I hadn't seen or heard anything about TIS/CEP until you got in touch with me. I was like, [laughter] TIS/CEP?

[42:37] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, that, this article—and if I, I think I have it, I'll send it to you at some point.

[42:44] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes, that would be great.

[42:45] **Joan Burroughs:** It referred to TIS/CEP as another kind of demonstration. Another kind of civil rights demonstration.

[42:49] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Yes.

[42:50] **Joan Burroughs:** It wasn't marching. But it was, you know, certainly educational and getting people—

[42:54] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Absolutely.

[42:55] **Joan Burroughs:**—giving people the ability to read and write and even to vote.

[43:00] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Exactly. Exactly. Yes. And, truth be told, there's a million types of demonstrations of what we were about, you can do what we were doing in many ways, you know?

[43:16] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, Betty, that's the last thing in the interview. And so now, I want to thank you for participating in this and as for your remarks have been very insightful, and in a way so different from some of the other interviews.

[43:36] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Okay.

[43:38] **Joan Burroughs:** I mean, it's certainly something that was needed and that's needed in this history, the things that you've said, Okay. Again, thank you. I'm going to end the recording.

[43:49] **Elizabeth Phillips:** Okay. Thank you.

[43:53] **Joan Burroughs:** Thank you.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Judith Phillips/Kingwood, TX

Interviewer: Guy Trammell/Tuskegee, AL

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Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Judith Phillips, an entrepreneur, a seeker of truth and beauty, a champion of family unity and a tireless advocate for peace and social justice, was an active participant in TISEP/TICEP from its inception through 1968. In addition to her work as a Tuskegee Hollis Burke Frissell librarian, she assisted with the TISEP/TICEP Distribution Center, the Mobile Library, and with the Community Resources Catalog. With her husband, Dr. P. B. Phillips, Judith established and operated an international consulting firm. Judith is the mother of three: Stirling, Dale, and Judy; grandmother to Dana, Niani, Nathan, Noelani and Maya. She loves humor, gardening, swimming, travelling, and experiencing diverse cultures.



Judith Victoria (Stirling) Phillips

[00.0:04] Guy Trammell: It is three o'clock pm on Saturday, April 29, 2023. I am Guy Trammell, at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. And I'm here to interview Judith Phillips, who is in Kingwood, Texas. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

[00.00:53] Judith Phillips: I am Judith Victoria Phillips. I'm at my home in Kingwood, Texas. I'm being interviewed by Mr. Guy Trammell, historian at Tuskegee, Alabama. It is Saturday, April 29, 2023.

[00.01:10] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now, listen Mrs. Phillips, if you could just share with us a little bit of your background, where you came from and where you grew up.

[00.01:23] Judith Phillips: Well, I was born in Devonshire Parish, Bermuda. I'm very nervous. I was born in Bermuda, a small island in the Atlantic Ocean. My parents were Lucille E. A. Stirling and Herbert G. A. Stirling. They came to visit us in Tuskegee. I'm the youngest of



eleven, I have five brothers and five sisters. I grew up in Bermuda. I came to the US to attend college. I met Bert during those times, and we married. that's how I came to be at Tuskegee Institute.

[00.02:14] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[00.02:15] **Judith Phillips:** That was my marriage [unclear]

[00.02:18] **Guy Trammell:** Where was the college? Where was it located?

[00.02:21] **Judith Phillips:** I went to college at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland.

[2:28] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, alright. And going to Maryland, was it the first time you came to the mainland?

[2:36] **Judith Phillips:** Well, I had traveled before, that wasn't my first time out of the island, but it was my first time to the US, yes. I came via New York. Bert and I met again in New York. I had another friend from Bermuda, one of my classmates, we attended college together. So, we came up on the, I remember, it was the Eastern Airlines inaugural jet flight from Bermuda to New York. It was an exciting time. You know, in those days, we would wear gloves and hats and what have you. So, it was just an exciting time. Bert met us at the airport—along with a friend of his. And then sometime later we left and went on to Takoma Park, Maryland.

[3:35] **Guy Trammell:** Now, okay, we're talking about the East coast. Was that—did you spend—you spent a lot of time there? In other words, you were living there. That was, how can I say, your, the culture, the introduction you had to the [crosstalk]—yes, to living on the mainland.

[4:01] **Judith Phillips:** Yes, that was my introduction. Yes.

[4:06] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[4:08] **Judith Phillips:** I have a sister Thelma McMillan, who was married, and she and her husband, Curtis McMillan, were students at Howard University. We all rented a townhouse together which was located near the college, it was in Northeast Washington, DC, Oglethorpe Street. We lived together, my schoolmate from Bermuda, Ruby Minors, and my sister Marie—we called her Pet, who was studying Cosmetology in Washington, DC, and Thelma and Curtis.

We rented this townhouse on Oglethorpe Street, Northeast, 9223. I'll never forget it. It was just at the border of Washington and Maryland, on the Northeast side. Columbia Union College wasn't that far away, but we still, you know, we had to either take a bus—two buses just to get a couple miles or take a taxi. So, that's another story [laughter].

[5:21] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Yes, so you—okay, so you literally came, I'm trying to think of—that will be a little, almost at the Mason Dixon line.



[5:33] Judith Phillips: Oh yes. And at that time, you know, you couldn't really shop at the big stores. And well, This is not a memoir, so I don't want to get into a lot of those experiences. But I certainly was there in 1960, before things really opened. And so, I remember going into the—— oh what's the store? Garfinkel's Department Store to test it., I'm so nervous [laughter].

[6:15] Guy Trammell: Yes.

[6:15] Judith Phillips: I'll tell you one experience I had while I was at college. I wanted to get a job and I remember it was Vernon Jordan, a lawyer and later the Executive Director of the National Urban League, who interviewed my friend and me. He called Ruby and me a few days later and referred us to Morton's Department Store. We interviewed and we got jobs at Morton's downtown DC. flagship store.

[6:39] Guy Trammell: Oh, wow.

[6:39] Judith Phillips: Yes. Ruby got a job down on the floor selling. And this was just at the opening, you know, the opening of the stores so that we could get jobs. I worked upstairs in the accounting department putting sales slips in numerical order. I remember that.

[7:09] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[7:11] Judith Phillips: We couldn't even go into the Marriott Hot Shops, we had to eat outside. That's all before the real integration. Yes. I can remember some things about DC before desegregation.

[7:35] Guy Trammell: Did you go to Virginia by any chance too? Because I know it's right there together almost.

[7:43] Judith Phillips: Right. We were married in DC. And but we lived, like I said, just at the border. The college was in Takoma Park, Maryland. Virginia? I don't recall going to Virginia that often to tell you the truth, not at that time.

[8:12] Guy Trammell: Okay. Do you remember at the point where it came up about going to Tuskegee? Remember where you were?

[8:22] Judith Phillips: We were married and were living in New York. We married in 1961. When Dr. Foster invited us to come to Tuskegee Institute we were living in New York. It would have been early 1963. [laughter]. Oh, boy.

[8:46] Guy Trammell: That's okay.

[8:47] Judith Phillips: Bert was working at the Urban League of Greater New York at that time; it was his first full time job. He told me about his experiences on the subway, talking with Dr. Kenneth Clark on their visits to meetings related to his work...Bert was Director of



Educational Research. And, you know, I was excited about him finally having a full-time job because he had so many part-time jobs. But that's all part of our young married life as students. He was a grad student, and I was an undergraduate student.

[9:46] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now, did—how—what was your first thoughts or reaction or feelings about that offer to come to Tuskegee?

[9:58] Judith Phillips: Well, like I said, it was his first full time job that he had with the Urban League of Greater New York, and he was enjoying it. And you can imagine being a young wife with a young son, that I didn't want to go back to all those part-time jobs, because they kept him up very late at night. He can tell you about that. But I was, I was open. I was a young wife, and I was open, so we considered it. Coming from a large family—both of us from large families—working, knowing how to work and make do, and to make the best of things.

[10:59] Judith Phillips: We talked about everything. He would always share with me. And, you know, we've been together 63 years now. And then we've always shared so when he told me about Dr. Clark's talk with him, I can remember I said, “Well, you know, let's see what it's all about.” They wanted to meet with us. I remember suggesting that we have it at our student apartment. Because at that time, I knew we didn't have money to, you know, lots of money to go into any of the big restaurants and what have you. We had the dinner at our little apartment... it worked out very nicely. Yes. And Dr. Foster and Dr. Clark came, we prepared, Bert went out and got the pies and the ice cream, and I prepared a nice dinner that day. I think it was a leg of lamb and—because that's what we would have for special occasions at home—and baked potatoes, and string beans, and carrots, you know, it was a good meal [laughter].

[12:29] Judith Phillips: They enjoyed it. We had a good discussion. And, you know, I was very nervous, of course, but after it was over, I was very happy with it and the rest is history. It was not an easy decision because just at that time, we were beginning to get settled and enjoying New York and getting a hold of it. You see Bert had been there before, but it was all new to me. Living in an apartment building for the first time in my life, and there were just a lot of new things to learn.

[13:30] Guy Trammell: Okay, well, now, okay. You made a decision, you actually are heading south, you're heading into—

[13:40] Judith Phillips: The deep south.

[13:41] Guy Trammell: Yes, so tell me, do anything kind of struck you as the trip coming down? Or is?

[13:50] Judith Phillips: Well, the biggest thing on my mind was the Emmett Till case. It still always pops up, you know, it was after that. And so, that was on my mind as we drove down. But once we made up our mind to come, we drove down. We had to go to Upstate New York, to Western New York to take care of some details. We came down through a different route than we ordinarily would have come. It was just a matter of the two of us supporting each other, taking



care of Stirling, our little baby, and just being safe. We talked about the different things that might occur, and you had to be very careful, but we did it. Yep.

[14:46] Guy Trammell: Wow. Okay, now, so when you're first—in other words, the first few days or whatever being in Tuskegee Institute, what were some of the impressions that you get, as you were kind of settling in and—

[15:07] Judith Phillips: Oh, I was really taken with the campus, the beautiful campus. And the students were very friendly and helpful. Some of them, I'll mention their names later, perhaps. But the students were very helpful to me. Then I started meeting some of the staff, the faculty, and you know, then I needed some help, and Mrs. Hattie Campbell was referred to us and recommended, and she came to help me out. So, I did have some help. Which made it a little easier for me to take part in some of the other activities that were going on...and just to feel a little more at home. I was open to learning, Bert, and I, we shared. I felt confident with him. And we both shared our ideas on different things. So, when he would tell me on the phone about his experiences, and then come home at night, and share them with me. We would talk them through and so I was learning, and he was learning. We were both learning.

[17:02] Guy Trammell: Yes, you remember the shops, or the places right there around campus?

[17:08] Judith Phillips: Oh, yes, I remember. Carter's grocery store...that was so important to me. And the—oh my God, I know all the stores. There was the tailor's shop. What was it called?

[17:30] Guy Trammell: Are you talking—

[17:32] Judith Phillips: The haberdashery. Remember that?

[17:35] Guy Trammell: Reid's Haberdashery.

[17:36] Judith Phillips: Reid's Haberdashery. I remember that so well, it was a nice place. And Carter's and then Mr. Sprague's house on the corner. And some of the other professors and administrators lived on that street. It was quite exciting to know, and I was a little anxious about it, but I didn't realize that we would be living next to the president. I hadn't expected that. Two hundred Franklin Road. It was a nice house. And on seeing it, we were both quite pleased with it. And yes, there was Carter's grocery, and I remember there was a young lady who was related to, at least she said she was, Edith Shehee. Do you remember that name? She said she was related to Booker T. Washington in some way.

[18:33] Guy Trammell: Yes. Shehee, okay. Yes. right [crosstalk], the Washington Candy Company. Yes.

18:42 Judith Phillips: They lived next door to the Carter's store or a couple of houses up. Yes, I remember her.



[18:56] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, that's a direct, direct relationship to Booker T. Washington. Yes, then did you—did you all get a chance—you ate in the Wiley's eat shop? The restaurant next to Carter's?

[19:13] **Judith Phillips:** Yes, yes. But I remember the chicken place too when it opened. There was a chicken place down below Franklin Road.

[19:23] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, Chicken Coop. Okay.

[19:25] **Judith Phillips:** Chicken Coop.

[19:30] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[19:30] **Judith Phillips:** I remember a lot of things... it's just that this interview I'm just not good at it.

[19:36] **Guy Trammell:** That's alright.

[19:37] **Judith Phillips:** I am working with Bert on his book. And I enjoy that.

[19:44] **Guy Trammell:** Any remembrances of eating in Dorothy Hall?

[19:49] **Judith Phillips:** Dorothy Hall—

[19:51] **Guy Trammell:** On campus, right on campus.

[19:54] **Judith Phillips:** Yes.

[19:56] **Guy Trammell:** The guest house.

[19:58] **Judith Phillips:** Yes, I remember. I do remember going back there in 2012 and staying at the Kellogg Center -- Dorothy Hall. That was on our trip to restart our writing of the book, and we wanted to go back and review and revisit some of the places that TISEP and TICEP had operated in and to also look for some of the official records of the 3Ts Movement. That was in 2012. Yes.

[20:22] **Guy Trammell:** I'm just curious, by any chance, did you ever go to the movies at Logan Hall?

[20:27] **Judith Phillips:** Oh, yes. And the dances. I remember one dance so well, because Chester Higgins I'll never forget it. He thought I was a student. and he asked me to dance [laughter]. but I didn't. I forgot what I said. That was funny.

[20:55] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. They had it all decorated, I'm sure.



[20:59] **Judith Phillips:** Oh, yes, I remember this student gala —Bert wanted me to go and be there and support him in it. And I went and, so I enjoyed participating in and observing and learning and growing. Really, it was a learning experience for me.

[21:21] **Guy Trammell:** And I have to ask, What about Homecoming? When they had the—

[21:26] **Judith Phillips:** I remember when Bert was teaching them how to put together these special cheering signs. And I think there's a picture of it in my files of one of the homecoming events. I did go to the homecomings, yes. I did. It was exciting. I enjoyed my five years in Tuskegee. I really did.

[21:55] **Guy Trammell:** Beautiful. Did the parade come by your house at the time, or did you have to go back on campus?

[22:02] **Judith Phillips:** Some of that detail, Guy, you'll have to forgive me. —I think I remember one parade, but I don't remember like every year.

[22:17] **Guy Trammell:** Right.

[22:19] **Judith Phillips:** I'm sorry.

[22:21] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, no problem. That's no problem. And I definitely want to ask, I know we talked a little bit before the interview, what do you remember of John A. Andrew hospital?

[22:32] **Judith Phillips:** Oh, my gosh.

[22:33] **Guy Trammell:** It was on campus.

[22:35] **Judith Phillips:** Yes. I used to go to Dr. Campbell. He was my pediatrician and, or obstetrician. And it was, let's see. Yes, he was the obstetrician and my pediatrician, I think, is that how it went.

[22:58] **Guy Trammell:** Sounds right.

[22:58] **Judith Phillips:** I enjoyed my experiences there. I trusted them. I followed their direction, had no problem with that. I remember, Stirling had asthma. And I remember Dr. Campbell recommending that I go to a doctor in... I think it was Union Springs because he was a Pulmonologist. I was familiar with segregation. Because, you know, I grew up on the island. So, I knew what segregation was about. I wasn't totally new to it. But when he told us we had to go to Union Springs, we talked about what we might expect. We went to Union Springs to this doctor, who was a white doctor, and we had to use the back entrance. So, I do remember how I felt then, but we had to do it, because Dr. Campbell recommended it.



[24:09] **Guy Trammell:** Do you remember any of the nurses or doctors, the names or anyone stood out to you?

[24:16] **Judith Phillips:** Dr. Kenney, Dr. Campbell, Dr. Dibble, I can see him now. An older gentleman, sort of heavysset at that point, and Dr. Kenney, and Dr. Campbell. And there was a young medical doctor that came in to, I think, help Dr. Campbell. I just can't remember his name... Yes, it was Dr. Foster. They were very good. I had a lot of faith in them and had no problems at all.

[25:05] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent.

[25:07] **Judith Phillips:** I remember our second son, Dale, was born in February 1965 at John Andrew Hospital. This was a long, long, very difficult delivery.

[25:35] **Guy Trammell:** Labor.

[25:38] **Judith Phillips:** Yes, a long labor. Thank you. And Dr. Campbell wasn't there at first. But they kept telling me, "He'll be here soon I went in about five o'clock in the afternoon and then, Dean Bowles and Susie Herring, were with me. Bert's mother had passed, and he'd gone to California. When my water broke, I called a student who baby sat for us, Susie Herring, and Dorcas Bowles, Dean of Women, and a personal friend, I don't know if you remember her, they came, and they took me to the hospital. And it was a long, long—and painful night as Dale was born the next morning. But I remember them telling me that Dr. Campbell was coming all night long. Because I kept asking for Dr. Campbell. And they said he's coming, he's coming. And then he came in the morning early. I remember it and then I had my delivery.

[26:47] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, yes.

[26:48] **Judith Phillips:** But everyone was very caring and supportive, — I trusted them, and they took care of us. Our daughter, Judy, was also born at John Andrew Hospital in March 1967.

Guy Trammell: [26:57] Yes, yes. That was like it was the first full-service hospital for African Americans in the whole country, so.

[27:04] **Judith Phillips:** Really? You're kidding.

[27:06] **Guy Trammell:** No that. Yes, yes.

[27:08] **Judith Phillips:** No, I didn't realize it at that time, really didn't. But I was quite pleased. And like I said, I didn't have any problems. I also had gall bladder surgery at John Andrews Hospital.

[27:20] **Guy Trammell:** Well, you go, yes. And to have it right there. Right there on campus, you know. And not having to go out, you know.



[27:28] **Judith Phillips:** Right.

[27:29] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. And—

[27:30] **Judith Phillips:** Yes, because so often, we had to go to Montgomery, or to Atlanta to get certain things. But to know that the hospital was right there. Yes. That was very, very good for us.

[27:42] **Guy Trammell:** Absolutely. Do you? Did you ever have a—did the family have to go to, I don't know, maybe even driving to the Veterans Hospital?

[27:51] **Judith Phillips:** No, I didn't. get to the Veterans Hospital. I heard about it. I heard all these different stories, you know, but I really didn't get to visit it. I was telling Bert the other day; I just really didn't get to the Veterans Hospital to be able to talk about it. All I know was there, and something happened, and you know, all the different stories.

[28:19] **Guy Trammell:** Just right there. Now I have to ask the others not to with the food. Did you all get certain things from the farm there on campus? I'm thinking about the turkeys that they had for Thanksgiving that you can get.

[28:35] **Judith Phillips:** I don't recall that.

[28:38] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay, yes.

[28:40] **Judith Phillips:** I know. Mrs. Carter's store played a big part in our five years. I remember one of her sons worked there; he ended up working for TIS/CEP. I remember going over to the shop at times and we would chat and talk about TIS/CEP programs. Then I think he worked for TICEP. T-I-C-E-P.

[29:11] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. Okay.

[29:13] **Judith Phillips:** I forget his name, but he was very nice.

[29:16] **Guy Trammell:** Well, let me yes, let's talk about that. What are the earlier parts you remember at the beginning of TIS/CEP? Do you remember when it was starting to—when the idea was coming about and coming in the fore?

[29:33] **Judith Phillips:** Yes, Bert and I used to go and drive out into the country to get to know Macon County. And we still do that kind of thing, drive out and explore. And we noticed the broken-down homes and so forth and shacks and what have you. We talked about it. I knew some of the history of Dr. Carver and Dr. Washington. So, like I said, I grew up on a very small island, but I knew that not everybody was rich. I knew that you had poor people. And then we would just talk about Dr. Carver and Dr. Washington, and what they did. One day Bert said to me that he was thinking about this idea of having the students involved. And I thought it was a good idea. We talked about it, shared back and forth. And then I remember he told me he was going to



have this meeting on the campus. I didn't go. But he went. And I remember he was a little nervous about it, anxious, because he wasn't sure people would come. But they came.

It used to bother me that his Sundays were always taken up, you know, Bert was always doing something. He really was very interested in doing a good job on the campus and getting to know the students. So, I tried to support him as much as I could. And when he came back from the meeting that night, I remember, he said that he had to get up early the next morning, because he had asked them to come back at 5:00 am in the morning. So, I remember him getting up at 4:30 am to get ready to go to this meeting. And then I remember him coming back and telling me how many people showed up. It was 150 students. Yes, so I was involved from the very beginning in terms of him getting the idea, and then us talking about it. And, you know, like I said, always trying to learn and grow.

I was also getting to know different people. Dr. Henry Collins and Mrs. Adeline Collins were in our age group, —Addie, we called her. She was very outgoing. And I'm a pretty shy person. So, I was attracted to her, and we hit it off. She and I were, I guess, two of the early volunteers, non-students of the TIS/CEP program. And eventually we did things involving collecting clothes for the distribution center and books for the mobile library. I have to say that other people were interested in getting involved.

[33:36] Guy Trammell: Okay, well you mentioned, okay, the distribution center. Could you kind of tell what that was? And do you remember where it was? Was it in one place or several places?

[33:47] Judith Phillips: I remember it was in one of those buildings. Was it Thrasher Hall?

[33:55] Guy Trammell: Oh, okay. On Campus Avenue. It was on Campus Avenue?

[34:00] Judith Phillips: Yes. the Distribution Center office was in Thrasher Hall on the campus.

[34:07] Guy Trammell: Yes.

[34:08] Judith Phillips: Yes. But Mrs. Collins. This is before the TISEP. T-I-S-E-P. Before the summer program, I can remember us, Addie, and I, running off those copies of—

[34:30] Guy Trammell: Mimeograph machines?

[34:31] Judith Phillips: The mimeograph. The purple thing, yes, the mimeograph, ditto sheets.

[34:37] Guy Trammell: Smelled so good.

[34:38] Judith Phillips: We started asking people to contribute clothing and used appliances. And then we had—we thought we'd rather than—rather than just give them away, we thought we would put just a very small price tag on them so people would feel they were buying something



and not being handed something. And that really took off. People really liked that they could get something for five cents and ten cents, you know. I do remember that, very definitely. Being a part of it was exciting and rewarding.

[35:23] Guy Trammell: And was it, was it open every day like weekdays or certain days out the week, or how? You remember?

[35:31] Judith Phillips: I can't remember that detail. I really can't.

[35:37] Guy Trammell: But they would come.

[35:39] Judith Phillips: We would have—I know we would have distribution center activities on weekends. we choose a place to take everything and then invite people to come to it. I remember that. But that was—

[35:59] Guy Trammell: Yes, were those mainly like in churches or what different type buildings?

[36:04] Judith Phillips: One of them was in an open area. —and there are some pictures that I have that show the distribution of the clothing and the outdoor activity where people came to attend it. —I have a picture of Mrs. Collins at the Distribution outdoor sale.

[36:28] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[36:30] Judith Phillips: Some of these things we're writing more details about in the book. Addie Collins was extremely helpful to me emotionally and in a supportive way. She had been there on the campus before us. I can remember her sharing with me about the Carver Research Center because her husband was an Agronomist. She would share a little about his work. I was learning firsthand about what was going on in the Carver Research Center. It was just a wonderful experience.

[37:20] Guy Trammell: Now you're talking about the George Washington Carver Foundation, right?

Judith Phillips: The center there right on the campus.

[37:28] Guy Trammell: Right. Yes, here, the one that he started.

[37:30] Judith Phillips: Right, yes.

[37:33] Guy Trammell: Do you have any memories of some of the ones that came to the distribution center, in particular, that seemed like it really helped them or maybe any . . . ?

[37:48] Judith Phillips: I have some notes here that I found in some of my papers. Mrs. Mary Davis was one of the volunteer staff members. There were other things that I was doing. I



worked in the library with Dr. Sprague, and I worked with Danny Williams and some of the other good people in the library. That was a wonderful experience. And then I worked with one of the VISTA programs. So, but anyway, back to your question about helping people with the distribution center. In one instance, the distribution center aided an expecting mother whose furniture was taken away, electricity was cut off, and was threatened with eviction. And the distribution center paid the family's rent and gave her furniture and clothing. And Mrs. Mary Davis did such a good job. When Addie and I were doing it, it was just something that we enjoyed, and we were working with the students. You know, it wasn't just us, the students were involved and that's what it was all about. Then there was another case involving a person who had been an invalid for 15 years, and she had several grandchildren living with her, and her water had been cut off. And with the help of the distribution center problem was taken care of in a short time. They were given \$10 worth of food and their case was referred to the professional social worker because T-I-C-E-P had social workers. Yes.

[40:13] Guy Trammell: That is great.

[40:14] Judith Phillips: There are some more things that I could talk about. It was an exciting time, a time where people really wanted to help and do worthwhile things to help people.

[40:34] Guy Trammell: Absolutely. You mentioned the library. By any chance. Did you come across a Ms. Trammell there by any chance? I don't know if she was there.

[40:42] Judith Phillips: I don't remember Ms. Trammell. I recall some of the other names. Danny Williams, he was so good to me. I remember him so well. Mr. Sprague would talk to me about Mr. Ralph Ellison. He was such a good man, Mr. Sprague. I felt very honored and privileged to work with him. It was a great experience. Some of the other ladies, I have their names right on my mind, but I can't think of them right now. They were all very good people, very inviting, and warm, and helpful.

[41:26] Guy Trammell: And by the way, they do—we do have a street by the library named after Mr. Sprague now too, so.

[41:32] Judith Phillips: Wonderful, that is wonderful.

[41:36] Guy Trammell: Yes, tell me about the library program. How did that work with TIS/CEP? What. . .How did it function?

[41:43] Judith Phillips: I can't give you all those details. But I know we used to write letters to people and—to different places and books started coming in. I just don't have all the details. I do have some personal pictures of the mobile TIS/CEP library with Susie Herring, who was one of the students that worked with the library program. And we would write to places in the north and all over the country to get books, and then the students would organize and catalog them. That was a program where people liked what they were doing. They enjoyed what they were doing, it was a pleasure to work with the TIS/CEP library.



[42:49] **Guy Trammell:** So it—did it travel to the different sites, or did people get—

[42:55] **Judith Phillips:** Yes, it traveled to all the counties, though I did not travel with them. I mostly helped them right there on the campus to unload the boxes and organize. But the students were doing most of the hard work. It was good.

43:19 Guy Trammell: So, it—so that, yes. So that was amazing, because you're talking about what—going to places that didn't have libraries or they might have had a school without even having a library there.

[43:30] **Judith Phillips:** Right. I remember two women who came from Fergus Falls, Minnesota. I remember they either wrote Bert or called and asked if they could come. They were librarians in Fergus Falls, Minnesota and I have their names written down. Jean Dahling and Carol Leafblad, I remember they came and got really involved in the program. I think they went on to start a library at one of the centers in Lowndes County. Bert could give you more details on that.

[44:09] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. So that's a lot of—there was a lot of moving parts with that then.

[44:15] **Judith Phillips:** There was a lot going on and I'm not doing justice to it. I'm just letting you know these things happened. And like I said, I'm working on the book, it's easier for me to work with Bert and both of us recall together some of the details. But I'll try and answer whatever else you want to know.

[44:52] **Guy Trammell:** Those are major, yes. Though that's a major thing that, like I said, the distribution center and the library that . . . and I'm sure that was an unusual fore—can I say a forerunner into a lot of other outreach activities at that time too.

[45:09] **Judith Phillips:** It was. I didn't work for TIS/CEP too long because I was raising three children during the time, I was at Tuskegee Institute. I remember Mrs. Foster heading the social work group. I remember there was an evaluation. And oh, the Resource Center. I remember we decided to create a resource center because there was so much interest in contributing to the distribution center and the library, and we felt there was this interest in people wanting to contribute their talents. And we came up with the idea of a resource center. —I was working with a group of people and their names were somewhere in my files. We created this Resource Catalog. We developed this survey and sent it to people, and they responded. And I was looking at some of the responses and I said I really want to share this information and it resulted in a community resource catalog. We did it for all the counties. We were asking people about their hobbies, their talents, and whatever it is they wanted to share. And we wanted to do this catalog so that people could use it and call on people when they needed a particular type of resource.

[46:55] **Judith Phillips:** Some of the things were your occupation, your special interest, your language, any illustrative material, your times available and any remarks. And more than one person said, "I'm willing to do anything that I can do to help my people, I like to work with the



young and the old.” And then That was an exciting project. I wasn't there to see the end of it. But it did go on. I want to read one or two more of the comments, because I was looking through this and I was really taken with it. This person said, "I can help teachers in interpreting children's literature to them." Another person said they had a special interest in library work, and they could speak French and German and Latin. So, you see, there were all kinds of people who were responding to this, this resource catalogue request. Another person was in banking and insurance, and there was another who was a veterinarian, whose special interest was soccer. And someone wrote, this was a hospital chaplain. I don't know if you know this person, Chaplain Pogue. He was at the VA hospital. And he said, "I think that this is a most worthwhile and timely program."

So, people were really interested in sharing their talents, their skills, and their hobbies, anything to help our people.” That's what was so good about looking back on this project and I felt very proud to be a part of it even though I wasn't involved through the end of it.

[49:13] Guy Trammell: Yes. Say it again. You said the Resource Center, that was the name?

[49:18] Judith Phillips: It was the Community Resource Catalog, a Directory of Citizen Specialists.

[49:21] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[49:22] Judith Phillips: We did one for Macon County first and then we did it for the other counties.

[49:28] Guy Trammell: Wow, that's amazing. And this before computers.

[49:33] Judith Phillips: Oh yes, everything was typed.

[49:38] Guy Trammell: That is excellent. That is excellent. And that—boy, oh, boy. And that, so that, and that was available for use by the ones in the program.

[49:49] Judith Phillips: Absolutely. If the tutors felt they needed some skill or talent or information, they could go in the Resource Catalog and identify one of the persons who responded and say, 'Okay, this is the time they need you to come up to the center to do this, that or the other.' I enjoyed working with that group.

[50:20] Guy Trammell: Excellent. Now, you referred earlier, so now I want to ask, you know. Within these different programs, some of the other ones that people that stood out, either the students, or the ones in the community, or the ones on campus that helped out with, you know, some of the different ones.

[50:38] Judith Phillips: There was a young lady named Mildred Knott I remember. I don't know why I always remembered her name. She led a group of students who created TIS/CEP's Homemaker's Handbook. Mildred was a student in the School of Home Economics. She was



assisted by Pauline Powell, Phillipia Wilson, Celia Rankins and Sylvia Franklin. I have a copy of the little booklet that they put together.

[51:17] Guy Trammell: That's any of the others. A student?

[51:22] Judith Phillips: The Resource Catalog. The Cookbook.

[51:32] Guy Trammell: In other words, from the library, or the distribution center that stood out.

[51:42] Judith Phillips: I think people really wanted to work in the mobile library program. The young people, students, were very proud of what they were doing. I just didn't hear any complaints. I can remember there were some problems with the transportation department because it was such a big project. I don't know if Bert got to mention it, but getting the food and materials as well as students and visitors out to the communities was quite a task. In those days it was difficult to rent from the rental agencies in Montgomery, so we had to go to Atlanta. There was a lot involved in the 3T's program...the 3T's Movement.

[53:04] Guy Trammell: Yes. Yes, that—the logistics had to be like you're saying—

[53:09] Judith Phillips: It was tremendous.

[53:11] Guy Trammell: Yes. I was thinking about Frazier being down the street from me, but then I don't think they ever did any rental, so.

[53:20] Judith Phillips: Yes, I remember that name. But to tell you the truth, I couldn't speak to it.

[53:25] Guy Trammell: Yes, yes. Yes. The Frazier Chevrolet.

[53:29] Judith Phillips: Yes, Frazier Chevrolet.

[53:15] Guy Trammell: Yes, but I don't think they ever did. I don't think they ever did any rental though. All they did was sales and service.

[53:40] Judith Phillips: I remember, Bert coming home and saying we had a particular problem. There were several different obstacles, Guy, but with each one, we had to deal with it, though I wasn't involved in every detail. But I was involved through being Bert's wife, and he'd come home and share things with me. I worked on each of the programs for a short while.

[54:14] Guy Trammell: That was great. To have that to work as a team like that. Because this, like I said, with him, I saw that as when they did Freedom Summer in Mississippi. This is like three freedom summers in a row, you know, reaching out to that. That was just amazing. Did you visit any of the actual sites at any time?



[54:39] **Judith Phillips:** I did, but not often.

[54:45] **Guy Trammell:** And that's, I guess—

[54:48] **Judith Phillips:** As often as I could, I would.

[54:50] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. Just thinking along that line, because when you think about the books, and a lot of the times when I got the books to even the schools, they had been used in so many other schools and they were just falling apart by the time they got to the black schools in the south, so yes.

[55:13] **Judith Phillips:** We were very, very encouraged by the response that we got when we wrote to different places, schools, wherever and asked for books. People were ready to contribute.

[55:30] **Guy Trammell:** That is excellent.

[55:31] **Judith Phillips:** The Distribution Center with its shoes and clothing and small appliances and the Mobile library with its books. And people were just very happy and proud to be a part of it.

[55:48] **Guy Trammell:** You can imagine the changes. Now, on the other side, now have you since that time, met, been able to speak with anyone who had been in the program who got—

[56:00] **Judith Phillips:** Oh, my gosh, over the years, Guy, you know, when we left Tuskegee in 1968, we started our own business in Washington, DC. And over the years John Brown — I don't know if Bert talked about John Brown and Wiley Yelverton, and how they and Bert's former students would call from time to time. So, even though we were not there in Tuskegee, there was always some kind of contact. And then Patti. Patti Jones. Patti was from Tuskegee and was one of the first black students to integrate the public schools in Macon County, she came and worked with us. You know, when Patti Jones Grace left Tuskegee, she worked with us in our business in Washington, DC at Curber Associates, Inc. That's before she went into the federal government and became an Associate Administrator of the FAA and the first Director of the Office of Commercial Space Transportation. And Patti was just a pleasure to know, almost like a daughter. So, we went to her wedding when she remarried... she married Clay Smith. Even though we weren't in and out of each other's homes all the time, there was always that connection with Patti.

[57:16] **Judith Phillips:** So, in 2012, Patti invited us to her home for dinner and invited — Dan Smith and his wife, Loretta Neumann, Julius Chapman, Roscoe Moore, and a couple other people to discuss TICAC, TIS/CEP and Bert finishing his book. She always felt that it was important to put these programs out there as a part of history. I remember Dorcas Bowles, Dean Bowles also felt that the TICAC and TIS/CEP story was important. She had written a letter to Ebony Magazine about the TIS/CEP program and about what was going on in Tuskegee, and recommended to them that they do a story on it, but they didn't follow up. So, Patti's husband



Clay Smith also felt that it would be important for this story to be told and encouraged Bert and me through sharing his approach to writing some of his well-known books. Clay was the Dean at the law school, Howard University Law School. They lived in Washington, we lived in Maryland by this time, but we also worked in Washington. So, we—they always felt the story needed to be told. And so, in 2012—well, it started before that—but in 2012, we really started buckling down again and we said we're going to take it upon ourselves to go to Tuskegee and try to revisit some of the centers to just get a feel for it.

Patti was planning to come with us, but her husband, Clay, was ill, and she couldn't go. But we went ahead, I remember, we stayed at her brother Doug Jones, and his wife, Antoinette's home in Montgomery. And then we took our trips up to Lowndes County trying to, you know, to see if we could find people and locate some of the centers that we worked at. And then we spent time in Tuskegee as well and met up with the Superintendent of the Tuskegee Institute National Historic site, Sandy Taylor.

[59:04] Judith Phillips: We had a professional relationship with the National Park Service and knew Sandy from earlier years. Sandy's office was in President and Mrs. Foster's former home. All these things were happening. Then, again, one of the young ladies who was working at the National Park Center, turned out to be a tutee. And I think Joan, I know Joan has interviewed her. But that was 2012. That was quite an exciting experience for us to go back and try to reconnect with some of the centers and the people.

[1:00:24] Guy Trammell: That's amazing. Yes.

[1:00:26] Judith Phillips: And I remember going back to the campus. We were trying to find John Andrew Hospital, and then to realize it was no longer there. I mean well [laughter], but that's where the archives were. And so, we were able to meet with the archivist, Dana Chandler and talk with him. However, except for the TISEP Reporter, the 3Ts records have not yet been found. And so, it's now 2023. And we're still working on this book, but it's a pleasure. It's a work of love really.

[1:00:59] Guy Trammell: A story that has to be told.

[1:01:01] Judith Phillips: It must be told. I really believe that.

[1:01:04] Guy Trammell: It's such a major part of that, and I don't know, do you remember, like, a lot of the civil rights, you know, foot soldiers, different ones coming to Tuskegee at that time?

[1:01:18] Judith Phillips: Oh, I remember Stokely Carmichael so well. He was so handsome [laughter]. And he was dynamic. Then Malcolm X came, you know. And then some of the entertainers, Joyce Bryant came and did Porgy and Bess on the campus. I remember that because she also sang at our wedding. Bert knew her in California. So, it's a small world, you know, and she just happened to be in Washington, DC at the time, and was able to sing at our wedding. So that was a more personal detail. But you know, I'm who I am. I remember that.



[1:02:07] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, and I'm sure you probably remember, Polk?

[1:02:10] **Judith Phillips:** Oh yes, Mr. Polk's Studio. We have a family picture that he took. Yes, I still have that.

[1:02:19] **Guy Trammell:** And did you take the children to the Carver Museum on campus?

[1:02:24] **Judith Phillips:** Well, we now had three children, you know? —The students would take them and help me out, you know, Susie and Melodeen and some of the other students would come to see me and they were very helpful. I remember Floyd Griffin very much because he used to drive Bert, you know, to the airport and to some of the centers. And he was just so involved and intent on getting Bert there safely.

[1:03:09] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, Chief Anderson.

[1:03:11] **Judith Phillips:** Chief Anderson, I remember him so well because he was very helpful in getting Bert to where he needed to be. There was another guy. One of the students who worked with Chief Anderson. I forget his name, right now.

[1:03:27] **Guy Trammell:** Roosevelt. Is that Roosevelt Lewis?

[1:03:29] **Judith Phillips:** Yes, I remember Roosevelt but no, he wasn't the one, he was from New Orleans. What was his name?

[1:03:38] **Guy Trammell:** It wasn't Palmer?

1:03:41 **Judith Phillips:** Huh?

[1:03:43] **Guy Trammell:** Palmer Sullins?

[1:03:44] **Judith Phillips:** Yes. Palmer Sullins. He would fly with Bert. Bert can give you more details about it. He would take Bert to some of the centers. I remember going with Chief Anderson and Bert to Jekyll Island. He had to speak there. I remember one time we had to land on this field and there was a snake. There was always something going on and Bert was involved in it. And I, you know, because I was his wife and I wanted to help in any way I could. I got lots of stress from it, but pleasure from it as well. Because it wasn't easy, there was opposition, to the way things were approached and so forth, but thank God we're still here.

[1:05:10] **Guy Trammell:** Do you remember? Gwen? Gwen Patton?

[1:05:13] **Judith Phillips:** Of course, I remember Gwen Patton very well. the one thing I was sorry about.... because she was very ill in 2012. But we did talk on the phone, and we promised each other we would get together —on our next trip, because we thought we'd be coming back soon after, but then she passed. Long before that Gwen spoke at the funeral service of.....



[1:05:56] **Guy Trammell:** Not Courtney? It wasn't Courtney.

[1:05:59] **Judith Phillips:** I'm having a mental block here. Yes, she spoke, and Bert spoke, and I attended the funeral.

[1:06:13] **Guy Trammell:** This is the one from Lowndes County?

[1:06:16] **Judith Phillips:** No, he was with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives.

[1:06:22] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, okay.

[1:06:23] **Judith Phillips:** What was his name? He was a student. He was an engineering student. Oh, I just can't remember his name. He used to come and visit us in Maryland. I'll think about it.

[1:06:36] **Guy Trammell:** Yes.

[1:06:37] **Judith Phillips:** But yes, we talked to Gwen in 2012 on the phone. I never did get to—we agreed that we wanted to see each other. But I didn't get to talk to her because she did pass. Yes.

[1:06:51] **Guy Trammell:** Do you remember the climate when Bloody Sunday took place? On campus. I know it was, . . . it. . . .

[1:07:01] **Judith Phillips:** I remember going to the—when Sammy Younge was killed, and Bert came home and told me about it. And then when he went down to join the students in the march. I remember him going out all these different hours, you know. I had three children now. So, my life was very involved with family and making sure things were going along, but also doing some volunteer work and a working mother. It was just very involved.

[1:07:48] **Guy Trammell:** Beautiful. Yes it was. And it was a special time too.

[1:07:53] **Judith Phillips:** Meredith Richardson]. I remembered his name. Meredith. Did you know him?

[1:07:58] **Guy Trammell:** Yes.

[1:07:59] **Judith Phillips:** Yes. Meredith. We liked him very much. And we stayed in touch over the years. And so, his family called and asked Bert to speak and Gwen Patton also spoke at his funeral. Gwen Patton, she was a very good speaker. We still have a copy of her speech.

[1:08:19] **Guy Trammell:** That, was that in Sumpter County?

[1:08:22] **Judith Phillips:** That was in Tuskegee.



[1:08:24] **Guy Trammell:** Tuskegee, okay.

[1:08:25] **Judith Phillips:** It was Tuskegee if I remember correctly.

[1:08:29] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, okay.

[1:08:31] **Judith Phillips:** I have this picture of Meredith. He was such a good person. And he and Bert got on very well. He was involved in a lot of things.

[1:08:52] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, well, just, I'm just going to see if you had any other things you might want to speak about, or things that really stood out to you, of being in Tuskegee, and all the things that were going on?

[1:09:11] **Judith Phillips:** Well, I was fortunate to be able to join the marchers as they came from Selma to Montgomery. I have a picture with my sister and Stirling, where we came into Montgomery. I couldn't go up to Selma, but we met them as they entered Montgomery and then walked in with them. I'll never forget that. I was just so happy to be a part of it. And when Stokely Carmichael and some of the other people came to the campus, I just felt very fortunate and honored to have that opportunity to be a part of the struggle. I saw our 3Ts Movement, TICAC, TISEP and TICEP, as a part of the civil rights struggle. That's how I saw it. We weren't doing sit-ins, but we were out there teaching and tutoring the tutees, involving the students, that was the big part of it. Students, not just our Tuskegee students, but other students, like the St. Olaf students Bert would go out to the counties—to the different HBCUs and to other campuses, like the University of Michigan; I remember I went with him on that trip, and he talked about TIS/CEP. And so, he was very, very busy. It was just an honor to be a part of it. I'll never forget it. It was, it was emotional for me, but also exciting.

[1:11:04] **Guy Trammell:** Absolutely, playing a major part like you were saying of the whole Civil Rights Movement, or how they said the black liberation movement in the South. Because at the meeting point of all the different ones from, I know, you hadn't mentioned them as SNCC. But you just called out the individuals?

[1:11:27] **Judith Phillips:** Oh, yes. Stokely and SNCC. I can't talk about SNCC, but I remember him because he came to the campus, and he just moved everybody. He was just electric, you know, and people were just eager to be involved.

[1:11:52] **Guy Trammell:** That's it, yes.

[1:11:54] **Judith Phillips:** The students were committed to TIS/CEP, the 3Ts Movement. And then to see Bert's 3Ts plan and talk with John Brown and Wiley Yelverton, and Professor Stanley Smith in their planning for the continuation of the 3Ts through SEASHA. That was also very important to me, I felt it was very good to be able to do that. When it closes out on the campus to have it, transfer it to the community. So, each of the communities would be involved. There was the feeder pig program and some of the other things that the SEASHA program carried forward.



We came down to Tuskegee for one or two of the annual meetings. Bert spoke at one of them that I was able to go to with him. So yes, I benefited so much from being at Tuskegee Institute during those five years. I wouldn't give it up for anything.

[1:13:02] Guy Trammell: Okay, let's see. SEASHA, Southeast Alabama Self-Help Association.

[1:13:06] Judith Phillips: Yes. Southeast Alabama Self-Help Association. You know, when we left Tuskegee, we never really left it. It was always there, you know. So, people would call. Wiley Yelverton and John Brown would call and keep us up to date on the things they were doing, and occasionally ask Bert for ideas and suggestions. And to know that they thought that much about his efforts made me feel good.

[1:13:44] Guy Trammell: That was it, yes. It was just amazing, how it could work so well, and especially all the different outreach parts of it.

[1:13:56] Judith Phillips: Yes, into all those counties, 12, 13 different Black Belt counties.

[1:14:03] Guy Trammell: Yes. And just I know one of the others talked even about the musical part of it. How they had a band.

[1:14:12] Judith Phillips: Yes, they had music, art, drama. Oh, yes. There were so many different aspects to it. I have one of them, the TIS/CEP brochure. There were so many things going on. The tutorial projects, distribution, the mobile library, home improvement, the resources catalog that I shared with you, recreation, small business and loans, community resources, health and hygiene, the social work unit and the TIS/CEP Reporter and Journal. They were doing these things, it was a part of TIS/CEP, and then to see it move into SEASHA. And to know that SEASHA is still going on, maybe not in all the different categories that it initially started with, but they still have a housing program. It was good to go back and know something that you were a part of, and Bert started was still continuing today, and helping people and their communities. It was just very heartwarming, and just emotional.

[1:15:42] Guy Trammell: Absolutely, and we have to put exciting in there too because it was amazing.

[1:15:48] Judith Phillips: Very exciting, and now to be involved with you, Guy Trammell, and with Joan Hamby Burroughs and, Wally Bowers, and Calvin Austin on the Impact Committee. It's been really an honor for me to be able to have Bert's former students coming in and being with us and sharing and developing this oral history project. It's just a good feeling. I have been in a very fortunate position to have been involved in this 3TsMovement. All the people that we've interviewed for the book have related back to their experiences with TICAC, TISEP or TICEP, and with, SEASHA. All of them have said that they were helped in some of what they have been doing in their lives. How being able to get out there and take a leadership role while they were young college students influenced their careers and lives. It was exciting for them.



[1:18:04] Guy Trammell: That's wonderful. It's an incredible story. It's an honor to hear it from you. And—

[1:18:11] Judith Phillips: Oh my gosh, I know I'm not the best interviewee.

[1:18:17] Guy Trammell: It's, it was great. It was fantastic.

[1:18:20] Judith Phillips: Thank you, Guy.

1:18:21] Guy Trammell: Okay, all right. Well, we're going to go—

[1:18:24] Judith Phillips: If there is anything else you want to know, just write to me and I will write to you [laughter].

[1:18:31] Guy Trammell: Okay, that'll work. Okay. Thanks so much and—

[1:18:36] Judith Phillips: Thank you. Thank you so much.

[1:18:39] Guy Trammell: I need you to keep telling the story and we're going to get, I know Dean will keep telling the story. And we're going to, you know, let people know the full story of what was going on.

[1:18:48] Judith Phillips: Absolutely.

[1:18:50] Guy Trammell: Alright. Thanks so much.

[1:18:52] Judith Phillips: Bye. Thank you.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP: History & Impact

Narrator: Dr. Percival Bertrand Phillips/Kingwood TX

Interviewer: Guy Trammell/Tuskegee AL

Date: April 28, 2023

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Percival Bertrand Phillips: BS, San Francisco State University; MS, San Francisco State University; Ed.D.; Columba University. Dean of Student Affairs Emeritus, Tuskegee Institute (University) 1963-1968. Creator and Director of TISEP/TICEP. Developed the first graduate degree program for Student Personnel Guidance and Counseling in any HBCU. Four TIS/CEPers (Lucenia Williams Dunn, Barbara Terry Sullivan, Julius Chapman, and George Taylor, were in the first graduating class.



**Percival Bertrand Phillips/
Dean Phillips**

During his tenure as Tuskegee Institute's Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. Phillips focused on reaching out to create circles of friendship, caring, sharing, and living in peace and harmony with oneself and with the world. Concerned with the growing racial unrest, economic and social justice disparities occurring throughout the world, Dr. Phillips began planting seeds for change in his part of the world. The 3Ts Movement and organizations that they inspired reflect the ideals that Dr. Phillips embraced in his attempts to alleviate disparities.

After leaving Tuskegee in 1968, Dr. Phillips and his wife and lifetime business partner, Judith V. Phillips, founded Curber Associates, Inc. Curber's focus was minority economic development, human relations, and counter-racism; (replacing the system of white supremacy with a system of equal justice for all). In 1976, the Phillips' founded Bermultinational Ltd., an international consulting firm. They also founded the NGO, Africa United States Partnership Fund (AUSPF). AUSPF partnered with community based African projects in innovative approaches to capacity building and sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives focused on poverty reduction and wealth creation in rural and urban areas.

Semi-retirement for Dr. Phillips, in addition to enjoying life with his family, grandchildren and friends, includes authoring a book about the 3Ts Movement, participating in the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committees' History and Impact Project, creating a 3Ts Movement Website, and initiating a podcast centering on positive dialogue. Dr. Phillips is legally blind and participates in workshops and meetings for low vision and blind people.

Dr. Phillips was honored, in 2017 with an Honorary Degree, Doctor of Social Sciences and Humane Letters *honoris causa*, from St. Olaf College. In 2018, the Lowndes County Friends of the Civil Rights Movement honored Dr. Phillips as a Civil Rights Living Legend.



[00:00:02] Guy Trammell: It is. It is 4:29pm. Friday, April 28, 2023. I am Guy Trammell, and I'm here in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama to interview Dean Bert—Bertram Phillips, the former Tuskegee Institute, Dean of Students, who is in Kingwood, Texas. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

[00:01:01] Bert Phillips I am Percival Bertram Phillips in Kingwood, Texas. I am being interviewed by historian, Guy Trammell. And today's date is April, the 28th, 2023.

[00:01:29] Guy Trammell: Okay, thank you for being available to do this interview, Dean Phillips. Can we start out, just tell us a little bit about your background, where you're from, and you know, your journey to become a doctor.

[00:01:47] Bert Phillips: Okay, first of all, let me apologize Guy for my dark glasses, but I'm losing my sight. And I need to keep them on as we go through this interview. I am from Berkeley, California. I was born there and went to school in Berkeley and Oakland and went to college at San Francisco State for my undergraduate work and my master's. And then went to Teachers College, Columbia University to earn my doctorate. And that's the history up to then.

[00:02:44] Guy Trammell: Okay. And now that, there's quite a bit, because I know there was a lot going on there, especially leading into the, into the 60s and everything. So boy, that was—was any of that thought kind of in the community as you were coming up.

[00:03:02] Bert Phillips: I'm sorry, say again?

[00:03:03] Guy Trammell: Yes. Any of the thoughts? I know that we're starting to look at new visions of, you know, society in that area. That's a huge area for that intellectual transition that was taking place.

[00:03:22] Bert Phillips: Yes, well, there were groups that were involved in urban planning and best pocket parks and community outreach in that time. And there were a number of groups that were very, very active and trying to bring people together across ethnic and racial and religious lines. It was—Murphy was more active than Oakland and San Francisco, but all three cities were active there. And New York, of course when I was there, there was a lot going on that was bringing things up to the core of the civil rights movement. You had Reverend Milton Galamison, a Presbyterian minister from Brooklyn who led two of the New York City School boycotts. And you had, of course, the opportunities to hear speakers speak on the corners in Harlem, who would give you the history of Africa as well as African Americans. I was working in some part time jobs, and then I worked at the—when we left New York to come to the state, to Tuskegee, I was Director of Education and Research at the New York Urban League and doing a study on the so-called X and Y schools. The X schools were basically Negro and Puerto Rican, as we said then Black and Puerto Rican. And the Y schools were predominantly white. And there



was a discrepancy and a disadvantage, in most all of those schools in a number of different ways. And that was an important part of what was going on in New York, along with some of the real concerns for true integration in the north, rather than simply just talking about it.

[00:06:12] Guy Trammell: Cause I know that, yes, a lot of things were taking place and really moving forward then. That was amazing there. And now what—what spurred—or how—what was the journey that you had to get to Tuskegee? And did you know what—how had you—how was Tuskegee framed in your mind before you got there?

[00:06:40] Bert Phillips: Well, as you know, Guy, my wife and I are writing a book that I hope will be published soon to complement this wonderful oral history project. And in that, I talk about the fact that Dr. Kenneth Clark, who was a leading psychologist of the time—and he and his wife, Mamie Clark, were the ones who did the famous doll study in their Northside clinic there in Harlem. And they are the ones who also were part of the presentation of factors that led to disadvantage in black children by presenting before the Supreme Court during the—during the Brown decision. And he was chairman of the board for the greater New York Urban League or Urban League of Greater New York. And he and I used to spend time on the subway together going into a number of different meetings in New York City. And we talked often about different things.

And one day, he said to me, "Bert, I hope you don't mind me asking you, but have you ever considered going to the Deep South, you've had a lot of experience in the West Coast—on the West Coast and also now on the East Coast." And I basically said to him, "Dr. Clark, you know, I haven't really given it that much thought, because, you know, there are enough problems right here in the North. And actually, with the problems in the South, it seems like it is even more of a threat to one's life and just presence of mind than it is here in the North." And we talked about it for a while. And then my wife and I talked about it. And later he said to me that he'd be glad to introduce me to Dr. Foster, president of Tuskegee Institute, who was coming to New York and who was a friend of his and was coming on business in New York. And I said, "Yes, it would be good to meet him," and my wife and I talked and said, "Well, you know, we're very happy in New York right now. We're just established ourselves, we have our first child, our son, and it would be good to talk to him, but we really not ready to go anywhere right now."

[00:10:27] Bert Phillips; However, after talking with Dr. Foster and hearing about his vision for Tuskegee and knowing about some of the things that had happened in Tuskegee over the years, and being pretty familiar with Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver's leadership of Tuskegee in the communities and their outreach, it seemed like it might be a good idea for us. And so, what happened was that when, when Dr. Foster came to New York City, he and Dr. Clark had wanted to meet with us. And so, we invited them to dinner at our graduate student apartment. And my wife cooked a wonderful meal for them. And we sat and fought, and just really explored many of the different issues that were going on around the country that day—I mean, around the country during that time. And we also talked a little bit about what was going on with the newly independent countries in the Caribbean and Africa. And so, it was from there that we eventually decided we would come to Tuskegee after Dr. Foster later on, sent us a letter of invitation for me to come to be the Dean of Students and Professor of Education and Psychology.



[00:12:20] Guy Trammell: Excellent. And could you kind of frame what—about what year was that? Or the time of year.

[00:12:30] Bert Phillips: That was 1963, during the spring of 1963, that we talked, and it was May of 1963 that we arrived in Tuskegee.

[00:12:43] Guy Trammell: Okay, let me ask too—you didn't mention it. What were some of the, I'll say, the areas that you had been interested in, as you were in New York? I know, I'm sure, it was sociology, or I don't know, what were the specific areas you were looking at, at that time?

[00:13:08] Bert Phillips: Yes, sociology, psychology, education. But as director of research and education researcher for the New York Urban League, I was responsible for research projects in education and in community organization, in different—in all the five boroughs of New York City. And as the education part of that, I was responsible for interacting with schools and educational groups and setting up honors programs for students and conducting community meetings. And so, I was very active in that area.

[00:14:04] Guy Trammell: And that sounds like right into what the environment Booker T. Washington created too, so. Okay, so now that you were—when you were coming to Tuskegee and kind of getting acclimated, what did you—where were your—had you been to Tuskegee before?

[00:14:26] Bert Phillips: No, we had not been to Tuskegee. I had not been to Tuskegee at all.

[00:14:31] Guy Trammell: Okay, what were you're—well, how did you get there first? Did you drive? Did you train?

[00:14:37] Bert Phillips: Oh, we drove.

[00:14:39] Guy Trammell: Okay. So, can you give me first impressions because now you're going into the deep South?

[00:14:47] Bert Phillips: Well, again, we talked about this in our book, and we talked about the fact that when we left Tuskegee—I mean, when we left New York City for Tuskegee Institute, we had our Bibles with us, but we had forgotten to buy a green book. And so, without that green book that would tell us what places we could eat, what places we could sleep and rest, and where we would be welcome, we were kind of quite lost. And so, as we drove down through, I try to recall all the states, I don't remember them all. But we drove down through from [unclear], and we were up in upstate New York at the time when we were and then we drove down through Benson, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, I think, Kentucky, then Tennessee, Georgia, and into Alabama. And we had, we tried to drive down [pause] carefully, trying not to drive too fast, or drive too slow, and not trying to bring attention to ourselves. And it was not an easy trip, because we had this—to be careful in where we stopped just to rest. We didn't really stop to sleep any place because we couldn't really find the places where we would be welcomed. But we



just, you know, drove down and it was probably around a 20-hour trip at the time. So, it wasn't too bad not having to—just having to sleep in the car and rest, but we were careful, of course, as we did.

[00:17:17] Guy Trammell: Okay, now. Okay, now, once you got to Tuskegee, what were the first impressions or what were you maybe even seeing coming in?

[00:17:33] Bert Phillips: Well, we got to, as we drove, we—and came through Atlanta—we were very happy to go to sweet Auburn Avenue and spend some time getting some good food there, and we knew we'd get—be welcomed. Even more when we got to Tuskegee Institute, when we came. We came into Tuskegee and, you know, were very impressed with the campus and with the community around the campus. On the way down, I didn't mention that we on our trip down, we saw a number of signs on the highway where there were actually billboards promoting segregation and white supremacy, and even the Klan. And so, we came into Tuskegee and Dr. Foster, and his wife Vera Foster [sp?] met us and introduce us to a few people who showed us where our home would be. And we lived at 200 Franklin Road, which is the house right next to the president's house. And we were very impressed with our little Tuskegee Institute Center, as we call it, where the stores were. And we were we were quite pleased.

[00:19:23] Guy Trammell: Okay, now, if you're facing Foster's house, are you talking about the house to the right going towards Lincoln gates, or to the left?

[00:19:33] Bert Phillips: No, the house to the left. If any were to walk by Dr. Foster's house going down Franklin Road and we're the third one. I think the for—I think Dr. Foster's house, yes, we're the second house. That there was Dr. Foster's house and then our house was 200 Franklin Road, was right there, right there.

[00:19:57] Guy Trammell: Yes, okay.

[00:19:59] Bert Phillips: You're the historian Guy, so you might correct me, but I think it was. There might have been a house between us and Dr. Foster, but I don't think so.

[00:20:09] Guy Trammell: Yes. Do—you had a—you did you ever upstairs in your house?

[00:20:13] Bert Phillips: I tell you, I'll tell you how we can identify this. Our house was where your present chief of police and safety for Tuskegee Institute live right now.

[00:20:29] Guy Trammell: Okay. Okay. I think I know that. Yes, cuz I know my great uncle actually lived there.

[00:20:36] Bert Phillips: Oh, really? Before we came, huh?

[00:20:40] Guy Trammell: Yes, yes. That. Yes, that would have been. Yes, absolutely. You're right. Yes, cuz he was living with us at that time. Okay, he was the one that set the clock for Booker T. Washington, at Whitehall and—



[00:20:56] **Bert Phillips:** Oh, really?

[00:20:58] **Guy Trammell:** He worked with Carver also on the farm fixing tractors, but it was Robert. Robert R. L. Wagner, yes.

[00:21:06] **Bert Phillips:** Isn't that something?

[00:21:08] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. Yes. So how, what was—how do you—how would you think about the climate on the campus at that time, the intellectual thought going on among the professors, the staff, even, you know, maybe from students also. What, you know, what, what, what was the, I'll say, the intellectual atmosphere or the, you know, the social atmosphere?

[00:21:39] **Bert Phillips:** Well, I think the intellectual atmosphere was very exciting and innovative. Interesting activities were going on, in terms of search of new knowledge, and virtually all the different departments and divisions. And you thought with professors, who are now my colleagues, and all of them were looking at new opportunities for enriching the intellectual life of their students and looking for new ways of pursuing, you know, the academic goals. And there was among the students, a real commitment to learning and commitment to being the best that they could be in terms of intellectually, socially in every way, and that really hit me. I felt that these Tuskegee students were really my students as dean of students, and I really felt that you could sit down—I sat down and talked with students and with professors and other professors— and it was always a brisk, challenging, intellectual conversation that would take place. Along with camaraderie and the general humor that would be a part of such a conversation. It was a welcoming campus, and a campus committed to moving forward.

[00:24:02] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, and the—having the, I know you referred a little bit to it, the businesses and different black-owned operations right there. Did you have any impressions about that? That they were right there, say in the village of Greenwood, you know, right around campus?

[00:24:22] **Bert Phillips:** Oh, yes. Well, I think it was just great having all of the different—everything you needed. Plus extra services like, of course Polk's Photograph Studio and so forth. But you had your cleaners, you had your groceries, you had everything there,—your dry goods, your pharmaceutical needs, you can—all could be met in those stores around Tuskegee. And it was only for larger furniture items or other kinds of things, maybe just to get an excursion that you needed to go to either Montgomery or Columbus or Atlanta to get other things.

[00:25:30] **Guy Trammell:** And I guess, I know, I think a few of us went by Reid's Cleaners to also buy other things and just get our clothes clean too, so.

[00:25:40] **Bert Phillips:** Oh, absolutely, yes. Yes, Reid's Cleaners. Yes, and it was definitely—it was, it was, it was really very exciting to have everything so close to you like that.



[00:25:57] Guy Trammell: Now, taking on the mantle of, Dean of students, I always think about things like that, like the mother hen. And here you are, literally out—if you go outside the bubble you just described, Jim Crow was just gnawing at the, [laughter] you know. You know, gnawing. It's all around, just outside of this village of Greenwood or the bubble. What—how can I say how, especially—and I know protection of the students was number one in your mind, and now you're right down in the middle of where, in a sense, Jim Crow almost was born and was, I know, it was very active at that time. So how, I know precautions were on your, on your mind. So, you know, but what? How was that? How was that? Because you're not in a city college, say taking care of, you know, just students that might be veering out on the weekends or whatever. But now you actually have, you know, just things probably a few counties away, going on, on a regular basis.

[00:27:13] Bert Phillips: Yes, well, we, in the beginning, Guy, we stayed pretty close to campus and tried to learn as much as we could about what was going on. We felt somewhat safe in most of Macon County. And simply because we had of course the—all the persons who worked in the VA, along with the Tuskegee Institute persons, the John Andrew hospital, of course, was right on the campus. So, we had that expansive area around us where we would walk and not feel anything, any problems at all, of course, the feeling was simply very good. We were able to make friends and acquaintances in those areas. When we went further out of Macon County, we would drive. We drove often, on weekends, my wife, Judith and our baby son, Sterling, and we would just explore what was going on. And in those, again, we didn't go all the way around Macon County, but in some areas not too far from the campus, we would sit and talk with some of the people who happened to be out on their porches or working in their yards. And we—that's as far as we went, we did not really explore beyond that area. If we drove to Montgomery, we would stay right on the main streets and highway and, you know, take care of what we needed to do and come back. And the same thing for Columbus. For the occasional trip to Atlanta, the same thing.

[00:29:25] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now, during that time, I mean, there's a lot of things going on. Can you tell me a little bit about some of the groups on campus and some of the people especially the in the student groups, about TIAL, Gwen Patton, was it Wendy Paris, Simuel Schutz, Sammy Younge.

[00:29:57] Bert Phillips: Well, let me, let me, let me, kind of if you don't mind, let me kind of move up to that, because what you just mentioned, is really, around '66, '67.

[00:30:12] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[00:30:12] Bert Phillips: Then '68. In '63 and '64 and '65, there were a number of different student activities and programs going on. But I think as we talk, I'd love, I want to focus just on the TIS/CEP aspect of it. And while we were driving in the Macon County area, around Macon County, back in the late fall of '63. My wife and I were talking, and I came up with the idea that it would really be good if we could work with the students in the communities, as well as on campus. That we knew our students were so eager to share among themselves and to learn new things, then it might be a good idea to try and create a student group that could volunteer in the communities right around the campus. And that would be following in the footsteps of Booker T.



Washington and George Washington Carver with their outreach with communities and using their knowledge to share with the farmers and communities around Macon County and beyond. And so, in assembly one night I broached the idea to the students about setting up a volunteer outreach program. And I told them that it was something that if they really were serious about, I would like to meet them the next morning at five o'clock in Logan Hall.

[00:32:43] Bert Phillips: 150 students showed up that next morning at five o'clock, and we created the first outreach organization that was part of the whole TIS/CEP movement, or what we call, or I called the three Ts. Because there were three Ts involved. The first program, which was this volunteer program, while we started organizing in December, late November, December 1963. We didn't really go out into the community until late January, early February 1964. This program was called the Tuskegee Institute, Community Action Corp. And what was the initials T-I-C-A-C [cough]. Sorry, Community—Tuskegee Institute Community Action Corp. T-I-A-C. And these students worked, tutoring in homes. They worked to help people improve their small farming areas or garden areas, they helped to repair homes. They did a lot of outreach, service work in different areas of the community. And they tutored mainly in the homes of the students they were tutoring. And they, usually the families would clear out the space in some part of a room or porch and that's where the tutoring would take place.

[00:34:55] Bert Phillips: Many of the tutors had to actually walk because we didn't have a transportation system. But we did have volunteers from the VA, volunteers from Tuskegee Institute, and general community who would sometimes give the students rides. Some on a regular basis, some on ad hoc basis. But it was a great sight to see those students many times, walking home together, singing songs, usually freedom songs as they came back to campus. And then after—during that program in 1964 we heard of the Economic Opportunity Act that was coming up, that was part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. And so we made, we proposed—sent a proposal in to try to set up a continuation and extension of this TIAC program and Tuskegee Institute Community Action Corp is what I should, I should have said. And then T-I-C-A-C, Tuskegee Institute Community Action.

I need to tell just one little aside, they originally wanted to call it the Tuskegee Institute Peace Corps. However, we got a call from Sargent Shriver, who was head of the National Peace Corps, who asked us not to use that name. And we never knew how he found out about our name. But anyway, we changed the name.

[00:37:04] Guy Trammell: That's Shriver with somebody named Kennedy, I believe, was it?

[00:37:09] Bert Phillips: Oh, yes, he was a brother-in-law of President Kennedy. And it was also during that time, that the National Student Work Program had been enacted. And so we also sent a proposal during 1964 to get Tuskegee Institute on that program, so that our students could be paid for their volunteer work as well as jobs around campus. In 19—early 1965, the volunteer students were able to actually do their work as work study programs. So it was under that direction that we sent a proposal in after a lot of trouble. We don't have time to go through all that in this, in this interview. But I have thought about, in the book, about all the objections that



we had. Some even from around campus, in the community, and many from the staff on the congressional delegations.

We finally got the proposal in. We had a summer education program called the Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program. In that program, I invited students from a number of other colleges around the country. And we wound up with about 950 Tuskegee Institute students, and 65 students from St. Olaf College, in Northfield, Minnesota, and about 100 other students from 30 other colleges and universities across the country. And so that summer education program had a number of different aspects to it, the number of different projects that were a part of it. We were working in, well, different Black Belt counties, and we also had to create a transportation system for that program. We had to rent cars for the program and also trucks and buses. We had a lot of trouble renting locally because of the segregationist policies and we wound up having you get most of our rental cars and vans from up in Atlanta.

[00:40:29] Bert Phillips: However, I won't go again into all the details of that program but I'll be glad to try to answer any questions you have on it. And then that program led to the Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program, which went on from the fall of 1965, through the fall of 1967. And then in 1967, we decided that we wanted to have a successor organization.

And so we created the program called the South East Alabama Self Help Association, or SEASHA. Now SEASHA, at first modeled the TIS/CEP program completely. And if you look at their early brochures, you'll see where they actually had many of the TIS/CEP programs on there as part of their movement. Later on, they became mainly a housing organization. And they are still a housing organization today, and still active, and their office is still in Tuskegee.

The Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program, which is the third T, was actually expanded on what the summer education program did and was involved in a number of things. I won't go again into all the details. But we did expand—especially in social services and in health services. And we did—one of the things I'll just mention briefly, is we did a health survey in Lowndes County in 1966, '67. And actually, it was noted in the report of the US Commission on Civil Rights, when they had a session on April, the 11th, 1968. It was exhibit 13, in which they talked about our health study. And it was led, the health survey was led by Dr. Alan Berman [sp?] who was lent to the Tuskegee program by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Department of Public Health, or at that time, it was called the Health Education and Welfare Group. It's now part of Health and Human Services.

[00:44:05] Bert Phillips :And so that was the TIS/CEP era. It was in '66, '67 that—well the beginning really is '65. There was a lot of activity among the students because they were interested in what was going on outside of the gates of Tuskegee Institute. And many of them in their hometowns and cities had been very active. Many were part of the Birmingham campaign back in '63. Many had been active in Georgia, Louisiana, in Alabama, and [unclear] some in the North as well. But there was a lot of activism on the campus, a lot of students wanting to do things and they worked hard. Some of them volunteered with SNCC, some with the SCLC, some with the NAACP, some with other groups. And it was in that atmosphere that TIAL was created.



Because the—our students wanted to have their own organization that was active. And so they created the Tuskegee Institute Advancement League or TIAL. And that was a civil rights group that did a lot of work with SNCC and other groups. They were instrumental in trying to desegregate the churches in the Tuskegee area they were active with, and some housing rights, and some land rights programs. And they were active in some of the basic protests that took place to try to end segregation. And there was in 1967—and correct me if I'm wrong, I don't remember the exact date—but it was 1967 that Sammy Younge, young Navy—

[00:46:44] Guy Trammell: 1966. 1966, yes.

[00:46:47] Bert Phillips: Was it '66?

[00: 46:48] Guy Trammell: Yes, yes.

[00:46:50] Bert Phillips: Okay.

[00:46:50] Guy Trammell: January third, yes.

[00:46:53] Bert Phillips: Okay. For some reason I thought it was the 1967 but 1966 then Sammy Younge, a young Navy veteran, a young student, and an activist, a member of SNCC, a member of TIAL, was coming from a meeting late at night and stopped at the gas station in downtown Tuskegee to use the bathroom, the restroom, and he was shot by a man named Segrest.

[00:47:33] Guy Trammell: Marvin Segrest.

[00:47:34] Bert Phillips: What was it you were saying? Marvin? Okay. And he was shot and killed. And I was called at about between one and two in the morning to come down to that gas station and identify his body. And that was, that was really one of the hardest moments of my life, not just at Tuskegee, but of my life, to go down and see a student who had—I talked with in my office, talked with on the, on the campus, a student who wanted so much to change the world and to make it better. And while he and I did not always agree on the speed of everything or the way in which things been done—should be done, we agreed on the goals and wanted things to happen. And I considered Sammy one of my students and we spent some long hours together that many people are not even aware of just simply talking about life.

[00:49:06] Bert Phillips: And I identified him. I identified Sammy Younge's body and then came back to campus. The next day Gwen Patton and Wendy Paris and a number of people from TIAL and from other groups led a march downtown. And there are pictures in some of the campus digest and in the, I believe, in the TIS/CEP journal of [unclear]. So I was in front of the group with linking hands with Gwen Patton and Danny Williams who worked with our historian library, and others, mainly students, but a good group of faculty and staff and marched downtown to protest this and I'll stop there.



[00:50:33] Guy Trammell: And then, and just for clarity for those who might be reading this or watching it. We, I know we've talked about SNCC, but go on and give us the acronym.

[00:50:47] Bert Phillips: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

[00:50:50] Guy Trammell: Okay. So people know that. Yes. And—

[00:50:55] Bert Phillips: SCLC was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and NAACP is National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

[00:51:08] Guy Trammell: Because I know some of those that were so familiar, to all of us. And during that time, especially, I was thinking did—mention, just mentioned about, did Ella Baker ever come through at that time?

[00:51:27] Bert Phillips: Yes, I believe she may have, but I don't, I never had the opportunity to meet with her.

[00:51:33] Guy Trammell: Okay, okay.

[00:51:35] Bert Phillips: Yes, and excuse me, Guy, I also should mention that the Congress of Racial Equality, CORE was also there at that time, they were, they had some activities.

[00:51:48] Guy Trammell: Excellent. Excellent. And, again, with those activities, I wanted to go back to the summer education program. With all the ones coming to Alabama, possibly some of them, I'm sure, for the first time, the set, the group that came from St. Olaf, how did you do like a introduction or a, you know, a way to kind of get them acquainted with the community? That type of thing, you know, what, what they were about to face? So they can, was there any reluctance? Yes.

[00:52:31] Bert Phillips: Yes. Oh, yes. I should have also mentioned a couple other things. The other, the activism on campus didn't just start then. It started long before I actually got there. Dr. Gomillion in the Gomillion v. Lightfoot case had led the case against gerrymandering in Tuskegee and had won a Supreme Court decision. And you also had Detroit Lee who had filed for—who had filed a suit against the Tuskegee—

[00:53:22] Guy Trammell: Macon County Board of—

[00:53:25] Bert Phillips: Board of Education. Thank you. Macon County Board of Education. And he won that. He and his group won that suit and then Dr. Gomillion won his suit. And so, there was, and there were other things going on at the VA, there were things going on in the community. So, it wasn't just this one thing that worked. There was a lot of moving forward, action, and activism in the area.

[00:54:10] Guy Trammell: And especially with the—okay, this suit against the Macon County Board of Education that actually integrated all the schools in Alabama.



[00:54:22] **Bert Phillips:** Absolutely.

[00:54:23] **Guy Trammell:** From that one. And then, and then when they did the gerrymander, and was it Gomillion v. Lightfoot, all of Tuskegee Institute was no longer part of the city. Remember on that, on that map? So yes, that was great. And then the only—what is it the only county in the state of Alabama at that time? Macon County was actually set for demolition because of that, I think it's still in the constitutions, so yes.

[00:54:59] **Bert Phillips:** Oh, really? Yes, well, you can, you can see that just from what you said there, you can see where some of the things that are going on in today's world and the different states are being modeled after some of those old ways of trying to fight any kind of progress.

[00:55:25] **Guy Trammell:** And in a sense, the—how can I say—the capacity of Tuskegee Institute at that time, it's been said that if they were asked to tell how many bubbles are in a bar of soap, probably had some on campus that could have done that too, so.

[00:55:45] **Bert Phillips:** [Laughter] I wouldn't be surprised. Yes, absolutely.

[00:55:50] **Guy Trammell:** The intellectual level was up there. And that was something too; the reputation of the Tuskegee Institute, with the students and the adults living there. Because of that intellectual capacity, and, you know, the ones there had cars and things, and they were actually others on the other side of the road, you know, other side of the tracks that, you know, were—how can I say—ready to discriminate because of the color of the skin, but also, because it they were not just black, but they also had intellect, and, you know, were—how can I say—conducted themselves in a much more sophisticated manner.

[00:56:38] **Bert Phillips:** Right. You're absolutely right. And I think it's just fascinating to see that that's still going on today throughout the country, throughout the world. I should have mentioned also that my teaching, one of the graduate courses that I thought was actually something that I created, was a course or a series of courses, that lead to the credentialing of graduate students who wanted to go into counseling. And this was kind of a first for an HBCU. And some of those same students are very active now in the community and around the country. Lucenia is one of those too, right.

[00:58:14] **Guy Trammell:** And that, that's the first female mayor to the city of Tuskegee also, Lucenia Williams Gunn, yes.

[00:58:26] **Bert Phillips:** Actually, I'm sorry, I should have given her full name, Lucenia Williams Gunn. And she's one of those and there are many others here. And I should say that they—many of those also, many of those students participated in the Three Ts movement.

[00:58:51] **Guy Trammell:** And, in a sense—how can I say that—because it definitely was an education. It was not, it was definitely community service, but also education for the students in



there to start to see the practicality of—how can I say—how their lives would be for communities too. So, you might speak about that, because basically, you're pushing, you're pushing limits of education, to other—to a different level, in a sense. And I know, I guess, across the spectrum, a more progressive way of thinking was taking place at that time.

[00:59:30] Bert Phillips: Okay, well, I'll come back. Let me come to that because I didn't answer your other question. In terms of the—we did have an orientation for all the students and for the students who were from St. Olaf and other colleges and who were white students. Their orientation was integrated into the overall orientation. We didn't have a special orientation for them, it was all part of the overall orientation because we wanted them to feel comfortable in working as a team, with their black fellow students, and they did. Some of the St. Olaf students worked on the campus with the TIS/CEP Reporter, our newspaper, and some in other, some other roles, but most of them were out in the counties tutoring. Some black students and some white students lived on the campus, and then went out in cars to tutor, but many of them lived with families in different communities. A number of the white students lived with their fellow black students, with black families, in different counties. And one video that became a documentary was developed. It's called Return to Alabama. That video was done with students who had worked in Lee County during the summer of 1965. The person who did that, who produced that film was from St. Olaf College. And [pause] Jeff, I'm trying to remember his last name right now.

[01:02:02] Guy Trammell: Oh, yes. Jeff. Yes.

[01:02:04] Bert Phillips: Yes. And well look, I'll have to get his last name, but—
[insert: Jeff Strate]

[01:02:13] Guy Trammell: Yes. And then definitely, he had to really tell that story. And in a sense, it's—how can I say—like we had, they had Freedom Summer in Mississippi one summer. But in a sense, you, yourself and Tuskegee Institute, we actually had three freedom summers here in Alabama, to really reach out and make a major difference. Not just to the students working there, but the community and the people that were involved.

[01:02:51] Bert Phillips: Yes, yes. There's no question about that.

[01:02:54] Guy Trammell: Yes.

[01:02:58] Bert Phillips: And then, coming back to your other point about the graduate students and other students getting to look at life a little differently. I think that when people listen to their stories, or hear, or talk with them individually, they'll find that these, the three Ts movement and their participation in the three Ts movement, helped them think in different ways, act—and act in different ways, and really become persons that they might not have become without that experience. And I'm eager to hear and read some of the stories of those that you've interviewed already. Those students, former students, who will share that kind of growth in this in their interviews. Because it was a period of time that if you weren't committed to looking at yourself, not just as an instrument of change for others, but as an instrument of change for you yourself. It



was very hard to really stay involved in this movement or any other kinds of movements. And I think that that is one of the things that you'll hear in many different kinds of ways as people respond. I know that in the stories that former students have written, that we're going to include in the book, you can see that and feel that and interviewing them, you can talk. You have probably found that out, yourself Guy. And I think that if we could somehow transfer that ethos, if you will, into today's world, I think it would really be helpful for the young people. The young people today are committed, they're bright, they're sharp, they're ready to go. But they also have so many different technological gadgets and other things around them. The world is changing in so many different ways so quickly, that it's, it seems like it's harder for them to get committed to a change in self, as well as trying to provide help or change in others.

[01:06:44] Guy Trammell: And it sounds, I mean, in what I'm so much hearing throughout, especially TIS/CEP, the concept and then, like I said, what we've actually learned, seems like, it allowed that opportunity for a lot of things from both society, things to be kind of stripped away to be able to get down to like you're saying, who self is. And also and what happens, you know, the ones that actually changed majors or change the direction, in other words, they were going in one particular direction, because it was just a traditional, almost like a conveyor belt situation, and then to come into realization of what really was meaningful to them, and to see how they could be that change agent in the world. Seems like, that's what I'm seeing through what I'm hearing from TIS/CEP.

[01:07:42] Bert Phillips: Definitely, definitely. Yep.

[01:07:46] Trammell: Yes, that's it. And you kind of got to going into a part, which I wanted to save to last, but that could go along with it. You know, however, we want to say. But again, how that—I think you've already stated some of it—how it would literally apply today. And like you were saying, with the technology, and so many other things that some kind of—sometimes can get in the way. Where—how can I say—if you're in communication all the time, we used to have to go down the hallway, to get to the telephone and now I don't think we can get away from it. And so, that kind of always kind of being up and communicating constantly, versus having that time to really contemplate, you know, could maybe, you know—in other words to be in situations that they maybe had never thought about, or maybe never thought that even existed, say, like I said, in Lowndes County. Could you just kind of give a little bit about some of the areas and what it was like in those areas at that time, in the early '60s, because you're talking about the black, some of the Black Belt. I know it was beyond just the Black Belt, but with some of the conditions that they saw up close and personal.

[01:09:18] Bert Phillips: Well, I think that maybe giving a couple of examples of some of the things that they did and the types of programs, in one of the programs to summer program. Just to take one example they—well, let me talk about the distribution center first. Now I'm just going to break very briefly. We had a distribution center that provided for a number of different goods and commodities to persons who were served by the types of movement and also persons who are not. The concept of it was that you did not want to give people things, you wanted people to buy whatever, so they could feel that it wasn't just charity. Everything that was in that distribution center was priced, below a dollar, a dollar or less, and most of them 50 cents or less.



There were some articles of furniture, occasionally, that people had donated for use in the distribution center, that might go for \$4 or something or less. But basically there weren't that many of those. But that's what a table, a small refrigerator, a bed might go for, \$4. Shoes would go for 50 cents, 25 cents, 10 cents, clothing for 30 cents, 25 cents and so forth. But we added a distribution center where people, a number of community—Tuskegee Institute, VA staff, and community—and the general Tuskegee Institute community contributed used and new clothing, shoes, household items, small electrical items, and so forth to that distribution center. And they, we had two vans that went all over the counties, all the—to all the counties where on certain days, community members could get these goods and commodities for this very low price.

[01:12:32] Bert Phillips: We also helped to repair some homes that were badly in disrepair. Were very much of disrepair. Students could come in and see that one home in summer that students came in to tutor. And they saw that the steps to the porch were rickety and could cause danger. And so, they called another group of the TIS/CEP, another unit to come in that—ones that worked in and repair areas—to come in and repair that. Another group came in to help people build a new—dig a new well and get a new pipeline to use to erase or to eradicate the danger of dirty water getting into their water system. Another helped to take virtually a whole house where the windows were covered with a wax paper and brown paper and helped them actually through, the distribution center, get glass to put in the windows. They installed it all for them. There were others where, the children clearly, and the parents needed help from some of the local social service agencies that were not providing help. The TIS/CEP students would go advocate for them and actually helped them to get the service needed. So, there were a number of different situations they saw and actually lived in because many of them lived in these homes with the families. They were able to do, to look at and see this is something that should not be here. We need to get rid of—we need to eradicate poverty. We need to eradicate it along with eradicating white supremacy and so forth. And it was a, it was a clear call to them to understand what it means to help bring about meaningful change.

[01:15:31] Guy Trammell: That's huge, that. I want to ask you to, if you could talk about the TICEP, the Community Education Program, when you started dealing with some of the health issues, could you just give maybe a couple of examples there. And you know, about possibly the conditions that they had to address and maybe some of the strategies?

[01:16:00] Bert Phillips: Well, we had a group of—there were social workers involved and the Social Work Group was actually led—or the Tuskegee Institute Community Education Programs, actually led by the late Mrs. Vera Foster, the wife of the late President Foster. And then there were medical health volunteers who worked with, who went to social workers. The families would be identified usually by the tutors, who would notice these conditions. And so there were identification of problems like asthma. There were identification of sores and wounds that would not heal. There were identification of just the health and conditions in a home that were causing health problems.

There were a number of very specific cases. For example, there was a group of TIS/CEP workers that worked and went out to Tent City to do medical and social work. Tent City was in Lowndes



County, and it was a tent city made up of families who had been put off their land as sharecroppers because they dared to try to vote and exercise their right to be citizens of the United States of America. And there were also people there, who had been buying their own homes, but whose loans had been withdrawn, simply again, because they attempted to try to vote or to exercise other rights as Americans. And so Tent City in Lowndes County, which was organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was a place where TIS/CEP workers spent time working.

There were a number of other health conditions that were mainly pulmonary disease type conditions, and also, you know, some untreated injuries. You know, people tended to treat their injuries themselves for the most part because they couldn't afford to go for medical treatment. And in some cases, of course, the doctors that were closest to them were white and wouldn't serve them. So, I think that the, again in the book, we try to go into more detail because we had more time to do a little more research. I should say one thing, Guy, that's very important for me to say is that unfortunately, we have not yet been able to find the official records for the three Ts movement on the Tuskegee campus. They may have been destroyed in one of the fires that happened in one of the buildings some years ago, or in a flooding in another building, or they may still be in unopened boxes in—that will eventually be discovered. But all of our research, for our book and all of the things we have has come from some of the few papers that I've maintained over the years, and from having to interviews and talk with people. And some have come from , of course the TISEP Reporter, which is our summer paper and the TICEP Journal, which is another, and some old issues of the campus digest that I happen to still have. But that's been one of the—some researchers in the future, hopefully, will be able to have that material to be able to tell the story in even more detail.

St. Olaf College has an archives, where they do have TIS/CEP materials. And as you know, they awarded me an honorary doctorate in 2017 and there were a number of Tuskegee students up for that ceremony. But most of their archives, of course, are around the, except for the TISEP Reporter, most of it is all from—based on their (St. Olaf) student activity and their participation. And they were active in keeping all their records. And part of it was that one of their former—another of their former students, James Reeb, had been with Dr. King in Selma just before the march to Montgomery, before Bloody Sunday. And he was one of those persons who had, a Unitarian minister, who had been killed in Selma by a white mob, because they were angry that he was with the black men, the other black, the black ministers. And so that may be part of their commitment to keeping all the records there.

[01:23:06] Guy Trammell: Okay, and I know I'm definitely going to need to ask you about the, again back in Lowndes County, that movement which ended up what was I believe 87 percent of the population, but zero voters. And then they had to come up with their own political party to not just vote but actually get people in office. You might share a few of the things that took place there, especially with the Tuskegee students.

[01:23:43] Bert Phillips: Well, Guy, I tell you, that was a time where Tuskegee students who were part of TIAL, Tuskegee students working with SNCC, and the Tuskegee students that were part of the TIS/CEP program, we're all committed to trying to bring about change. The people of



Lowndes County had been really organized by local persons. And then, with the help of SNCC, they were able to really get active in fighting for the vote where they were a many percentage majority and yet had nobody voting. They did create a party, a political party, that became a rallying point for the people in Lowndes County, to try to bring about change. And it must be remembered that Lowndes County was a county where lynchings and just general harassment and violence against nlocks was a daily occurrence, almost. And to try to bring in, bring, put fear into the hearts of Black people, and not have them be active in their own behalf. And so, the political party that was created was actually named the Black Panther Party. And it was really in Lowndes County where that name first stood for movement toward freedom and justice. And then later, the Black Panthers adopted that name and created the Black Panther group in Oakland. And the history of that is well known with it's being subjected to every type of oppression that you can think of led by the FBI, and eventually the killing of its leaders in as many different ways as you can think of. And I think, Guy, you can add additional information that is much more accurate than probably anything else I can add.

[01:27:22] Guy Trammell: Well, that, yes, you covered it very well, to bring that in. That gives them one of my last questions because I know we've been going for a little while. And that is because I know, with my brother being active, he was called Trap. He's the one that wrote the Black Thesis Newsletter. He talked about the fact that the FBI, every place they went with SNCC, with Stokely Carmichael, the FBI was right there. And they got—they got upset because the FBI would not—how can I say—protect them from the Georgia deputies or any of the other southern deputies coming after them for just passing out literature on voting rights, just passing out flyers, would shoot at them and chase them. So, I'm just wondering, did, was there any flak coming back from the FBI? You know, I'm thinking about on that level. Or did—was their presence made known during the time of any one of the three Ts. And I just say, either out in the field or with the campus or anything?

[01:28:46] Bert Phillips: Well, I tell you, their presence was not made known to me by them. But I was told by a person who was in investigations with the US Army, that the FBI was investigating everything we were doing. And that, and so, at some point, I guess, we may find out that the records were there. But you know, it's also, again, we're not into talking about everything that went on at the time. And I think in the book that was published recently, Gwen Patton talks about some of those things in her book and the student, Tuskegee student uprising, which, you know, was written by Brian Jones and recently talks about some of those things as well. And also, Daniel Smith, who wrote *Son of a Slave*, and Floyd Griffin, who wrote a book called *Legacy to Legend*, all talk about some of the things that happened during those times. And I think that the important thing is that the FBI has unfortunately been used to try to disempower every single black organization that's ever been—during the time of its operation, has tried to dismantle all black organization. And many times, by using inside people or people who are inside the organization to do that. Yep. I want to just change the subject for a minute, Guy, because you mentioned your brother earlier, and I want to mention that your father, Guy R. Trammell, who was professor of electrical construction Division of Building Services was one of our three Ts movement supporters.

[01:31:59] Guy Trammell: Okay, didn't know that. Okay.



[01:32:03] Bert Phillips: What happened was he and other professors, when we were first starting, there were a lot of ups and downs especially in the beginning about whether we should keep trying to move forward on the TIS/CEP program and he was one of the ones that felt it was really important and then showed his commitment to it.

[01:32:24] Guy Trammell: Okay. Excellent. And okay, and I want to ask, a lot of your—let's see, your orientation and meetings, did you, you were meeting probably in what? Logan Hall and Huntington or?

[01:32:44] Bert Phillips: Yes. Yes.

[01:32:47] Guy Trammell: Okay, a lot of different places, okay? I want to, I know want to start to get your closing thoughts, too. But I just have to ask about that other incident. I know this is much later because it seemed like you left and came back. Cause, I know, I just say growing up around the campus at Greenwood we never had police to come through until Sheriff Amerson was elected. And I know the students were responsible for that. How that situation, when, when the sheriff came with, had called, I understand it was the last executive order that Lurleen Wallace, George Wallace's wife, as Governor made was to march on Tuskegee Institute's campus and I understand, they brought enough to probably wipe out the entire the entire campus. Any—can you just give a little bit of—how can I say—just kind of some of that picture of what that was, what was taking place there?

[01:34:08] Bert Phillips: Well, that was, that was in 1968 when we—students wanted to make sure that a truly black university could be created and held the trustees in Dorothy Hall while they were trying to negotiate with them. And it turned into a standoff because there were a number of differences in the way everyone wanted to approach that situation. And so, the students held to their resolve to say that they really wanted to have a discussion and have some changes made. In the end, near the end of the day, the students finally agreed to let the trustees go. The trustees had left the campus and were all on their way home or had arrived home, but that night that order was still given for the guard to come to the campus.

There was no need for the guard to come to campus to free the trustees and I don't know what some of the news organizations actually said or are still saying, but the truth of the matter is the trustees were not on the campus when the guard, the National Guard and the and the state police and others came up there as if they were going to have a war on the campus. And we know when it happened in Orangeburg and with this at the same college there and we knew the reputation in Alabama. So, in the middle of the night, they had encamped. They set up an encampment, just like you would if you were having a regular camp going to a war. And they had set it up near the, near the campus, Guy. And you'll have to help me actually with the physical location because I can't really recall exactly where it was, but it was, it was an area big enough to set up a number of tents, and the command tent, and then supporting tent, and all the other pieces of equipment.

And anyway, then they, so I went over there. One of the campus police persons drove me over, about 2:00 or 3:00 o'clock in the morning where they were. I tried to ask them why they needed



to come. Everything, the trustees were safe, there was no need for them to come. And they basically said they were coming because Tuskegee was, had been, had all these uppity people on it for too long and they were coming. And so, in the morning early, they came to the campus. And I went out to the gates and stood there in front and went before them and told them that they could not come in. They said, well, you can't keep us from coming in. I said, well if you come in, you're going to have to come in over my dead body because I'm going to try and make sure you don't come in and there are reporters and everyone else here to make it clear to the public that you were asked not to come in. And they went back and held on for a while. And then they said, well, there are some students that we need to talk to and we're going to come in. I said, no, if you need to talk any students, you give us their names and we'll arrange for them to have proper representation if you need to talk to them. You can talk to them at that point. And so, they went back and eventually came back and said, well, we'll bring you that list of names. And then eventually someone came and brought a list of names and by that time Dr. Foster and all the campus was involved and they did not, as I recall, and I know this is almost 60 years later, so I may not have the right recollection, but I don't recall that they ever arrested any students. They may have questioned some, but that was that. That was my recollection of the situation.

[01:40:26] Guy Trammell: And that was right at the time that King was assassinated too.

[01:40:31] Bert Phillips: Yes.

[01:40:32] Trammell: Yes, and those was turbulent times [crosstalk]. So that. Yes. So, what we're talking about, like I said, that was in a sense Tuskegee Institute was right in the middle throughout that time, literally almost in a powder keg. And I just, you know, it's great what you've done, and so many others to keep it going even now. And, you know, I really appreciate that. Are there any additional thoughts about that and even, you know how you were saying, how SEASHA is continuing the work in a different way? Especially in this environment we're in now, the relevancy of that incredible way of exposing students and really making a change in the community. You know, being relevant for those young people that are out here today to maybe get them involved.

[01:41:46] Bert Phillips: Well, you know, I believe that it would be really wonderful if Tuskegee University would have some type of, at least maybe two days if possible, I would like to see it as a, as a three-day type of workshop conference where former students could come in and interact with present students. And where faculty could get involved in community— Tuskegee Institute and general Tuskegee community could get involved and talked about the importance of relationships between the university and the community that could be enhanced through student activity and student participation.

And the idea of and then out of that, create two or three either pilot projects or full projects that would involve the students being out and perhaps given some type of credit for part of their work and certainly being compensated for part of it and maybe also maybe volunteering some of it. But some type of combination of that where the students could take their talents and their experiences and combine them with projects that are critical to the forward movement of the larger community and the community persons could engage with them.



And I think that it's the time when universities like Tuskegee with its storied history and traditions could perhaps set a tone for universities and colleges throughout the United States and really throughout the world. We all know that young people are always at the forefront of change and protests and a partnership in terms of the kind of change we need in this country today, I think would be wonderful to have it be led by an historically black university like Tuskegee Institute. And I think there's a thing . . . I think there are Greenwood, the Veterans Administration, Tuskegee Institute, the community—there's something special, and storied, and sacred, and powerful about that area and that community. And it's seems to me that if we can all find a way—those who've been a part of Tuskegee in the past, those who are part of it now, and those who are going to be a part of it in the future. That is the students who are there now, the students who will be coming in this next semester in the fall, if they can all look at this as : This is our time, This is our opportunity. This is our legacy to have this happen. I think it would be a great thing to do. And I think, you know, you don't need, to me, you don't need to say is it worthwhile? I think you need to think about why not us. Why does it always have to be some other entity that does it and then we get involved? Why can't we be the change that actually changes the world?

[01:47:08] Guy Trammell: Absolutely, absolutely. And that, you know, that is definitely the way for the future. And then that, as you were saying, because even Booker T. Washington, he was in his early 20s. So yes, that's it. Yes. Well, I want to just thank you and like to know if you had any other closing thoughts.

[01:47:33] Bert Phillips: I just want to thank you Guy. I want to thank the committee for putting this, putting this together. It's been, I think, this is going to be a great addition to the annals of history in the United States and hopefully beyond that. So, thank you all for all your good work.

[01:48:01] Guy Trammell: Okay, well I appreciate that. Appreciate you and definitely as we continue to move forward, we have to continue to get these stories out. And thank you for continuing to get those stories out and continue to bring clarity. And you know, and just putting things in perspective so we can start to carve out a great future.

[01:48:26] Bert Phillips: Well, thank you, Guy. Thank you and Joan and Calvin and Wally for, and of course my wife Judith, for being so insistent on making sure that the story gets told.

[01:48:45] Guy Trammell: Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay, well, we're going to sign off and move on with the project. Okay?

[01:48:56] Bert Phillips: Okay, very good Guy. They take care. Thank you.

[01:48:59] Guy Trammell: You too. Okay. Thanks.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Toni Reed-Rashid/Birmingham AL

Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham AL

Date: November 7, 2022

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Toni Reed-Rashid was born in Birmingham AL to Mr. John Allen Reed, Sr. and Mrs. Louye D. Griffith Reed. One of four children, Toni entered Tuskegee as a freshman in 1965. She volunteered at TISEP's clothing and donations center while enrolled as a fashion design major under Tuskegee Institute's acclaimed Clothing and Related Arts professor, Booker T. Felder. Toni Reed-Rashid is a children's clothing designer. She is also a visual artist whose art works have been exhibited in museums, art shows and purchased worldwide.



Toni Reed-Rashid

00:00] Joan Burroughs: Today is November 7, 2022, to 12:08 am. I am Joan Hamby Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama. Here to interview Toni Reed-Rashid, who is in Birmingham, Alabama. This is part of the TICEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

[00:43] Toni Reed-Rashid: Good morning. My name is Toni Reed-Rashid. And I'm located in Birmingham, Alabama, and I am being interviewed by Joan Burroughs.

[00:57] Joan Burroughs: Thank you. Okay, we're gonna start off and the first question I'll ask you, is, do you remember how you heard about the TIS/CEP program?

[01:08] Toni Reed-Rashid: Yes, I do. My cousin Joan Burroughs, who was Joan Hamby at the time, told me about it and told me that might be something that I would be interested in. And as it happened, I was very much so.

[01:27] Joan Burroughs: Okay, where were you? Were you a student then? What year were you in at Tuskegee when that happened?

[01:33] Toni Reed-Rashid: I do believe I was a sophomore. So that would be 1966. Okay, and I was a sophomore at Tuskegee at that time.



[01:45] Joan Burroughs: Okay. What did you know about the TISEP program?

[01:50] Toni Reed-Rashid: I only basically knew what Joan, you know, had introduced me to by just telling me. I was told that this would help the poorest community in Alabama, which was at that time, and I don't know if it still is or not, Lowndes County. And she gave me several ways that I could help or if I knew somebody else who would want to help. And the one that she mentioned, was the one that I was most interested in, was working, selling clothing to—and shoes and other household items—to the people of Lowndes County or to anybody who was in need at that time.

[02:41] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so you worked with a distribution center, was it located in Tuskegee, or . . . ?

[02:47] Toni Reed-Rashid: It was it was located in Tuskegee. It was in—oh, I forgotten what the dorms names are. But it was in right outside of one of the dorms and it was a distribution center they had brought all the clothing and food items and the household goods to this one particular place. And we would go there—well we—I would go there every weekend. I think I worked weekends and meet with the people who would come to purchase the clothing. They were extremely grateful and very humbled by it and I would sell clothing from I say shoes I would sell shoes that were a nickel a pair. Sometimes dresses might be fifty cents. And even you know at that time that was really a very good price for someone to pay who really did not have an income or had very small amount of income. Do you have another question?

[04:13] Joan Burroughs: People came there from all over not just Lowndes County? They came from different places to buy things?

[04:20] Toni Reed-Rashid: They need because what happened was it was word of mouth just like most things are. They would come from everywhere. But there was no doubt that when they showed up, that these were people who truly were in need. They didn't know what to say, they didn't know how to ask me, you know anything. So being my little gregarious self I'd go right up to them and start talking and try my best to make them feel extremely comfortable in their purchases. I would help them try on the shoes, help them try on the clothing, I tell them you don't want to pay for it if you get home, and then the clothing did not fit. So, I tried to make them, you know, as comfortable as I possibly could. I really enjoyed that part of it for two reasons because I love working with people and I love helping. But also because my major at Tuskegee was fashion clothing and design by Booker Felder. He was my instructor. And that was something I really wanted to do, which I did.

I designed clothing for a little over eleven years. I was a clothing designer for Simon and Magilner here in Birmingham. I did children's clothing. And I think that helped me to feel even more attached to my major. And Booker Felder also told me that it helped him in the end, because he was able to bring his students from Tuskegee—it was only four of them, I believe—to walk through the design process with me, in Birmingham in West End. And at that time, and I think the whole time, I was the only African American designer that they had. And I know I was



the only one there at the premises where I was located. But I always had the, you know, desire to design. And I think that the TIS/CEP program really helped me feel connected to that, made me know that I had not made a mistake in what I was feeling, made me feel like this was the right path for me the path that I had chosen. Because in some ways I would be able to, I hoped, help other people who were in the same positions that the people of Lowndes County were, but more on a larger scale. Which really happened when as I was designing, our company normally sold to places like Macy's and Strawbridge and Clothier, upscale stores at that time in Chicago, New York, all over, California, we had representation, you know, in all fifty states. But they also sold to the army: I'd have to change the clothing and make it less frilly, or take off the buttons, or move a zipper, or make a shorter zipper. So that the people in the army or in different areas, maybe rural areas could also afford the clothing. And knowing what I knew from the, my TISEP experience really helped me with that.

I'd also like to say something about my parents in this experience. I remember, it was Fourth of July, it actually was the third. They called me on the dorm phone. I went and answered the phone, they asked: Are you coming home tomorrow? And I said no, I'm not. I've decided that I would stay here and work with TIS/CEP. And they asked: Are you sure that's what you want to do? I said yes, because I felt like more people were going to come [to TIS/CEP's clothing distribution center] during a holiday because they were off. Because a lot of them were sharecroppers and people that work for other people, and they did not usually have time off. So, the Fourth of July would be a wonderful thing for them—time rather—for them to be able to come. It was so heartwarming. One of the things that I really remember the most about me working there [at the campus distribution center] and knowing that I'm doing the right thing. That afternoon, early afternoon, probably was right at noon. My father, my sister, my mother, and my little nephew drove up and parked right in front of the TIS/CEP distribution center. I had no idea they were coming. They came because they thought it was such a wonderful thing for me to do and they wanted to see exactly where I was working and what I was doing and how I was helping someone. And I remember sitting out back, they brought barbecue and watermelon. And, you know, naturally offered to everybody but few people wanted something. But I remember that. And it made me proud to know that my parents were so proud. And my little sister was so proud of me for doing something like that, for helping others because you do it, there is no pay. [I volunteered in the distribution center]. The only pay you get is what's in your heart. And my heart was full.

[10:45] Joan Burroughs: Okay, well, you answered a lot of the questions that I have not yet asked.

[10:50] Toni Reed-Rashid: Oh, I'm sorry.

[10:51] Joan Burroughs: Oh, no, no, no. But that works. So, with the distribution center, did you ever—do you know how the clothing and the articles were collected?

[11:03] Toni Reed-Rashid: I really, I can't say for sure, but they were collected all over. Anybody could bring items to the center but they had to be in good repair. They did not have to be new, but we didn't want any run over shoes or any dresses with all the buttons off of them.



Now if a button was hanging, that wasn't a problem. I fixed the button. If they had just a loose couple of loose threads, there was not a problem with that. But we wanted it to be something that the people would be proud to wear, or that their children would be proud to wear. So, they brought it to us.

[11:46] Joan Burroughs: Do you think there was somebody in the program who also collected from community?

[11:50] Toni Reed-Rashid: It had to be because I received some. Like I said, I worked on the weekends, and it was always a fresh batch of something else to be given away. And we'd have to go through it, tag it. And even things like it says, given the shoes. I remember one little girl said I really want them, but I don't think we can pay a nickel. And I said, well, how much can you—can your mother pay? She said, I think she had about three or four cents. I said, okay, that'd be fine. I mean, I wanted to just give it to her, but something I have learned later in life and that didn't know then, that people do like to pay for what they get. They feel better about it. They feel bigger about it. They feel like they didn't get a handout, they had a hand up.

[12:49] Joan Burroughs: That's a very good, that's a good way to see things. And so now, so when you—you pretty much volunteered. You know some people in TISEP were paid. You didn't—

[13:02] Toni Reed-Rashid: I did not get paid. I chose not to be paid.

[13:05] Joan Burroughs: You wanted to be—you wanted to volunteer.

[13:07] Reed-Rashid: I was strictly volunteer. I never got a penny.

[13:10] Joan Burroughs: Okay. Okay. Now, so you've explained a lot about that. So, you worked only in Tuskegee, you didn't go out into the counties—because there were thirteen counties.

[13:20] Toni Reed-Rashid: I did not. I stayed. I stayed right there at the distribution center, and I worked there. The only time I went out into the counties was during the voting time.

[13:34] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so now let me see where are we in the interview? This is very, very good and very enriching because no one's talked about the distribution centers yet.

[13:43] Toni Reed-Rashid: Oh, okay.

[13:44] Joan Burroughs: That's a good thing. And you did say that the TISEP experience kind of like influenced you and your future decisions?

[13:57] Toni Reed-Rashid: Yes, it did. I had already made the decision about my field of study, clothing and design. That was what I was taking at the time. But it made me understand that this



was truly my calling. I believed in my heart already that it was truly my calling. But you know, that experience kind of reinforced that.

[14:21] Joan Burroughs: I see now. So, I think that you've talked a lot about the TISEP experience. Did you know of other people's experiences while out in the counties or did you ever talk to other people in TISEP? I mean, yours was kind of like pretty much tied to the distribution center. So maybe there was a lot of that you didn't come into contact with?

[14:44] Toni Reed-Rashid: Well.

[14:45] Joan Burroughs: Mr. Felder seemed to have been very clued in to TISEP.

[14:50] Toni Reed-Rashid: Yes, he was. And he thought it was really nice what I was doing, and he said so.

[14:58] Joan Burroughs: I think that he might have been instrumental in receiving those items that you distributed too because someone else mentioned to me that he would, he brought in, he brought things in sometimes.

[15:12] Toni Reed-Rashid: And it could have been. I personally never saw him bring anything in, nor did he tell me that he did. But it seems as if this would be something that he certainly would do. Now, there were sometimes two other people, sometimes one other person that was there at the distribution center. I don't remember them. I don't remember their names. I just knew that I was not always there by myself. Yes.

[15:43] Joan Burroughs: Okay, now, the next question has to do with civil rights. What did you know about the civil rights movement when you were a student?

[15:54] Toni Reed-Rashid: Again, I had Joan Hamby Burroughs to thank for that. She would come to my dorm and wake me up: "Get up, get up, get up, time to go, we're going downtown to protest, we're going to talk about this, and we're gonna get everybody's voting rights". And I'm gonna tell you something that I did at Tuskegee with Joan. This was one early morning, when I say early, Joan wanted to go at 7:00, 7:30 AM, which we did. And not just Joan, because truly, I was a young woman with my own mind. So had I not wanted to go, I'd tell Joan to go on and I was not going. But I wanted to go, I wanted to be a part. And this particular time, it was on a Saturday. Joan said, today, we're going to the Mercantile. Actually, I had not heard of the Mercantile, you know. And then when we got there, I understood it was where they got all their dry goods. And they bought—the people from the other counties-- bought everything that they needed to sustain their lives and to plant and all of that, on their farms. A lot of them were sharecroppers. But we were there not to assist them in purchasing, but to sit in front of the store, and not allow them to go in.

And the reason being is on the weekends when they knew that the sharecroppers were coming. . . and I would say 99.9% of them were African American . . . they would raise their prices from



50%, up to sometimes 100% more, to sell the same products that they sold to their white customers for less. So we were trying to protest this particular store, so that they would not be able to let people in and at least they would lose money for that particular day. We were sitting right in front of the, this store door. There were men, against the protest, on horses present also. Now there had to have been about 50 of us, so I don't want you to think that there was just Joan and Toni there. But it had to be about 50. There might have been 25 or more people (customers) there to buy. And we were not letting the people in and the way that happens is you just sit on the ground. And then the horses walked over us. I had—I was scared to death. I did not scream, I didn't holler. I just sat there and I prayed and prayed that they didn't stomp me or break my leg or something. Later, I found out that horses don't do that, they wouldn't step on something that was alive unless it was harming them.

But that was one of the things we did. We protested with that. I remember going to a church—I don't even remember where the church was—to listen to Martin Luther King, he came to the campus to speak to everyone and I was with Joan at that time, and it was also in the evening. But he never got there. He was held up in Birmingham is what we heard. Now I don't know if that was the same time he was put in jail in Birmingham. I'm not sure. But I do know that he never, he never got there. The people that were there at that time, I think was H Rap Brown was there. Fred Shuttlesworth was there. He left soon after they announced that King was not coming. I don't know if he went back to Birmingham. And oh, I can't think of who else was there but then a lot of my friends were there as well. My peers who were attending Tuskegee.

[20:15] Joan Burroughs: Well, that's answered a couple of questions there. Oh, who were your friends that went . . . ?

[20:23] Toni Reed-Rashid: Well, Sammy Leamon Younge. He was murdered there. They shot him in the back of the head for going, wanting to go to the bathroom and it was for whites only. My friend, Eugene Adams, let's see Wendell Paris, Eldridge Burns, Ralphine Pughsley. These were the main people that I know, or I knew that were there. Betty Shields might have been there. There was another Betty, but I can't think of her name. Anyway,

[21:13] Joan Burroughs: She was from Birmingham.

[21:15] Toni Reed-Rashid: Yes, she was from Birmingham. She turned—she was a policeman for a while.

[21:18] Joan Burroughs: Gamble.

[21:19] Toni Reed-Rashid: Gamble. Betty Gamble. That is her name. She was there. And these were people—Palmer Sullins. he was there. William Winston. And four of the people that I named were all residents of Tuskegee. Also, I remember being there at one point in time and Joan and I were down at the square and Palmer Sullins was painting the statue that was there in the square black. He was way up top with his bucket and paintbrush. And Joan turned to me and said, oh, we better go. And I couldn't understand why. We had an uncle that lived there, and she saw him. And she thought perhaps he was going to come and get us. But he did not. It all worked



out well. But my time at Tuskegee was [cough], excuse me, was full. Very, very much of an adventure. Besides being an education, I learned how to be very proud of being a black young lady at the time, which helped me to grow up to be a proud black woman. And I raised two wonderful and extremely proud young daughters. Who also, one went to a—well, they both went to great colleges. But one decided that the college—the first college they both attended—after two years that she would transfer to a HBCU because she said, “Mother, I just have to get that black experience you talked about at Tuskegee”, she said so she moved. And not to say she lost a thing. Because in her moving as far as grades were concerned, she graduated summa cum from Delaware State University, and where she was at first was St. Mary's College in Maryland. And they called it a beach because that's basically what it was. And there were, it was 99.5% non-black. So that did not bother them because I had raised them well.

[23:56] Joan Burroughs: Yes. So, you felt, did you feel that the work though, you know, the civil rights movement, did a lot to try to uplift black people. And I'll read to you something that was in one of the there was a publication that I was made aware of—

[24:23] Toni Reed-Rashid: Okay.

[24:24] Joan Burroughs: —when I started with this project. And they referred to TISEP, in this way “Tuskegee, another kind of demonstration in the black belt, a new kind of civil rights demonstration.” And they were talking about the work of TISEP at that time. You know, the fact that people were learning to read, that there were students out there working in the communities to educate, and then there were also things on campus. As you said, the clothing distribution center. I think some of it might have even happened during the week in the counties outside of Macon County.

[25:05] Toni Reed-Rashid: Oh, they did, they, the students would go, I did not do that. I did not do that. Most of mine was during weekends. And then if it was during the week, because it was a protest for civil rights, as far as you know, helping somebody, it wasn't always the weekend, it could be at any time. Like for voting rights, you'd go and stand, or you'd help people. But most of the time, indeed, was done, you know, for the weekend. TISEP was my choice.

[25:41] Joan Burroughs: Yes. Well, that was I think, that that's pretty good. And you really added to, to the content that we have.

[25:50] Toni Reed-Rashid: Oh wonderful, I'm glad. I'm glad that I could do that. You know, it's amazing what you do, and learn, and find out as you're growing, and you don't even know what it is until later in life. The experiences that you have and the way you try, the road that you try to have your children and your grandchildren to follow is because you've traveled that road. And or you've heard your parents who travel those same roads. And they give you an understanding of that. And they tell us about it . . . And they tell us about it . . . And they tell us about it! They make it quite clear, the roads that they've had to travel to get to where they are, to get us to where we are.

[26:54] Joan Burroughs: Where we need to be for sure.



[26:56] Toni Reed-Rashid: Yes, oh, we still have a long road. What they say?: “You got a hard row to hoe?” We've got a hard row to hoe. But because of the things that we have done in the past, and the experiences that we've had, I think I actually believe the little things and my small contributions have helped. I was not, you know, like on the frontlines. I didn't do the Pettus Bridge and those kinds of things. But I did in Birmingham when I was still in high school. But that was it, but I did it. And I did it because it was from my heart. And the wonderful thing about it is my parents never told me that I could not do it. Never ever said “Toni, this is not for you. That's not what we want you to do.” ... We want you to be this, that, the other, none of that. “You do what's in your heart to do, but be as careful as you possibly can.” and that's all they asked me.

[28:01] Joan Burroughs: All you can do. Yep.

[28:04] Toni Reed-Rashid: That's all they asked me. And so, I did. Always be honest and tell the truth. Because believe me, it all comes back to you. Yes.

[28:16] Joan Burroughs: Well, I thank you for this interview, and will get a copy of it to you.

[28:22] Toni Reed-Rashid: Okay, that would be wonderful. And just so you know, it was absolutely my pleasure. And as you heard, Joan was a true inspiration in helping me to do a lot of the things that I did. She was my older cousin by six months [laughter]. But as you see here, we're still in touch. And you know, family is everything.

[28:51] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[28:51] Toni Reed-Rashid: So, thank you. Thank you for having me. I truly enjoyed giving what I could remember of my past time at TIS/CEP.

[29:01] Joan Burroughs: Thank you. Thank you. This will end the interview. Thank you.

[29:05] Toni Reed-Rashid: Very good.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Jeff Strate/Minneapolis MN

Interviewer: Lisa Daniels/Birmingham AL

Date: June 27, 2021

Transcriptionist: Joan Burroughs

Jeff Strate Ohio University (MA) St. Olaf College (BA). After finishing his junior year at St. Olaf College, Jeff Strate, Layton Kelson and Charles Larson, as part of TISEP, were guests of the Norman Pitts family in rural Lee County. They were among 6 TISEPers who were assigned to Wachoochee School in Salem AL. Jeff joined the Peace Corps and served in Uganda from 1967-70. After studying journalism at the University of Minnesota, a career in television. Jeff is a television producer. He is writer, director, reporter/host who has worked in major cities from Minnesota to Massachusetts. His work appears on HBO, PBS, Travel and other cable access channels. Jeff hosts a television program, Open Space, that covers human rights as well as transit and education equity advocacy in the Twin City MN region.



Jeff Strate

0:04] Lisa Daniels: This is Lisa Daniels interviewing for Jeff Strate. It is 8:11 AM Saturday, June 26, 2021. Hi, Jeff.

[0:19] Jeff Strate: Good morning Lisa Daniels] How are you doing today?

[0:22] Jeff Strate: Well, we're fine. And the hot sun is not shining this morning. The birds are singing outdoors. It's the day after the Chauvin sentencing hearing and decision by Judge Cahill. So, we're all kind of, not all of us, of course, but we're all thinking about that. It's been part of our lives for more than a year.

[0:55] Lisa Daniels: How has this experience impacted you? And does this have anything to do with the TISEP program? Do you see any connection?

[[[Editorial Note by Jeff Strate: I improved the fluency of my answer on Monday 6/12/2023]]]



[1:06] Jeff Strate: Well, for me personally, yes. In 1965, when I went to Tuskegee to get involved with TISEP, most of the [civil and voting rights action] was in the South. People were being martyred on behalf of civil rights, and it seems that's where the big problems were, down South. But over the past fifty years, we've learned that there are problems everywhere in the country; most recently and notably in Minneapolis, and St. Paul, Minnesota. In an ironic way, it seems we still have an awful lot to do regarding civil rights, understanding and getting along peaceably, and understanding different cultures within our country. And that's true here in Minnesota as well. That said, there - - are a lot of great people everywhere, everywhere. And what you see on the news doesn't really reflect the totality of what Minnesota is right now, just as the news did not reflect the totality of what was going on down south in the mid to late '60s. We've all had to learn much more about what had happened after the Civil War. We had good history teachers at my high school, but they couldn't possibly cover all of the mishandling of people in a history course. All that stuff about Reconstruction and the "Jim Crow" era is now coming to light again. Or not again. I am hoping the death of George Floyd and the incarceration of way too many black men for minor crimes will bring reforms. People are getting a sense that this is not right. Of course, others don't. I'm being inarticulate here, but I learned during the TISEP program: Keep your eyes open and listen to what people have to say. And what also I discovered in Alabama 65 years ago, was that the Norman Pitts family, the family who put me, a Tuskegee student and another St. Olaf student up for the summer, pretty much had the same values as the Strate family in Minnesota; different churches, different ways of living but pretty much the same values. You're not going to learn that watching the news. You know, you've got to meet people.

[4:45] Lisa Daniels: So, as you mentioned, your family, could you tell me a little bit about your decision to be a part of this program? And what was your family's reaction?

[4:56] Jeff Strate: Well, I was in my junior year at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. It's a small liberal arts college, at the time, about 2000, maybe 2100 students, mostly Lutheran and white from the Midwest and a lot from small towns in the Midwest. We had some foreign exchange students and that's about it. But it was also a time when things were gearing up in the Civil Rights Movement. Also, the "Freedom of Speech" movement in Berkeley, California (referred to by cynics as "The Dirty Word" movement) on campuses were happening around the country. These were things that we talked about in high school. And at St. Olaf, during my sophomore and junior years, we staged demonstrations/protests that were about campus issues. St. Olaf was a Lutheran College. During morning chapel services, Rolvaag Memorial Library, The Cage coffee shop and classrooms were closed. Students attended Boe Memorial chapel services during cold winters to avoid long walks back to their dorms and just to keep warm. I was part of the group that organized and managed a sit-in at the library during chapel. We felt that church attendance should be an individual's free will decision. Our quiet, polite demonstration upset other students, some librarians and college administrators. I was not the leader, but was part of the small group that met with college president Dr. Sidney Rand. We talked about the sit-in and other student issues. For example, women students were treated like second-class citizens; they had stricter hours and dress codes and dorm-visiting and off-campus travel regulations than men. At the time, Civil Rights was making the national news. We heard about the TISEP program from St. Olaf English professor Dr. Richard Buckstead and Tuskegee Institute Dean,



P.B. Phillips. Dean Phillips visited St. Olaf College and with Dr. Buckstead met with students and offered an opportunity to join the summer program as a tutor, or in some other capacity. And so, it just seemed to me, "Hey, this is what we've got to do right now. This is happening in our country." Approximately 65 St. Olaf students traveled individually or paired-up to travel to Tuskegee to join. So, I did it. We were not paid a lot of money, but for me TISEP was an exciting chance to get involved with others in the Deep South at time when Minnesota seemed isolated from big changes there and elsewhere. It was my first time out of Minnesota to work and know folks who I thought were really different from myself. Okay, we all needed money to continue college, but when the opportunity to join a summer-long program- not just a week to, say, help a church or put up a shelter, I was interested. We "Oleys" didn't know how large TISEP was going to be until we actually arrived in Alabama. For me, it was an adventure just riding with my friend Dick Knight in his car to Tuskegee. Dick drove on to Florida. My real adventure began signing in with the TISEP check-in team

[9:31] Lisa Daniels: So, before we get into the real adventure, could you tell me a little bit more about your family and what was their response when you decided to take part in this program?

[9:40] Jeff Strate: Well, my mom and dad supported it. You know? They said "Go for it! Yes, that's fine. Be careful." You know, people were getting killed. A St. Olaf graduate had been murdered, I think going into Bloody Sunday, James Reeb. And you know, that was on our mind. Other people were getting killed, too. We had no idea however, how difficult life had been for African Americans down south. We had an idea, but we had no idea about what is now called institutional racism. But my parents were supportive. Some of their friends were not: "Why does he want to do this" ? they asked. Well, you know it was just cocktail conversation that I overheard from some of my parents friends. But my parents were supportive. Maybe they just wanted me out of the house that summer [laughs].

[10:56] Lisa Daniels: So, of course, your parents are supportive. You arrive at Tuskegee University. What was that big and real adventure? Tell us a little bit about that.

[11:06] Jeff Strate: Well, it was the first time I'd lived with people who weren't of Scandinavian or Northern European descent. At Tuskegee, we were in the minority. So that was kind of exciting. Our dorm mates were Tuskegee students, some like ourselves from other colleges. And the food was different. For me it was: "Oh, hey, this is kind of cool. What does this taste like? Not bad." And so the food "adventure" and then the organization of the program was incredible, kind of like going to boot camp, what I thought of as boot camp. We woke up early in the morning for exercising on a football field and running around and doing calisthenics. And then assigned to and began training for what our jobs would be. Some TISEP college participants were in theatrical groups; some were in health groups. I was designated a tutor. During those first weeks, the program was trying to figure out where we should go. Layton Kelson, a Tuskegee student, I, and Chuck Larson, another St. Olaf student, were assigned to teach at Wacoochee Junior High School in Lee County. The three of us shared a bedroom in the home rented by our host the Pitts family. That is kind of exciting. Layton, I recall, is from Brooklyn. His family was a Navy family. In 1965, they were living in Beaufort, South Carolina. I think Layton is still alive



and he still lives in South Carolina. So, he's more used to the south than Chuck and myself. You know, the color of the earth and the unpaved, country roads in Lee County are reddish. Where we come from, it's rich, dark soil. Lee County trees were also kind of different. So too was the way of life; the homes were much more modest than in Minnesota, even compared to our poor, dying farming towns which were beginning to disappear in the 1960s. Another difference was Southern accents. They are really different from upper-Midwest accents and, to begin with, hard for me to understand. I'm really bad at foreign languages [laughs]. The Southern African-American dialect was different, but you know, you get used to it. And you learn things.

We were college students. So, you know, the world as a whole is kind of like, "Hey! Wow! ... regardless of one's color or cultural background."

[14:56] Lisa Daniels: So, of course, you mentioned that you taught at Wacoochee High School in Lee County.

[15:01] Jeff Strate: Yes, it was a junior high school at that time.

[15:03] Lisa Daniels: Junior high school at that time.

[15:05] Jeff Strate: Yes

15:05] Lisa Daniels: Do you remember any of the lessons you taught? And what was your experience with the students?

[15:12] Jeff Strate: Well, the students who showed up were motivated, very motivated. Some had to walk three or four or five miles to get there every day. And I only taught, I think, some English, you know, like reading and writing and things like that, remedial English. And I may have taught, it's been a long time ago, I should have read the TISEP Reporter, which was the program's weekly newspaper. But we were teaching to help students prepare for integrated schools rather than the so called separate but equal schools. The students at Wacoochee Junior High School in Salem, not Selma, were all very smart, bright and eager kids. The premise of our program was that students needed to get ready for an integrated school and for actual textbooks that were not ten years old. I didn't know if I was a good teacher or not. Maybe not. I was personally worried that I was not doing a good job. I did save a number of student notes and completed homework as well as issues of the TISEP Reporter. I've donated those items and photos to the St. Olaf College TISEP archives. In terms of teaching, we were working for Wacoochee School. That summer, Wacoochee was managed either by the principal or a teacher, perhaps Miss Thorne. So, we were not "going to set up a tent and teach school on our own." No, no. We were part of that school district. Dean Phillips and his colleagues who were administering the entire program made sure that school districts were absolutely involved. We could not have tutored at Wacoochee without the school district's permission.



[18:24] **Lisa Daniels:** So, you mentioned that this program was to help students prepare for integrated schools. What did that?

[18:33] **Jeff Strate:** That's how I understood it. Yes.

[18:34] **Lisa Daniels:** Okay, what did that mean? Possibly, you know, psychologically, what activities did you do to prepare students for that?

[[**Jeff Strate Editorial NOTE: I re-worked the following answer for clarity and added background details on June 12, 2023**]]

[18:44] **Jeff Strate:** Well, I don't recall much of that, except for just teaching in the classroom. Of course, we'd be designated or asked to oversee recess time and oversee playground games and baseball. We sensed that this was the first time that students had actually had a teacher who was not African American and or not Alabamian. It's just a white person teaching them who was motivated to be there. I could say that on behalf of the other teachers from St. Olaf and the other white teachers who participated in the program. There weren't many of us, but I think just being there was important. One of the great things of this was that Chuck, Layton and I got invited to attend Weeping Mary Baptist Church, perhaps the dominant black church in that part of Lee County. I remember church services and potluck picnics, where people would bring lemonade, iced tea, ripe peaches, chicken, sweet corn and sweet potato pie. Very cool. I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the church service. In fact, that's where I learned about the Holy Spirit. Weeping Mary was where I began to have second, fleeting thoughts about being a Lutheran. Some of the parishioners were dressed in uniforms and looked like nurses.

When the preacher really got going, some parish members would faint, apparently captured by the Holy Spirit. The "nurses" were like first responders for those who were losing their balance and might fall to the floor. I thought, "Boy, I've never seen this at a Lutheran Church. Maybe they have a different, superior way of getting there than I do!" Thirty some years later when a few of my TISEP friends and I returned to Tuskegee and Lee County for a reunion and to make a public television documentary, we revisited Weeping Mary Church.

[Added on June 12, 2023]: Church elders remembered us- Chuck Larson, Layton Keelson, Lee (Myrna) Mauer, and former student Emma Jean (Pitts) Madden. Layton, Chuck and I lived with Emma Jean's family. Lee, an Oley, also taught at Wacoochee and lived in Salem with Miss Thorne, a teacher. Tuskegee coeds Anisa (Ragland) Kerr and Matty were also tutors at Wacoochee and also may have lived at Miss Thorne's house.

For Chuck, Layton, Emma Jean, Lee and myself, the return became an emotional experience. We recalled night classes for grownups at Wacoochee. An embarrassing memory for me was tutoring civics to black Alabama adults. I'm was a poli sci major with mostly theories gleaned from thickish, social science, peer-approved journals published for other scholars about "third world" development of political philosophy. I had forgotten how to talk like a person. I was with these



eager-to-learn adults. Some were elders who had never had the opportunity to learn how to write their own name. I was this good intentioned Minnesotan speaking *high falutting* academic jargon. My class smiled and intently listened. These folks were polite, warm and ... forgiving. When we returned to Emma Jean's home after night school, I asked myself: What was I thinking? My own brother (who became a political science professor) would not have known what I was talking about. Good grief. My mistake with these wonderful, real-world folks, was one I've since learned to avoid. You've got to know the back story and culture of your students and speak in their language, not with the word smithing within some academic and geographic cocoon. That lesson has helped me in Detroit, in Uganda as a Peace Corps teacher and ultimately as a journalist and community organizer to save open space.

That said, I now have about 30 user-names and about 34 passwords. Good grief!**[24:34] Lisa Daniels:** So, I have some follow up questions. I want to come back to the civics and your Peace Corps experience, but I want to go back to Weeping Mary Baptist Church. Is that a black church?**[24:46] Jeff Strate:** It is, yes.

[24:47] Lisa Daniels: Okay. And then tell us a little bit about the [church]. How often did you go to the church? Were there other churches that you had an opportunity to visit and how was this dissimilar from your Lutheran background? You mentioned a couple of things about that.

[25:03] Jeff Strate: Oh, sure. Well, Weeping Mary Baptist Church was a simple, wood frame structure with no air-conditioning. I think it has been leveled since I was last down there 30 years ago. People used hand fans to keep cool. I was unused to the growing cadence of the sermon and the energy of the preacher, but it was interesting, even fascinating. The Lutheran churches I went to were liberal churches, intellectual to a degree. Everyone thought I'd become a pastor. But you know, I'm kind of a shy guy and I couldn't see myself being a pastor at all. But Weeping Mary Baptist Church helped me realize that everyone has a different lens, every individual has a different lens into what God is about, and what Christianity is about, what any religion is about. I think that different religions have a common core. The differences are shaped by various cultural, economic, geographic and historic conditions. And so, yes. I had a lot of joy going to Weeping Mary Baptist Church.

Lisa Daniels [27:02: Are you saying "Weeping Berry" or "Weeping Mary"?

Jeff Strate [27:05]: "Weeping Mary" as in...

Lisa Daniels [27:07]: "Mary"?

Jeff Strate [27:07]: "Mary," Yes, yes.

Lisa Daniels [27:11]: Okay, I want to make sure we have that correct.



[27:13] **Jeff Strate:** Yes. Good. Thanks. And church, you know, Lutheran churches aren't all the same, either, you know. Some of the ones I went to were really large. Their services were produced like a television special. Everything was on cue with music that came at the right place, the singing was perfect. But some of them (Lutheran Churches) were small and rural, and more personal. So yes, Lutheranism comes in all flavors.

[27:57] **Lisa Daniels:** Can you tell me a little bit about your experience with the night school teaching civics to the adults? Why was there a need to teach civics to adults?

[[[**Jeff Strate NOTE: I have re-worked the following answer for clarity on June 13, 2023**]]]

[28:08] **Jeff Strate:** Voter registration, the Civil Rights Movement and the Selma to Montgomery freedom marches were going on. SNCC and other groups were registering voters. People were not yet used to having any kind of power with the vote, or, perhaps, how governments are supposed to work. They knew how Alabama's system worked. What we were modestly attempting with the grownups at night school was to say, "Well, this is how it probably should work," according to the law and your rights. But we were not political for a very important reason: We were teachers- tutors. We took seriously orders to not demonstrate or register voters. We were there to teach math, English reading, typing, and things like that.

[29:23] **Lisa Daniels:** You mentioned they were not yet used to having power. And it was because of the system. Can you go into detail about why they weren't used to having power and what this system was?

[[[**NOTE: I have re-worked the following answer for clarity on June 13, 2023**]]]

[29:38] **Jeff Strate:** Well, I've never lived in the South except for three and a half months in Alabama and short subsequent visits. But we had read about and seen documentaries about reconstruction and the Jim Crow era. TISEP 1965 happened during the Jim Crow era. You didn't do certain things. You didn't say certain things. And you had to act a certain way- both blacks and whites. But we midwesterners didn't know what it was like to actually live that way. Life for a white liberal in Minnesota was different. Okay. Of course, we also didn't know much at that time about what Native Americans had been going through, since the pioneers arrived. That's all come out over the last couple of years. And the history is just horrible. It is just horrible. So, in our small way in Alabama, we were just trying to say, "Okay, if it works the way it's supposed to, this is what you can do in this way." I don't recall telling adults, "Hey, go out and register to vote," although others might have. We didn't want our educational program to be shut down or attacked by the Klan or its enablers. We didn't need that trauma. We were there just to teach. Get that reading level up, get the spelling levels up, develop typing skills. And that's primarily what we were doing, which I agreed with.



[31:46] **Lisa Daniels:** So, you mentioned, you know, the possibility of being threatened by the Klan. How probable was that at that point in time?

[[[**Lisa Daniel's request for clarification at 32:02 and my answer below have both been shortened & clarify my intended answer. Refer to the transcript if needed,]]] [31:55] **Jeff Strate:** Well, I never met any white people in Lee County or at Wacoochee unless they were part of the TISEP program. However, a car full of racially mixed TISEP Wacoochee tutors went on a three-day vacation trip to St. Petersburg, Florida. On our way back to Salem — and we talk about this in the public television documentary we made 30 years ago. We tried to get a meal in a Perry, Florida restaurant. While waiting at a booth to place our orders someone played a comedy tune with Jim Crow flavoring on the restaurant's jukebox. It featured two black guys with heavy, stereotypical accents flying a biplane. I recall the characters were going to dive bomb the Capitol in Montgomery or something like that. It was like listening to Amos and Andy, an old radio series which was voiced by white actors, not by black actors. I said to them: Layton, Anisa, Myrna, Matti, and Chuck, "Well, that's kind of strange." We also found it strange that no waitress had come to take our orders. I went over to the wait station, and said, "Hey, we'd like to put our order in." I returned to our table. No one came. About 10 minutes later, a deputy sheriff walks in. He was this guy with shades, high dark polished boots in an uniform with a badge. He said something to the effect that, "You know, you guys should probably not hang around here much longer." That's what I recall. Don't take that as a direct quote. But I politely but firmly informed the officer that, "By law, we should be served here." I recall referencing, for the benefit of the officer, that U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy could take an interest in our situation. Layton quietly told me to shut up! don't do that. don't say that. We're in trouble. We did leave and were tailed out of town (maybe to the county line) by the officer in his squad car. And then about maybe 15 miles north on the way back to Alabama, there was a gas station. Myrna asked the female attendant if we could fill up and get some food inside. She said, "Yes, sure." This was a friendly white woman about only 15 miles away; a totally different situation [35:02] **Lisa Daniels:** This is in Alabama [35:04] **Jeff Strate:** No, we were in Florida.**

[35:05] **Lisa Daniels:** Still in Florida. Okay.

[35:06] **Jeff Strate:** On our way back to Alabama. Yes. And there's an account of this story in the documentary we did. And so that's the only problem. But I think once in Auburn, near the campus, a mixed group of us, including kids from the Pitts' family were not served in a pizza parlor. We were told to leave. We left. And then there was the time we were chased on the red dirt roads between Wacoochee School and the Pitts' farm. We believed it was some white guy, probably a Klansman. But we had a better car. He was chasing us to harass us or whatever. But he ate the red dust our car stirred up. Emma Jean and her younger brother Allen knew all the roads in the area, "Turn here! turn there!" And so, we escaped. Others in the TISEP program, experienced similar or more intense situations. There's one anecdote that was kind of touching. During our last days at the Pitts farm, Mrs. Pitts showed us a fruit basket. And she said, "This is from the white farmer down the road. He didn't want to show up. But he was happy you're here."



[37:02] **Lisa Daniels:** Why do you think he made the decision not to show up but to send the fruit basket instead?

[37:08] **Jeff Strate:** Well, he'd be harassed by his white neighbors. But he did leave a gift.

[37:23] **Lisa Daniels:** So, you've told us about your position in the program, a little bit about your roommates and family. What was your experience at Tuskegee University? What was it like to be at Tuskegee University in 1965?

[[[Jeff Strate Note: The following answer has been polished a bit on June 14, 2023]]]

[37:39] **Jeff Strate:** Well, it wasn't like going to college, it was like going to army camp, which is a good thing. That's a compliment. It was very organized. And it was, it provided me with a feeling that "Hey, things are getting done here. Things are working, things are moving forward. These people may not know what they're doing all the time, but they know far more than I do. And I'm really happy to be part of an organized initiative to help out part of you, know, "what Martin Luther King and the other civil rights leaders said was extremely important." Even though the laws changed. Education is that third leg of the stool to keep things moving ahead. And so that's why we were there. And that's why we didn't want to make news or get in trouble. The incidents down in Perry, Florida and Auburn were not demonstrations on our part. We were just hungry. We just wanted food and that just happened to us. So that was extremely important, I think, to be part of that program. The Tuskegee campus was exotic for us. As I mentioned before, the food was good and so too the camaraderie of getting to know Tuskegee students. We were all the same age. I thoroughly enjoyed my times on the Tuskegee campus.

[39:34] **Lisa Daniels:** Were there any social events on campus for you to interact with one another?

[39:39] **Jeff Strate:** Yes. Sure, there were, all the time. We were all living in the same dorms together. We were eating together. They showed outdoor movies at night; we'd just sit down and they'd have an outdoor screen and a 16-millimeter projector showing Hollywood films. After the flick we'd visit a fried chicken joint just off campus. We were in contact all the time. The St. Olaf students did not live together or eat together. We were just mixed in with the Tuskegee students.

[40:21] **Lisa Daniels:** So, do you think this program not only allowed you to help students who were in high school or junior high school prepare for an integrated school, but for the students on Tuskegee's campus to live in an integrated society.

[[[The following answer was re-crafted on 6/13/2003 to more fluently and accurately represent my thoughts about 1965 as well as these days.]]]



[40:38] Jeff Strate: For those students who were from segregated parts of Alabama, that may have been true. But Tuskegee students came from all over the world, it was more diverse than our campus with its with mostly Scandinavian American students. Tuskegee was a more cosmopolitan place. We didn't see that then because we were young and didn't know much. But in retrospect, that is what it was. So, you know, African American students from other parts of the country, from Chicago, Detroit, New York and even San Francisco and Oakland, were part of a different kind of integration at Tuskegee: rural/ Southern, urban/Northern. African American students from the midwest and the coasts knew more about the South because their families had migrated north from the South.

[42:04] Lisa Daniels: With the great migration.

[42:06] Jeff Strate: Yes, that's right.

[42:09] Lisa Daniels: Could you share, what was your experience after the program? Had it changed your view of the world or the South in any way? And what did you share when you got back to St. Olaf?

[[[NOTE: With the following answer, I have eliminated minor stuff that I talked about earlier in the interview and did some polishing on June 13, 2023]]]

[42:21] Jeff Strate: Okay, um, well, it certainly changed me. I don't think it changed my values. It confirmed and energized my values. I don't know, if I got them from my family, schools or church, it's just who I happened to turn out to be as a young kid. My values weren't changed, but were reinforced by what happened to me thanks to Tuskegee. I'm not a religious person—but the values of that secular summer program seemed to be aligned with Christianity as a whole. I felt comfortable, very comfortable, with what I was doing. When we returned to St. Olaf, for my senior year, Dr. Richard Buckstead had the TISEP veterans speak about our experiences to groups in the Twin Cities, Northfield and southern Minnesota.

And we thought, "Hey, they're going to want to hear this." [laughs] I think maybe only one of the groups we spoke to really appreciated what we had done. The others were exhibiting what we call "Minnesota nice." They're "nice" people, but you don't know if you're irritating them until much later. I wasn't the only guy being sent out to various towns, churches and schools to talk about our TISEP experience. But I would say that most groups responded to what we had to say, with lukewarm appreciation. And among those groups were people who silently thought, "No, they shouldn't do that."

[44:51] Lisa Daniels: Now did you...

[44:53] Jeff Strate: Go ahead, please.



[44:54] **Lisa Daniels:** Did you get a chance to possibly share this information when you got back with your family's friends? I know you mentioned, some of them didn't want you to go. Did you have an opportunity to have a cocktail conversation with them after your experience?

[[[**The following answer was re-crafted on 6/13/2003. My new answer more fluently and more accurately represents the way I should have responded to Lisa Daniels' question on June 26, 2021.**]]]

[45:09] **Jeff Strate:** My parent's friends were very curious when I returned from Alabama. Those who had doubts were more understanding than they had been before I had departed for Tuskegee. Their doubts had been primarily about the dangers they had been reading about in a part of the U.S. that they perceived to be backwards and addicted to "the good old days" of plantations, Spanish moss, servants and poverty. The Freedom Riders and Freedom Marches had signaled that things were changing in the South. My parents' friends understood that. They viewed the South as a dangerous place to go for idealistic college kids. I had a very long parental leash. I like to think that I'm the only one among my pals through high school to have never gotten in trouble.

My paternal grandparents had passed away before 1965, but my maternal grandparents were still part of my life. Gladys and George Walgreen supported my Alabama summer. Gladys corresponded by snail mail with the Pitts family for a number of years sharing Christmas cards and appreciation and 'How are you doing?' notes. It was her idea. My grandmother was a retired detective, a private detective. She worked undercover for department stores in the Twin Cities. George sold fine, tailored suits in an upscale store. One would think that they were the types that would have disliked my plans for the summer: "No way." They were concerned, but proud.

There were positive regional and community newspaper articles about the St. Olaf group in Alabama. And, generally, the response to my version of what was going on was well-received in Edina, the Minneapolis suburb where my family lived. Those who did not approve, remained politely silent and never wrote critical letters-to-the editors or the Edina Courier or the major daily newspapers.

[47:07] **Lisa Daniels:** Did your grandparents ever get a chance to meet the Pitts? Or was it all via mail?

[47:13] **Jeff Strate:** All via snail mail.

[47:15] **Lisa Daniels:** All via snail mail.

[47:15] **Jeff Strate:** All we had. We had telegrams, of course, and, you know, that's about it. So, this is all very slow stuff. Five-cent stamps.



[47:30] **Lisa Daniels:** So, if you would share, possibly three major lessons you learn from the TISEP program.

[[[Jeff Strate Note: The following paragraph more succinctly and clearly represents with far more words than my phone interview. And, I've deleted the last three or four sentences of my answer. They ramble on, don't make much sense and don't lead anywhere. Changes made on June 14, 2023]]]

[47:44] **Jeff Strate:** The first thing I think would be, so you're surrounded with different people. Don't be frightened. Learn some stuff. And be forward to the degree where you say "Hello. Hi, how you doing?" Things like that. Make that initiative yourself. You know over the past fifty years, maybe, three or four times a year, part of those panel discussions with whites and blacks talking about Civil Rights, integration, equality and bad policing, I'm thinking it's just human nature to hang out with people like yourself. In Eden Prairie, where I live now, I was a member of the city's Human Rights and Diversity Commission. There are 65,000 people living here including a large Somali community. There was a well-meaning attempt when I was a commissioner to hold a few cross-cultural mixers. Okay [laughs]. At one of them, I had to go around and whisper in the other commissioners' ears, "Go talk to people." They huddled up in pairs talking to one another. So too the Somalis, all women. It's human nature. But I had learned at Tuskegee to talk and listen to folks. Ask them how they're doing. Show an interest. Don't be shy. They may be just as shy as you are. But I'll tell you, when smiles break out, as any teacher will tell you, you realize that's what you needed to do. Another lesson I learned was just give things time. You don't have to be snappy or impatient. Provide strangers time to comfortably respond. It might not happen in one meeting, it might happen after a couple of meetings. For example, Weeping Mary Baptist Church. "Kind of cool" I thought. At first, "Gee whiz. Wow." And then second and third times around, "Okay, yes, this works for folks here." I didn't know about the important role provided by black churches as harbors of survival and reform. Also, during the summer. I realized that I did not want to go to grad school immediately after St. Olaf.

[52:17] **Lisa Daniels:** So, I want to close this out with connections. So of course, you mentioned the lessons that you learned in 1965. Did you see a connection between your experience in Alabama to Uganda? And do you also see any connections between the lessons you learned in Alabama to the things that are going in Minnesota today?

[[[Jeff Strate Note: I've reworked the following section to eliminate my factual errors during the phone interview and to more accurately and fully answer the above question]]]

[52:41] **Jeff Strate:** Well, of course, yes. Listening to people. Shortly after Tuskegee, as I noted, Ole TISEPvets were sent out to talk about TISEP in southern Minnesota. After graduation in 1966, a St. Olaf College pal, Gary Christianson (who was not at Tuskegee) and I rented an apartment for about 50 bucks a month on East Grand Boulevard in Detroit. We worked the nightshift in a Hamtramck spark plug factory. Poverty, racial discrimination, lack of housing, and injustice for African Americans in Detroit was sparking tension and social unrest. My summer in rural Alabama helped prepare me for urban Detroit and the following year, rural Uganda and



much later, situations in Minneapolis, New York and Trenton. In Detroit, Gary and I worked alongside the sons and daughters of African American migrants from the South and the sons and daughters of more recent Polish immigrants. I learned how to make potato wine in the home of one of our black co-workers and compared notes on sweet potato pie with another. We rode city buses, hung out a few times in black saloons ringing with Motown music. In August, a riot broke out when police attempted to disperse a group of “loitering” men on the east side of Detroit. Our relaxed E. Grand Blvd. neighborhood grew tense. Detroit police began showing up in “trouble spots,” sometimes with a small military-like tank. I was in Uganda during the major riots of 1967, which of course, were far larger.

Peace Corp training was more intense, complete and much longer - 3 months - than what had been possible at TISEP. Once in Uganda, there were TISEP/Peace Corps similarities. The PC office in Kampala was also run by dedicated administrators.

At a remote secondary school, per Uganda policy, we were teaching in English. Students ranging in age from 13 to 18 were from different “tribes” speaking different dialects and languages. My teacher colleagues were Ugandan, Sudanese, American, Canadian, English and Irish. I shared a staff home with two other Peace Corps teachers, one from Detroit, one from suburban Boston. We were employed by the Uganda Ministry of Education and worked directly for the headmaster of St. Edward’s School, Bukuumi.

In Alabama, our TISEP group was managed by the Wacoochee School staff - another TISEP/PC similarity. What I had learned during the summer of 1965 connected to my three years in the Peace Corps. Ironically, P.B. Philips told a small reunion of TISEP veterans on September 24, 2017 at St. Olaf College that the original name of the Tuskegee initiative in 1964 (?) - “Tuskegee Institute Community Action Corps,” was changed to “Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program” to avoid confusion with the newly created Peace Corps.

It is human nature to hang out in professional, racial, educational and economic cocoons. But I continue to find much value in connecting with folks who are different from suburban Jeff. I go to cigar lounges because a wide variety of mostly men (often total strangers) find time to share stories and argue about, say, professional sports, golf, fishing and the latest Tom Cruise movie. One of my go-to cigar lounges was ransacked during the Minneapolis riots following the murder of George Floyd. About four months later it reopened. And guess what. The customers, as they were before the riots, were diverse and on all rungs of the economic ladder.

My summer in Alabama provided me with confidence in working alongside and living with folks different from myself. I have applied and built upon the pragmatic idealism practiced during my TISEP summer in Alabama throughout my life - as a graduate student, as a factory worker, as a television producer/writer, as a community organizer to save open space, as a member of the Eden Prairie Human Right and Diversity Commission, as an advocate for transportation equity, as a member of the Peace and Social Justice Writers Group and, since September 2020, as a founding board member and reporter for a startup, on-line newspaper in Eden Prairie.



[59:27] **Lisa Daniels:** Sometimes you need an Alabama moment.

[59:29] **Jeff Strate:** Yes [laughs]. Well, that's a good title for a new documentary, or maybe your study: It's "An Alabama Moment"

[59:41] **Lisa Daniels:** Well, this is Lisa Daniels interviewing Jeff Strate. It is Saturday, June 26 at 9:10 am Central Time and I will stop the recording.

Jeff Strate's Edited Response: Thank you for the opportunity to comment, Jeff Strate.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact

Narrator: Shirley Streeter/Union Springs AL
Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham AL
November 18, 2022
Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Shirley Streeter of Union Springs AL, participated in the Mount Silla Baptist Church TIS/CEP center as a tutee during her tenth-grade year in high school. Ms. Streeter was employed at Tuskegee Institute and later enjoyed a successful career with the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.



[00:01] Joan Burroughs: Today is November 18, 2022, at 7:30pm I am Joan Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama and here to interview is Shirley Streeter, who is in Union Springs, Alabama. This interview is part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. So, you can introduce yourself if you will. Thank you.

[00:46] Streeter: Okay, today is November 18, 2022. My name is Shirley Streeter. I am in Union Springs, Alabama. I'm being interviewed by Miss Joan Burroughs in Birmingham, Alabama, regarding the TIS/CEP program.

[01:06] Joan Burroughs: Thank you. So, we'll get right on into the first question. How did you hear about the TIS/CEP program in Union Springs?



[01:18] Shirley Streeter: I heard about this program through word of mouth from my best girlfriend, Annie Johnson. She was a member of the Mount Silla Baptist Church. And she heard about the program. And they also, I think, had a flyer going around at school about it.

[01:37] Joan Burroughs: Which—what was the name of the church again?

[01:40] Shirley Streeter: Mount Silla. S-I-L-L-A.

[01:44] Joan Burroughs: Okay, thank you. I'm writing that down, so I'll remember.

[01:49] Shirley Streeter: Okay. And that's how I heard about it. And she invited me to come. She said it was a night program during that time, and they would, there was a tutoring program. So of course, we being young, when it's something to do and wanted to be away from home anyway.

[02:08] Joan Burroughs: Yes.

[02:08] Shirley Streeter: And we consented to go. And we started going there at night. So that's how I heard about it.

[02:16] Joan Burroughs: What kind what was being tutored there. Do you remember?

[02:20] Shirley Streeter: They were tutoring, if I can remember right, English and math.

[02:24] Joan Burroughs: I see. Okay, and so what—do you remember what year you were in in school when that took place?

[02:35] Shirley Streeter: I don't remember precisely, Joan. But it probably was the 10th grade.

[02:41] Joan Burroughs: Okay. Okay. And so, just tell me a little bit if you can remember anything that you did there. So, it was mostly academic that program—that night program?

[02:54] Streeter: Yes, it was mostly academic at night. And you know, we would go there, and we would get tutoring. And of course, they would give us a snack. And mostly it was like hot pot pies. And we remember that and something to drink. And then they would teach, you know, go over our lessons with us. Those especially of us—those of us that needed it, they would go over the lessons with us. And they would transport us back home. And I can't remember how, but I think they had cars. And they would take us back home, those that were not in walking distance.

[03:34] Joan Burroughs: Let's see. Were there any other components of the program than the tutoring?

03:42] Streeter: The—well, I can't remember was it that year or whether it was later that summer, because I think we were this was during the school year. But during the summer they



came in to tutor us, you know, like a summer school program. And there were activities like sports, we played softball. And they would take us on a—I remember one field trip to Tuskegee, they took us to Tuskegee Institute, now, Tuskegee University. And they took us to a play. And I remember the play, *Porgy and Bess*, and we were so excited to go on the campus of Tuskegee Institute at that time, because that's the first university or college campus that I had ever been on. I had ridden through Tuskegee, probably one time in my life. But they took us all over the campus and they rolled us around and let us see the campus. And we saw the students walking and it was fascinating to us. And Tuskegee was a beautiful town it seemed during that time, you know, so that was exposing us to some things we had never seen before.

[04:57] Joan Burroughs: I see. Well, that's it sounds wonderful. I guess since you were in high school, everybody kind of looked big to you on the campus.

[05:04] Shirley Streeter: Oh, yes, we, you know, Union Springs is twenty miles south of Tuskegee. And you know, it wasn't a big town Tuskegee wasn't. Union Springs city was about as, I guess downtown was about as big as Tuskegee. But Tuskegee had more outlying communities and stuff. So, it seemed to be a bit bigger and stuff to us. Yes.

[05:31] Joan Burroughs: Okay, and so you—how many times—how long did you attend the program?

[05:38] Shirley Streeter: Um, it was during that winter season. And I know we went that summer season. In the summer, we moved from the church to a school building, located maybe seven miles out of the town, west of Union Springs. And we went to a school that was called Thompson, and it was in the Thompson community. The school was one of those that they closed during that time, and consolidated and had sent the children to Carver, where I graduated from, where we were going to school. And so, we were having the sessions in that school in Thompson, in the Thompson community. That's T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N. And we, that's where we went. And we, they taught us there, they tutored us there. And that's where we did a lot of our sports, like the softball and any other little sports we could get.

I wish I could remember the names of the tutors, but I don't. The only one I remember his first name is Isaiah. And I think he was kind of like the head tutor. And it was another young woman there. She was a nice lady. And I can't remember her name either. But it was more than them. But those are the two that stood out in, you know, that stayed kind of in my mind for me to remember. And there were other students from the school because we rode a bus. And so, they had the bus and it picked up kids not only in the city of Union Springs, but there were outlying communities. At Thompson, that we would go out and pick up several children and bring them back to the school. In this case, also they went to school in Union Springs too because by that time, they had turned closed down all the little two and four rooms schools that these kids came from. And consolidated them and brought them back to Union Springs to attend Carver, or the elementary school, South Highlands and Union Springs Elementary.

[07:56] Joan Burroughs: Well, I didn't know about that. That's a good thing to know. I didn't know that schools closed down, the smallest schools.



[08:03] **Shirley Streeter:** Oh, yes. Some of us—some of them was those schools. What's the name of those schools? This guy that had all these schools. And I can't remember the name of them. But I know Merritt, M-E-R-R-I-T-T is one of those schools.

[08:18] **Joan Burroughs:** Were they Rosenwald schools?

[08:20] **Shirley Streeter:** Rosenwald schools. Yes, some of them were Rosenwald schools. And I know of two Rosenwald schools that are still here in Bullitt County. They are not open, but they are black community centers right now. They're trying to get them remodeled for use.

[08:40] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, well, you know that was, those—that was big in the early 1900s.

[08:45] **Shirley Streeter:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes. My parents. My mother went to a Rosenwald school. And my aunts. My family went to Rosenwald schools.

[08:55] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, that was what we had then.

[08:57] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes.

[08:57] **Joan Burroughs:** That was a black thing then.

[08:59] **Shirley Streeter:** It was. But I do remember some of the students' names that went to school with me and like I said, my girlfriend that told me about it, her name was Annie Johnson. And another one was Zela Williams. Z-E-L-A Williams. Abby Lockett . Kelly Hendricks and it was one more Hattie Carr. C-A-R-R.

[09:38] **Joan Burroughs:** What was the first name?

[09:39] **Shirley Streeter:** Hattie? H-A-T-T-I-E.

[09:42] **Joan Burroughs:** Hattie, okay. Are you still in contact with any of them?

[09:48] **Shirley Streeter:** Just my best friend, Annie Johnson. She lives in Detroit right now. And so, she's, you know, I talk to her periodically. But I don't think we ever talked about TISEP, and her memory is worse than mine [laughter]. So, I know she probably won't remember too much. Because I talk about old times sometimes, she said, I just don't remember that either.

[10:21] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I know. So, can you talk a little bit about your community? You mentioned it briefly. But you know, just about what people did there. What it was like living there.

[10:35] **Shirley Streeter:** Oh, Union Springs is a very small town. And there was not too much going on. Everything that we did, mostly Joan, was through the church or through the school. At that time, you know, there were not, there were no—the only recreation we had, there was a



movie house. And there was more that we had. Now, you know, the movie house, but as—and a swimming pool. But that was about it. But as far as the community goes, I probably wasn't privy to a lot of the stuff that was going on, especially politically. We knew who the political people were, some of them like I said, it was Judge Huffman, Rufus Huffman. He was our first probate—black probate judge that was here. And I did go to school with his son, but his son, Rufus Huffman, Jr. is one that helped to integrate the schools here.

[11:37] Joan Burroughs: I see.

[11:38] Shirley Streeter: And so, there were several that had that helped do that. And I was talking to one young lady, then she's the one lady that said that she was in that accident I told you about earlier that they were at the First Baptist Church then. And, but maybe that's where TISEP originally started before I heard about it. Because this young lady is older than me. And she said, that might have been the program. She said, because a tutor was taking us home and we had a horrific accident. And two of my classmates were in that accident at that time and was almost killed. You know, and she said, I don't think the tutor—you haven't heard of a tutor being killed or in an accident when you were working?

[12:26] Joan Burroughs: No.

[12:27] Shirley Streeter: Okay. But um, so maybe it was a different program? I'm not sure. And so, so I told her, I didn't know anything about that then until Annie told me about it.

[12:41] Joan Burroughs: I didn't know—I don't know of anyone being injured or anything. So which year was that? Do you remember the year?

[12:51] Shirley Streeter: She told me that was 1965.

[12:53] Joan Burroughs: Okay, that was the first year of TISEP.

[12:56] Shirley Streeter: Mm hmm.

[12:57] Joan Burroughs: It was first year.

[12:59] Shirley Streeter: I told I thought that was a first year that I recall you saying 1965. And so I didn't know. I didn't know anything about it in '65. Because I probably was in what, eighth grade, then.

[13:17] Joan Burroughs: You were there in '66, then.

[13:19] Shirley Streeter: '66 or '67. It was more like '67 and '68. That we were—that I was there.

[13:31] Joan Burroughs: And it's good to hear some of those names of the centers. Because I was down there last year, doing site documentation. We were trying to find all the different sites



based on the information that we had. And I did find one, and because, yes, I have to—I'd have to look up the name. But we took pictures of it. It was a church. And there was a lady there who showed me where the—I think she said that the activities were moved to a different place. And she pointed in the direction of the place. But church in Union Springs.

[14:10] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay. All right. It probably was. Could have been first Baptist or it could have been Mount Silla.

[14:17] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. I don't look it up. Now. I've got it. We took pictures of it. And we have information. Yes.

[14:24] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay.

[14:26] **Joan Burroughs:** So, you had a pretty good time, as far as your feelings about your memories.

[14:34] **Shirley Streeter:** So yes, oh, yes. But you know, we didn't know the purpose. We just thought it was someone. We didn't know who started this program. All we wanted to do is participate in it at that time. And there were some talk, you know, that we heard talk about the civil rights movement that was going on at that time. And Judge Huffman was a big part of that, you know, he was One of the leaders here in the county. And he was a big part of that. Because he encouraged us at that time, or maybe the summer after that, to be like poll watchers and stuff like that.

[15:13] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh, really?

[15:14] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes. So, I can remember being a poll watcher down in Fitzpatrick, Alabama, which is about seven miles—seven or eight, seven to ten miles out of town here. But it's still in Bullitt County, and they had a lot of little polling places, you know, and things were rough back then. They didn't want us to vote.

[15:34] **Joan Burroughs:** I know. So, you were getting a civic education and a political education and a regular education, an academic education at the same time.

[15:44] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes.

[15:47] **Joan Burroughs:** So yes, and, you know, the—how did you feel about TISEP, during that period? Because there weren't many opportunities in black communities then, you know, for different things. Usually nothing was happening. And that, did you think that that kind of rounded out the community for you? Or made it better?

[16:17] **Shirley Streeter:** It filled a void, you know. Because, you know, and I thought it was good, because, you know, it was something that was helping the black people, the black children here in the county. I didn't consider it then as a help. I considered it as something to do.



[16:35] **Joan Burroughs:** Something to do.

[16:36] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, something to do. But later, I did understand that it was a help, because a lot of the children needed that. And at that time, they were not having much summer school that the schools were getting, you know, and so students will be left behind because they did not know. But now, this is hindsight, because I was not thinking like that then. But now I do realize that's what some of TISEP accomplished in helping kids to move on.

[17:08] **Joan Burroughs:** And, you know, you just made me realize something. Because I didn't think about the fact that there were no summer schools in some places.

[17:16] **Shirley Streeter:** You know if you got left back, then you just repeated, you know. And so, I don't know exactly when the summer schools came into being, but I think it was when my children went to school, I think they had it. They never had to go because they knew better. So [laughter].

[17:37] **Joan Burroughs:** They had to get it done in the winter, right?

[17:39] **Shirley Streeter:** That's right. They had to get it done in the winter. Get it done when the school was open. You better pass those grades and stuff. Yes. So yes. So, it was I mean, you know, I'm trying to think of something else that I can say. I know you sent me some questions, and I'm trying to see where they are. You sent me some.

[18:01] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, in the text, yes. Things that you can think about. And yes, because I'm gonna—while you're looking at that, I'm just going to mention one thing. Have you ever heard of Dr. John Henrik Clarke?

[18:17] **Shirley Streeter:** John Henrik Clarke.

[18:19] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[18:21] **Shirley Streeter:** That name sounds familiar. Who is? Who was that?

[18:24] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, he's from Union Springs. And he became a very, very outstanding professor of African American History and Culture at Hunter College in New York City. And he was basically self-taught. He, you know, he taught. He got himself educated well enough so that he became the Chair of the Department. He created African American and Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College in New York City. And he's well known. He's written many books.

[18:59] **Shirley Streeter:** Hey, I did hear something about him. I really did. And he is from Union Springs?

[19:04] **Joan Burroughs:** From Union Springs, Alabama. That's where he was born.



[19:08] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, I remember reading about him maybe just last year, I don't know. No, I didn't. I wasn't very, very aware of him. I can tell you that.

[19:21] **Joan Burroughs:** Well look him up. Google. You know, Google him some time. Read about him. He [unclear] [crosstalk]

[19:26] **Shirley Streeter:** I did read about him, but obviously it didn't stick. Things don't stick like they did a long time ago. But I am going to read up on him, but I have heard his name before.

[19:36] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. When they told me Union Springs that was the first thing, I thought about was him.

[19:44] **Shirley Streeter:** Mmm hmm, okay. But yes, but they—I think that TISEP inspired me to want to go to school, you know, especially want to go to college. And I did go to school. Well, I didn't go to college like I wanted to, because I got married right out of high school. Like, you know, you can't tell people something sometimes.

[20:10] **Joan Burroughs:** Well you sometimes, you do what you're led to do, you know.

[20:16] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, and started a family right away. So, you know, that kind of got that delayed a while.

[20:24] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, I know.

[20:25] **Shirley Streeter:** And so, I had to do certain things like work a little bit. And I went to school, like, with the—what was the name of that program? It was a program in Tuskegee. At Tuskegee Institute, they had, I went to school there for a while and honed my typing skills a little bit more. I always wanted to be in business in some way or another in administration or business at some point. And so when I finished that class, I worked at Tuskegee Institute for about two years, maybe. And I was going in a—I got the job with the National Park Service with Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site. With the Department of Interior.

[21:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[21:15] **Shirley Streeter:** So, that began my career with the National Park Service. And from there, they allowed me to go to school. They sent me to school, they would really sent me to school. In that program, that I was there with the Park Service, and from there, I should have gone on to Auburn, like I was supposed to. But again, I got the big head. And I didn't do that.

[21:41] **Joan Burroughs:** But you did a lot though, you did. I mean, that was amazing. And the Park Service, you know, trained you, educated you, you know,

[21:50] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes.



[21:50] **Joan Burroughs:** That is wonderful.

[21:52] **Shirley Streeter:** They did, they did. And, you know, plus, and so I was started as a clerk typist, GS three. And when I left the I was a GSR 12 administrative officer, so my whole government career was there.

[22:09] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[22:10] **Shirley Streeter:** But we brought in the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site. And then we brought in Selma, the Selma trail first. The Selma National Historic Trail first, and then the Tuskegee Airmen. And now I think they've added Birmingham in there also since I've left.

[22:30] **Joan Burroughs:** Mmm hmm, I see.

[22:32] **Shirley Streeter:** And we would add Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. When they let didn't have a superintendent, we had to bring them in under us, too. So, we had a full load, you know, of work [laughter].

[22:44] **Joan Burroughs:** That was. I didn't know all those things were going on at Tuskegee. Yes. You know, and that's wonderful and—

[22:52] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, they turned that, George Washington. We, you know, we administered the George Washington Carver Museum, and Booker T. Washington home, on the campus of Tuskegee, and it had the historic district that we had to oversee also on campus. And then we got Moton Field, the Tuskegee Airmen out there. And the whole trail, the fifty-mile trail from Montgomery to Selma, Selma to Montgomery.

[23:21] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[23:22] **Shirley Streeter:** We had to administer that also. So, it was very interesting. And it was fulfilling also, you know.

[23:34] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, that was that was a great opportunity and a great way to, you know, to earn a living is work doing some things like that.

[23:42] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, I was not a park ranger. I was, you know, I was an administrator all the time. I was in administration all the time.

[23:49] **Joan Burroughs:** And you need, though, you need that for sure.

[23:52] **Shirley Streeter:** They couldn't do it without administration. I'm telling you. You know, but people see you with the uniform on, I did wear the uniform. And they see you with the uniform and they thought everybody was park ranger, a forest ranger. I told them no, we're not Forest Service, that's Department of Agriculture [laughter]. It didn't make them any difference; they just saw the green and they thought you were Smokey the Bear



[24:20] **Joan Burroughs:** Smokey the bear [laughter]. That's what I thought about.

[24:24] **Shirley Streeter:** Uh huh, uh huh. Yes, indeed.

[24:27] **Joan Burroughs:** Now, so you mentioned the civil rights movement. Were you—did you know much about it? You mentioned Judge Huffman?

[24:40] **Shirley Streeter:** No, I didn't. I didn't really know too much about it, Joan. It's just that we knew the people that was into it. We know that. There you know, black people were beginning to run for offices. And Mr. Huffman was one of them and Sheriff H. O. "Red" Williams. H. O. "Red" Williams, he wasn't the sheriff all the time. He was our first black sheriff. We got him. And we got black, all people to be like the circuit clerks. And you know, those were some of the things that we were trying to accomplish here in Bullitt County to get our people in place to do things. And they were having mass meetings and stuff in the churches. And First Baptist and Mount Silla was two of those churches that they had them in. And they also had them out in the rural areas. But I don't know where. I know Midway, Alabama, that's in Bullitt County. Midway is a city. Was a little city in Bullitt County. And they had people doing stuff out that way also. Us being children, we didn't know too much what was going on?

[25:52] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. But you knew it had something to do with making life better for yourself? Or . . .

[25:58] **Shirley Streeter:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We I mean, we had TV, we saw Martin Luther King, we saw what was going on down in Montgomery. And my grandparents raised me. My grandmother, and grandfather. And, you know, and we knew the sit-ins, we knew about the sit-ins and all of that stuff. I was a little kid, smaller than the ones that were doing the sit-ins, but I wanted to do the sit-in anyway [laughter]. I couldn't even. I couldn't even get to Montgomery [laughter].

[26:31] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, that was a big time in our lives.

[26:35] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, it was. And I did experience racism, you know, of course. I can remember coming to Union Springs with my grandmother and having to go to the colored, you know—black, I'm saying black—to colored toilets.

[26:54] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[26:55] **Shirley Streeter:** And water things, water fountains or whatever. I can remember that. I can remember riding a train also from here to Florida. And, you know, and we had to have separate facilities and stuff like. We had to go to the back of the place to get your food sometimes. And my being small, I always thought that was just wrong, you know?

[27:22] **Joan Burroughs:** [Laughter] Yes.



[27:24] **Streeter:** And, you know, because why do we have to do this, so when I was wanting to question it, and the old people would shut you up, you know, because they didn't want the trouble.

[27:34] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes. Now, well, then that was. That was a lot of trouble. You know, that was trouble to be had.

[27:39] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes. And it was. It was good trouble in a bad way.

[27:43] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[27:45] **Shirley Streeter:** Because it got a lot of people killed, you know.

[27:47] **Joan Burroughs:** A lot of people killed. Well, you know, and so a lot of people think of the civil rights movement as, you know, the marching in the street and the getting people put in jail, and even people injured and everything. But, in all of that was to uplift people who were oppressed, in certain communities. But I'm gonna read something to you. I always include this in the interview, because a lot of people never think of it like this. But it, there are so many ways to uplift. There was an article, it's in the Southern Education Foundation report of the fall of 1965. And it listed the TISEP program, and they described it in this way. "Tuskegee," and then they had colon, "another kind of demonstration in the black belt, a new kind of civil rights demonstration." And they were referring to the work of TISEP out in the counties. Can you make any comments on that? Or?

[29:05] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay, you said, it was in the southern education, what kind of reports?

[29:10] **Joan Burroughs:** Foundation report. They saw TISEP as another way of demonstrating, another kind of civil rights action.

[29:21] **Shirley Streeter:** Now I did hear something, and I just heard this in reference to TISEP being a part of this. They thought that TISEP was here, getting students ready to integrate the schools. And they thought it was getting students that were going to TISEP ready to, you know, to be the ones to go to the school. And the same lady I was telling you I was talking to said that her daddy, they even shot at her daddy. Some white cops and white people shot at her daddy because he thought they thought that he was preparing his children to go to the white school. Because they—

[30:09] **Joan Burroughs:** Might have just been preparing his children, you know?

[30:13] **Shirley Streeter:** Well, you know, they didn't think we did anything without a, we got to have an ulterior motive for that. Because we couldn't think for ourselves, you know, of course, in their minds. No, we shouldn't want to better ourselves.



[30:30] Joan Burroughs: Yes. So, what do you think about that? I mean, it is when you think about going in and teaching people, you know, like tutoring and bringing that is a demonstration of sorts.

[30:49] Shirley Streeter: It is. It is, and, you know, and truly, you know, even if it's not a blatant demonstration, knowledge is power, and they didn't want us to have that knowledge. They didn't want the outsiders coming in teaching us things that might set our minds to thinking that I want more for myself, and I want more for my children, you know, and stuff like that. Because knowledge, like I said, knowledge is power, and you learn something different, and then we might just start acting out, you know, like bad children to them. And so they wanted everything to stay the same. And they wanted to keep us at the Jim Crow stages in our lives. And people were not going to have it because, you know, Black Power, and all of that stuff was coming in. Stokely Carmichael, and all of those people, you know. You know, things were changing, and they didn't, you know, nobody likes change, especially if it's not to their benefit.

[31:56] Joan Burroughs: One of the things that I see, you know, it's like empowering yourself. Empowering other people who are like you, you know. So that is a different kind, it demonstrates something differently. I mean, it shows new potential, you know.

[32:14] Shirley Streeter: Mmm hmm. And it's opening the eyes of those that's blind, really, you know. Well not blind. But you know, it's just opening the eyes of your people to ideas and to knowledge that has laid dormant so long.

[32:33] Joan Burroughs: That's a good way to say it.

[32:34] Shirley Streeter: Mmm hmm and so you might not know it at that time, but that's the effect that it has. And you know, it has that effect in the long run.

[32:46] Joan Burroughs: I've heard that some people in some counties—adults attended the TIS/CEP program at night.

[32:53] Shirley Streeter: Oh really?

[32:54] Joan Burroughs: Yes, some. We, the program that I worked in Hayneville, we taught mostly students, but there was some where adults wanted to learn also. And so, some of them could not read or write yet, and they learned to read and write in a TIS/CEP program.

[33:16] Shirley Streeter: Okay. Now, they did start up an adult program here. Now, I don't know whether TIS/CEP had anything to do with that or not. Because like I say, we were kids, and we didn't know everything that was going on. We were recipients. And so, we didn't dig, you know, into who started it or why unless they were just visible like Mr. Huffman was or like Mr. Williams was. And Mr. Foster was another guy here, named Foster too, he was big in education.

[33:53] Joan Burroughs: All those things were important because education, you know, it's definitely always important.



[34:00] **Shirley Streeter:** Mmm hmm. And what's—and there was Benjamin Jordan, he was in Midway. I think I mentioned the town of Midway.

[34:08] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[34:09] **Shirley Streeter:** So, there were people that were icons in every community, and all of them worked together, you know, to try to bring the civil rights, just to get the civil rights movement started here. And they are probably most responsible for some of these TISEP, you know, just the TISEP program. So, when Mr. Phillips came, when he started this program, he came out into the community to seek these people out?

[34:38] **Joan Burroughs:** I think that my understanding of it is that he made contact with people all over Alabama.

[34:45] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay.

[34:46] **Joan Burroughs:** You know, like you hear about people doing things, you contact boards of education, you find out who the people are who are most willing to work in those kinds of things. So, I'm not sure You are the process he used. But he did. He made a lot of contact with people all over. Well, as far as Birmingham, I don't think that there was anything beyond here. And then all around the Black Belt all, you know, down towards going like in Troy, Alabama. All those places. There was, I think there were thirteen TIS/CEP counties.

[35:26] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, you named him in the letter, you know. It was named in that information that you sent me. In the Black Belt, mmm hmm.

[35:35] **Joan Burroughs:** So, he made contact and he had students also who were probably were from those places. Sometimes I think that they could put him in touch with vital community members.

[35:52] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay.

[35:52] **Joan Burroughs:** So, it took off from there here. He had begun—he began a program prior to TISEP, like I said, and they were just programs that got students involved in community education, community projects, where the kids learn, helping kids reading and tutoring. I mean, some, I think that he described some of them as some of the students will walk maybe a couple of miles to go to a place to help children with their homework.

[36:27] **Shirley Streeter:** Oh, okay. Okay.

[36:29] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, he was doing that. So, it grew out of that kind of a community effort. And so, I guess it caught on and he was able to expand that to other counties. And so, it became pretty big. There were so many tutors, we had tutors from all over America.



[36:52] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay.

[36:53] **Joan Burroughs:** Not just Tuskegee students but people who came to Tuskegee to join the—to work in the TIS/CEP program.

[37:03] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay. Well, that's, that's great, because like I said, I know before I even started working at Tuskegee University, in Tuskegee Institute—it was University, I'm trying to see when it became a university. But before I started working at the school, the college, I was a VISTA volunteer, like I told you with the SEASHA program and you know. And it was students then, and they would come in, the VISTA volunteers, they did basically the same thing, stuff like that.

[37:49] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, you know, that Dean Phillips also, SEASHA is a result of his work.

[37:03] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay, okay. Like I say, I knew all the SEASHA family out there.

[37:49] **Joan Burroughs:** And a group of people started fishing. So, students, some of the students of Tuskegee, and I think there was a man named Mr. Brown, who—

[37:57] **Streeter:** John Brown. John Brown.

[37:59] **Joan Burroughs:** Well, they all started SEASHA. And that was an outgrowth of TIS/CEP.

[38:05] **Shirley Streeter:** That's what now that I was gonna ask about that. Because it's so, so similar. You know, it's so similar, because I know, I spent two weeks in Atlanta, preparing to be a volunteer.

[38:16] **Joan Burroughs:** Oh.

[38:17] **Shirley Streeter:** Mmm hmm. And when we finished, we would go out into community. I mean, we used to do everything and like I say, tutor the kids. We would go to parent—people's houses and help them with their kids. I have washed at people's houses and put in screens and everything, you know. It was so rewarding.

[38:39] **Joan Burroughs:** It is and it's meaningful. [Unclear] very meaningful because it helps people.

[38:46] **Shirley Streeter:** It helps and you know, when you, and we would show them how to do it, you know. After we have been taught, we go and teach them what we know how to do.

[38:55] **Joan Burroughs:** That's what teaching and learning is all about.



[38:57] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes. And you know, when we did applications for homes and help them with homes, and how to fill out applications to get the FHA houses and stuff like that. So that's what VISTA was like, and it reminds me of what you're saying TIS/CEP's concept is too.

[39:16] **Joan Burroughs:** Because TIS/CEP students did a lot of those kinds of things, too.

[39:20] **Shirley Streeter:** I know, I know.

[39:21] **Joan Burroughs:** And so, yes. But Dean Phillips did that. SEASHA began with him and the TISEP program.

[39:31] **Streeter**

Okay, okay. What is it? Southeast? Southeast Self-Help Association. SEASHA.

[39:38] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[39:40] **Shirley Streeter:** Yep. Yep. I've worked with them, I guess, a couple of years before I went to the school, to the little clerical school that they was giving at the university and then now start working with the University and from there on to the National Park Service. So, I was trying to jump in and do what I needed to do.

[40:03] **Joan Burroughs:** That's obvious you like to learn. That's for one, that's for sure [laughter]. Considering what you do, so that's another plus.

[40:12] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, what I wanted to do it because I had a family I needed to help raise and my husband was, you know, he was doing what he could, and I was doing what I could. We didn't want them to be like us. We wanted them to have a better life and a better opportunity.

[40:26] **Joan Burroughs:** Think you've answered them because—some of them I don't have to ask because you were so good about explaining things about the civil rights movement and in your area and the education system. And so, all this built in. I think you covered a lot on your own.

[40:57] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay, okay, then.

[40:59] **Joan Burroughs:** Very good, enlightening interview.

[41:04] **Shirley Streeter:** Have you interviewed? I'm being nosy now. Have you interviewed lots of—have you found many to tutees?

[41:10] **Joan Burroughs:** No, I haven't. And I would like to find more because that's what's missing now. I found one man in Lowndes County. And I interviewed him before I even started doing this. But I would like to find more tutees to talk about TISEP, you know, to see how they felt about it.



[41:33] **Shirley Streeter:** No, I know, like the Abby Luckett girl. No, I knew she was older than—she was a couple of years older than me. So, she might have had a better grip on what was going on. You know, if I could get in touch with her, I would ask her if it's okay. If she would like to be interviewed, you know?

[41:54] **Joan Burroughs:** That would be great. And you can yes, and you can set it up for me. And I would love to have opportunity to interview her if she's willing.

[42:02] **Shirley Streeter:** Yes, I saw her on Facebook, one time. I have to search for to see if I can inbox her and see if she even remembers TISEP, you know.

[42:16] **Joan Burroughs:** That would be wonderful.

[42:18] **Shirley Streeter:** You know, I would try to do that. Because, you know, whatever, can, you know. I'm not a, like I said, I'm not a very comfortable person doing this [laughter].

[42:32] **Joan Burroughs:** You've done exceedingly well. This is a great interview; it's been really wonderful.

[42:38] **Shirley Streeter:** You think so?

[42:40] **Joan Burroughs:** And you will, you'll see it. I'm going to—what happens now is we do the transcript and I'm going to send you the transcript. And you know, like sometimes words get jumbled up or messed up. And if you can, you can correct things if you see something that needs correcting and send it back to us, and then we do the final before it goes to print.

[43:05] **Shirley Streeter:** Oh, okay, then. All right, then. Okay, then, that'd be great.

[43:09] **Joan Burroughs:** Thank you, if you have a picture of yourself, that you don't mind being display with your interview, you can send that to me also.

[43:18] **Shirley Streeter:** [Laughter] Oh, gosh.

[43:23] **Joan Burroughs:** We got to have pictures in the, you know, with the interviews, too. A lot of them aren't a problem because we have the video, and we can use the video picture. But in your case, if you can, if you have a picture that you'd like to include, that would be great. We would like that.

[43:41] **Shirley Streeter:** Okay. All right, then.

[43:44] **Joan Burroughs:** Stay in touch. And I really appreciate all that you've done, and the effort. And so, I suppose that this will conclude our interview, but you can stay in touch with me, and I'll be getting, like I said, the transcript to you to look at. And when you see it and you make any corrections, you can sign up on the final form and send that back as well.



[44:10] **Shirley Streeter:** Oh, okay, then. Okay. All right, then, Joan. Well, it's been nice talking to you. And I wish you the best of luck in getting all the information that you need.

[44:23] **Joan Burroughs:** Thank you. And you can call me if you think of anything else, you can call and say it.

[44:29] **Shirley Streeter:** I certainly will. All right then.

[44:31] **Joan Burroughs:** Thank you so much. And so, this will end our interview. It is now 8:25. Thank you again.

[44:39] **Shirley Streeter:** You're welcome. Have a great night.

[44:41] **Joan Burroughs:** You too.

[44:42] **Shirley Streeter:** Bye.

[44:42] **Joan Burroughs:** Bye.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

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Janet Thomas Sullen is a native of Tuskegee, Alabama. She was educated in local schools and received both, Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Tuskegee Institute. Janet majored in Secondary Education with a concentration in Language Arts and Reading. She was employed 39 years in the Macon County Public School System. During her tenure in the school system, Janet served as a twelfth grade Honors English teacher and chair of the English Department. After a highly successful public schools teaching career, Janet became the Language, Art and Science Connections Director for Tuskegee University's College of Agriculture.



Janet Sullen

[0:00] Guy Trammell: It is 3:47 on June 9, 2021. I am Guy Trammell in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, here to interview Janet Sullen who is in Tuskegee, Alabama. This interview is part of the TIS/CEP Organizing Committee TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. Okay, go ahead.

[0:51] Janet Sullen: I am Janet Sullen, located in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, and I'm being interviewed by Guy Trammell. Today is Friday, July 9, 2021

[1:06] Guy Trammell: Okay, and let's begin. Tell us where you were born and tell us about your parents. Good morning.

[1:20] Janet Sullen: I was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, Tuskegee Institute on the campus at John Andrew Hospital. My parents are Elaine Thomas and Frederick Thomas.

[1:31] Guy Trammell: Okay, and what—tell us, this goes, back but tell us a little bit about what they did. I've got to ask you more.

[1:38] Janet Sullen: Okay. My mother was head of the art department at Tuskegee University [then Tuskegee Institute]. She was also the curator of the Carver Museum for in excess of 20 years. And she was the curator when the Park Service took over the Carver Museum and several other entities at Tuskegee University. So, she was instrumental in saving and storing some of the treasures of the museum that belonged to Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver. Also, the dioramas and a lot of the other pieces of important memorabilia from Tuskegee. My



father was, he was a corrective therapist at the Tuskegee VA Medical Center for many years until his death. Both of them are Tuskegee graduates. And I'll go back even further. My grandfather, whose picture, a painting that he did is hanging behind me in my living room, was also a Tuskegee graduate in mechanical drawing. And I just found out the other day, my grandfather's brother, who is Oliver Nestus Freeman, who created the Round House in Wilson, North Carolina that is now an African American Museum and kind of monument to him, was also a Tuskegee graduate. He died in 1955. And he got his degree in Industrial Art. So, we're a Tuskegee family. My grandmother worked at John Andrew in infantile paralysis.

[3:28] Guy Trammell: The world's first infantile paralysis unit as I understand.

[3:32] Janet Sullen: Right. Right.

[3:34] Guy Trammell: Now I got to ask you this because, you know, because this is history too. Your mother had a certain mentor as a child, okay.

[3:44] Janet Sullen: Yes, George Washington Carver. She would go to his office because my—her father's office and Carver's office were across the hall from each other. And so, as a child, she would go to Dr. Carver's office, and eat lunch with him and those kinds of things. So, he introduced her to dandelion sandwiches, and she says she would not eat those, but he prepared them for her and he also made some vanishing—some cold cream for her to use out of peanut oil. And he told her that if she put it on her face, she would be pretty. And of course, those of you who know my mother, she was a very, very beautiful woman, and we still have some jars. I have about six jars of that cold cream that he made for her.

[4:34] Guy Trammell: Okay, and I know she was a prolific artist also.

[4:37] Janet Sullen: Yes.

[4:38] Guy Trammell: The museum, by the way, you know, had been part of his laboratory too. So that was, I was wondering, how do you know about the transition there, anything from then—because I know there was a fire upstairs unfortunately destroyed a lot of his work. But at what point did she take over after that, you know, after he had passed.

[5:03] Janet Sullen: She took over the museum, the lab, the part of the lab that was left was located on the basement floor. And it was enough of it to see his actual lab, the wooden counters and the sinks and some of the beakers that he used. And those kinds of things that were not destroyed in the fire were located on the basement floor of the museum where now they have this little theater down there. And some of the offices are down there. That's where that part of the museum was located. And the top floor, which was dedicated to the fruits and vegetables that he grew that were enormous in size, and the dioramas that were done by artists. Those are being restored. Those are in the bioethics center in the museum, in the Tuskegee Museum. Those have been, those are in the basement, in the cold storage, but they are being restored bit by bit. So, one day, they're going to come out and they will have them somewhere for us to view.



[6:11] **Guy Trammell:** Absolutely. There you go. Yes. And there's again, she's responsible for that still being there, to continue.

[6:20] **Janet Sullen:** And she's also responsible, for there was an asteroid, a piece of a—

[6:28] **Guy Trammell:** Meteorite.

[6:29] **Janet Sullen:** What do you call it from outer space? One of those was named—a meteorite, right—was named after Dr. Carver. And finally, she has she worked and worked and worked for years to try to get that meteorite to Tuskegee. So, it is, in part, pieces of it are in Tuskegee and is in cold storage at the bioethics center in the Tuskegee Museum. But they credited her with having worked for many years, researching and trying to find out where that actually was, and she did. They were able to get a piece of it. So, Tuskegee does have that.

[7:11] **Guy Trammell:** Because he had gotten it, but like you, I said another college came and took it

[7:16] **Janet Sullen:** Right. They took it but we were able to get a piece of it, I understand. I talked to Dana Chandler about that. And he was telling me that they did and he showed me a lot of the letters they had that my mother had written asking for that. So, they memorialized a lot of that information.

[7:35] **Guy Trammell:** Perfect. Yes. Okay. And, okay. And then again, when you come along, you're actually in the village. You were born in the village of Greenwood, you know.

[7:48] **Janet Sullen:** Right.

[7:50] **Guy Trammell:** And then raised right there and everything. Tell us a little about childhood. I think you went to a certain school [laugh] here on campus?

[7:58] **Janet Sullen:** Yes, I went to Chambliss Children's House, which was the lab school for the university students who were majoring in education. And, of course, I went there from kindergarten through eighth grade. My mother also went to Chambliss Children's House and she graduated back in the 30s. When it was up on Gregory Street. Gregory and Green Street.

[8:19] **Guy Trammell:** On a hill.

[8:21] **Janet Sullen:** The house was located up there. And after they moved to the location where I graduated, that turned into apartment houses for some of the faculty and staff. But I went to Chambliss Children's House, and it was an experience that I didn't appreciate until I got to be an adult. And a lot of my friends who became teachers as well, Janice Johnson, and then Joyce, her sister, and some of us who—well, Janice and I both became educators and we were wondering why we taught the way we did. Everything



was hands on and problem-based learning. And these are all terms that I was not exposed to when I was in school at Chambliss Children's House. But everything that we did had a purpose. I mean, we learned how to sew in the fourth grade, we started in the fourth-grade sewing. And so, we had to make our physical education uniforms, our shorts. And so, if you messed up your shorts, you just wore messed up shorts all year. But everything that we did, we had a purpose.

May Day was not just getting out there dancing and doing exercises, we had actual productions. We did *The Wiz* and *Oklahoma* and whatever the newest musical was, and each class had a role. So, *The Wizard of Oz* and *South Pacific* we had to learn all the musical scores for that in our music classes, and we had to learn the dances in our PE classes. And then the art class with Mrs. Turner, we had to make our props for May Day. And it all came to a head, you know, that May first, second, or third or whenever we had that, on the front lawn. So, it was quite an experience.

We, you know, we even had to work in the cafeteria and set the table and we had to learn etiquette in our Home Economics class. And we had to, we couldn't help cook, but we could help serve the food once you got to a certain age. And one of the things that really stood out to me, that I shared with my grandson all the time, we had a co-op. And you could—the steps are still there with the little smiley face on side of the building. And you had—we had to take turns working in the co-op. So, we had to sell potato chips and popsicles and push-ups and those kinds of things. And we had to count the money back correctly. And if it was not, you know, we came up short, then our parents had to make up the difference if we messed up.

So, we learned all of that kind of I mean, those are invaluable experiences that we had at Chambliss Children's House, because it was all problem-based learning. Everything was based on everything that we learned. We used that in some way, shape, or form. And I still use sewing. I have a lot of friends, you know, I have a lot of people who want me to hem a skirt or cut off some pants and all that kind of stuff. And my mother kind of enhanced my sewing skills because she could sew, but we—all girls—had to learn how to sew in the fourth grade. So, people, that can't hem a pair of pants or a skirt or whatever, didn't go to Children's House. Because if they did—all the guys had to take shop and they had to wire a lamp, a simple lamp and things like that. So, it was quite an experience at Children's House.

[12:04] Guy Trammell: And that really ended up with all the projects and what struck me too, as I was studying Rosenwald schools, I found out that George Washington Carver wrote the curriculum for the Rosenwald schools.

[12:21] Janet Sullen: Oh, did he?

[12:22] Guy Trammell: I always wonder, did he have a hand in anything at a Children's House, you know, because, you know, again, it had been around so long. So, you know.

[12:32] Janet Sullen: He may have? I wouldn't doubt it. I wouldn't doubt it because now at school at Children's House, after school, we would go up to the dairy barn. And we would milk cows up there for Mr. Buchanan. So, well, you know, George Washington Carver was had been deceased for many years by the time I came along. But I feel now that his influence was still



there. Because he did so much at Tuskegee, and he did so much that was not—that he didn't publicize, you know, so I just have a feeling that he probably did. He probably did.

[13:14] Guy Trammell: So, he thought, that's it, get it into it, because even that concept of kinder—kindergarten, otherwise take the children into the garden. I know he pushed you got to high school because you went to a certain high school.

[13:34] Janet Sullen: Right.

[13:34] Guy Trammell: Which wasn't far.

[13:37] Janet Sullen: Tuskegee High School and it was part of the lab system as well. But yes, I went right up the street, not even a mile to Tuskegee Institute High School where we kind of perpetuated the same, you know, kind of curriculum with the home economics and vocational classes and those kinds of things. So, I didn't stray far. I was right up the road. And it was a beautiful experience for me, now that I look back, because most of my teachers were my parents' friends, my mother's bridge partners. You know, my Daddy's co-workers, or either, you know, friends that he played poker with. And my principal would come over and play poker with my dad all the time and his friends. So, it was a village kind of atmosphere. Well, it was a village atmosphere that you don't realize until you become an adult and look back and go, 'Yes, the whole community had a hand in bringing us—in our upbringing'.

[14:41] Guy Trammell: And at that time, I think the eighth-grade building, was that still there? Or had it been taken down?

[14:47] Janet Sullen: Yes, the eighth-grade building was still there.

[14:49] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[14:50] Janet Sullen: That was, and I always remember that building because they used to have a sex education classes way back then. I finished high school in 1968 and in that building, they showed us actual childbirth. And they took the boys out and they went somewhere in the gym or some other place and all the girls had to sit in there and watch an actual childbirth. And scared us half to death. But that's my memory of that eighth-grade building. And I had a couple of classes, I had English and science and, you know, those classes in there as a ninth grader. But we had classes in the eighth-grade building, but I was actually in the ninth grade because I finished eighth grade at Chambliss Children's House.

[15:34] Guy Trammell: Yes. Wasn't there like, it seemed like there was a little auditorium or something, because I seem to remember.

[15:40] Janet Sullen It was.

[15:41] Guy Trammell: Had one there, okay.



[15:43] **Janet Sullen:** It was an auditorium and all that had a wooden floor and all of the wooden trimmings on the building. That is the—that's the first thing that they tore down was that auditorium because the classes were still there, but they tore auditorium down. And then eventually they took all that and remodeled it to what it is today.

[16:06] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, so that was more of a transition period while you were there. As they were moving more into the more modern building.

[16:16] **Janet Sullen:** Right. Well, no, when I left, it was after I left. I think I was in college when they started doing that.

[16:23] **Guy Trammell:** Okay.

[16:24] **Janet Sullen:** Because my daughter, it was more during Tiffany's time period there that they started working on that. Yes, so it was quite a bit later.

[16:35] **Guy Trammell:** Yes. Do you remember any of those buildings right below there? Because I understand—

[16:41] **Janet Sullen:** Oh, yes.

[16:42] **Guy Trammell:** Tuskegee airmen used to live there with their families.

[16:44] **Janet Sullen:** Right? Yes, right. There were some buildings there by the scout hut that surrounded the scout hut because we used to have dances and parties at the scout hut. And then there were buildings that were connected, almost like. They almost looked like the first attempts at townhouses because they were all connected in rows. And that's where a lot of the—some of the doctors lived there that didn't live on the reservation at the VA. And some of the doctors who were at John Andrew Hospital lived there, because I know my neighbor Jane Campbell, lived there before they moved to Beale Street, next to us. When my parents built their house on Beale Street, the Campbells were right next door. But they used to live right there below Tuskegee Institute Middle School now.

[17:39] **Guy Trammell :** Now, this question is almost redundant. But just talk a little bit about—which I know, it was everywhere—the concept in high school of, you know, the community, the teachers, family, different ones thinking about college. In other words, I'm going to ask the question, but I know. Was there any influence from the community or the school about moving on to college?

[18:15] **Janet Sullen:** Oh, yes. We were all encouraged to go to college. And we were encouraged to go to Tuskegee. I had a scholarship to Northwestern because my mother went to college everywhere. She went to Tuskegee, and she went to Mexico, she went to Paris, she went to India, she went to all these different places. Kentucky and several other places. But I had a scholarship to Northwestern because my mother did some studying there one summer. And I heard the name and I was like, that's where I'm going to go. But no, my father said, you will go



to Tuskegee. And most of my classmates went to Tuskegee. I could name out of my class of two hundred and something about fifty of us ended up at Tuskegee, graduated at the same time. And during that time, it was, you know, you want to graduate in four years. You didn't want to go and have to come back and stay another year and all that kind of stuff. Because I got married my second year in college, and my daughter was born and I was out of school for a semester. And I still graduated with my class because I was determined to come back.

But yes, we, it was emphasized that we would be college students. I mean, we took French, we took all the math that they offer. We took, you know, all this stuff without question. And one thing that I always note to my husband is that when I started working and started teaching school, and they said the seniors had to have so many units to graduate. I never knew what a unit was. I just knew go to school, take these classes, pass, and go to college. So, I had no knowledge that you had to have a certain number of units to get out of high school, I just knew you better go and make good grades, and finish and go to college or else. So, yes, we were influenced. And a lot of what we did, the University was a big influence on us, because everything we did was connected to the university. The football team played an alumni bowl. They would let us out of class to go to the SIAC tournament for basketball. That was a half-day of school for us for a whole week, they would let us out of school so we could go buy our tickets to go.

We would walk up to Logan Hall and buy tickets. If they had a football game, it was a half-day of school, everything was revolved around the campus. We went swimming there, we saw movies there. All of that, you know, we didn't—I didn't even know about a lot of the stuff downtown. Until, you know, civil rights came along, all of that kind of struggle came along, and then my dad made sure that I knew about those things. But um, yes, the university had a strong influence on all of us, because, you know, the football players would come out to the school. You know, all the girls was just about to die over the football players when they came around. So, it was quite an experience. And it's an experience that I think we're trying to resurrect, because it was lost for a period of time but I think they're trying to get back to the influence that the university had on—has on our students.

[21:51] Guy Trammell: Yes and then you just point out how complete the community was right there too, you know, because—

[21:57] Janet Sullen: Right.

[21:58] Guy Trammell: Even the eating places for campus you got Larkins right here, you got Wiley's on the block, you got by others.

[22:07] Janet Sullen: Thomas Reed's Chicken Coop right down the street.

[22:09] Guy Trammell: There you go. Everything just right there for you. So, yes that was amazing. And here or there now, how, or at what point, you know, was it before college or in college, that you decided to go into your major? Because you've really taken that major to another level. Talk about that.



[22:33] Janet Sullen: Okay. I wanted to. I started out majoring in clothing and related arts, because I had the visions of being a model, and I was going to design clothes, and all that kind of business. Um, that quickly changed when I took one class, with Mr. Felder, and he said, everything that you know about sewing, tailoring, he was going to throw out the window, and he was going to re-teach it. Now I learned how to sew in the fourth grade. My mother reinforced that because I learned how to sew at Children's House, like I said, all of us did. So, I started looking because I was like, I don't want to relearn, you know, I know how to do this. And I was raised by educators. My grandfather taught me how to read and write before I got to kindergarten and, you know, he was an invalid, so he couldn't, you know, show me with his hands. He talked me through a lot of things. I could play cards, I could play checkers, I could do all that kind of stuff before I got to kindergarten. And so, and my mother was a teacher on campus so I would go to her class, you know, after school, after I get out of nursery school, whenever I would go up there with her.

So, I had educators all around me. Mrs. Sawyer, Nelle Sawyer, I don't know if you remember her. But she taught out in Cotton Valley. She would take me with her to class, you know, sometimes, so I was always in a classroom, always, you know, somebody's student. So, after I looked at, well, I don't think I want to learn how to re-sew all over again, or relearn how to sew. I looked into education because Marilyn Jones and her sister—we called them Sugar and Bunny—lived up the street. And my cousin Donald came down and he lived with my grandmother for many years. And we had school. So, we had school after school every day. They were older. So, we would have you know, if you answered the question right you would sit on the porch step, you could move up a step and every time he asked another, answer another question, move up another step. And when you got to the top step, you could be the teacher. So, we had educators. Denise Mahone, all of us ended up becoming educators. And I realized after my first semester at Tuskegee, that this is what I wanted to do.

The only question was, what was I going to major in and I don't, I didn't like science. Didn't like math. And then I thought about it. I said, when I read, I write, my grandfather had instilled in me this because he was a poet, and he had his pamphlets that he would produce and I was his secretary. So, I was into reading, and writing, and creating, and all that kind of business. And so, I decided to major in English, and to be an English educator for high school, because I wasn't attuned to little kids. I almost majored in special education but I changed my mind because I wanted to be more versatile. I didn't want to get in a box and have to stay in that box. So, I ended up—I chose language arts, and I'm glad I did. And I went on and got my masters right after I finished in '72. And I just kept going, after I got a job at D.C. Wolfe, then I kept going until I got my master's degree, and it's been a career that I really cherish. I wouldn't have done anything differently. I'm doing something different now, but then I would not have done anything different. But that's how I ended up in education because I had educators. My aunt was a teacher. She went to Tuskegee, and her husband, my uncle was one of the flight instructors for the Tuskegee Airmen out at Moton Field. And so, she, you know, was nurtured at the university, at Tuskegee Institute. And she was a teacher too. So, I had teacher, teacher, teacher all around me, and then I'm on campus every day with my mom. So, it just fit. It was just a perfect fit for me.



[26:55] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent, excellent. Yes. I'm going to say that I knew it had to come from some place special.

[27:03] **Janet Sullen:** It did. It really did. And I wouldn't trade those 39 years for anything else, even though I enjoy what I'm doing now. That is to say, I've repurposed myself. Ms. Laos, told me to say I've repurposed myself. But I'm still teaching because I still teach classes on the campus as well. An education and English classes. And then what I do with extension is teaching also. So, this is the same, it's just not as what—it's not as rigid as it was, you know, being in the classroom all day from eight until three.

[27:42] **Guy Trammell:** So, you got, tell me again, what degree you got from Tuskegee.

[27:48] **Janet Sullen:** I got a BS degree in secondary language arts, and I got a master's degree, Master of Education degree in language arts and reading. And I also went to Auburn University and got certified as an extension educator. Because teaching an extension and educating in extension is a tad bit different. So, when I started working on campus, everybody was telling me, 'Oh, extension, does this and extension does that'. So, my son Daniel suggested Mom, why don't you go to Auburn and take the certification classes. So, I took five classes to be Extension educator certified. So, it's a little bit different, but it's still teaching.

[28:31] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, now, going back when you first came on campus now, I mean, I know it was probably just, what, three blocks, three or four blocks from your house? I mean.

[28:40] **Janet Sullen:** Right.

[28:42] **Guy Trammell:** Was there any transition that you went through, anything coming up on campus? Because I know life is a little bit different. Even though it's not that far.

[28:53] **Janet Sullen:** Right. It was. It was quite a bit different. I had a car as opposed to some other students because I'm from Tuskegee. So, you know, my parents, whenever they bought a car, when my mother bought a car, she'd give me the old car. So, I had a car. I stayed at home. My parents thought I was going to stay on campus. They, in fact, gave me luggage for graduation from high school and I was like, I'm not going anywhere. I have my own room. I have a car. I am not about to move into a little room, dormitory room. The only time that I lived on the campus was when I pledged Delta. And I moved out and stayed in somebody's room on campus because my mother was a Delta. So, when I went back home, I had to answer to her. So, I was like, you know what, let me just go on campus where I just answered the one group of people because if I leave and go back home, I got answer to them and I got to answer her. So, it was. It was a transition but it was not a transition as much as some other students because I had—I was living at home and then my sophomore year I got married.

So, I ended up living in my grandmother's house, right there next to what used to be Alan's store right near the post office. Well, you know where that is Guy, but I lived in her home, because my grandmother had passed away by that time. And so, I lived in her house. So, I was independent, I was working and I had work study. And then I had a child. And I had a



lot of responsibilities as a college student, because I had a family. So, I was able to somehow, as I look back, juggle the social life of being a college student, and being a mother and a wife, you know, and having a job, but it all worked out. And, you know, I had a lot of it. The strange thing about that is, most of my friends, were doing the same thing. The one, those of us who were—who graduated from Tuskegee Institute High School—and we ended up going to Tuskegee, most of us were married, most of us had children. Most of us were living either at home, or we had parents who were helping, you know, us to be independent.

So, it wasn't like I was out there by myself and it was anything odd. Because when we have our class reunion, strangely enough, my class has a lot of students—has a lot of children, who are all in the same class with my daughter. So, when we have a class reunion, we talked about our kids, all of them just about graduated, well not all of them, but many of them graduated in 1988 from Tuskegee Institute High School, because all of us were married at the same time, all of us just got pregnant the same year. And, you know, we were having the same kind of transitions from home to campus. Now, I lived a couple of blocks, like you said, from the campus. I could walk up to the campus for whatever they had, I could take my child up there, I would take my daughter to class, you know, all those kinds of things. And my mother was right there at the museum. So, you know, I had a support system around me and most of us did because we were in Tuskegee with our people. So, we enjoyed all of that. Our families, our, you know, spouses, our children, our college life, all of that, you know, was taken care of, and it was it was happening for us.

[32:33] Guy Trammell: Yes. And I know being that close definitely helped during homecoming too.

[32:37] Janet Sullen: Oh, yes. [Crosstalk] We didn't miss homecoming, we didn't miss a football game. We would be there with our strollers and everything. But we were there.

[32:46] Guy Trammell: That's it. The crowds were in place.

[32:49] Janet Sullen: Right.

[32:50] Guy Trammell: Now. During that time, there was this program called TIS/CEP now. Which TIS/CEP were you in, the community education program or the summer education program?

[33:02] Janet Sullen: I was with the summer education program with Dr. Phillips. I started working with them in the 11th grade. Because I told my mom, I wanted to earn—and my daddy—I wanted to earn my own money. So, my mother knew Dan Smith, and because she worked on campus, so she said, “Well, I have this daughter that, you know, wants a job”. So TIS/CEP came up and they hired me that summer, as a part of the program. And we would go very early in the morning to—Oh, my goodness, what is the building now its condemned, right across from Sage Hall. Not Tantum Hall, its right across from Sage Hall.

[33:52] Guy Trammell: Thrasher.



[33:53] Janet Sullen: Thrasher Hall. We would meet at Thrasher. And I should know that because I taught a class in that building, but it was Thrasher Hall. We would meet there in the morning.

[34:03] Guy Trammell: Give us a year. Yes.

[34:05] Janet Sullen: Oh, I was in the 11th grade. So, it had to be 1967 and the summer of 1967. And we would meet up there very early, like six o'clock in the morning, and we would put together our plans for the day. I was teaching art. And so, we would go out to the different communities. [Break in Recording]

We went to a place in Phoenix City called Pumpkin Bottom. It was just before you get to [break in recording] we would go there and teach art. And in Montgomery, off of Bell Street. The building is still there because it's just outside, just before you get to Maxwell Air Force Base entrance. There's a building to the right. I think they've refurbished it and made it into a library or museums [break in recording] ...teaching art to the young people. Now some of the others taught science and I remember Patti—oh, Patricia, oh, my goodness, I can't—Patti Jones was teaching there. Idris, I think was part of the program too. But they would teach other things. They were older than me—

[35:34] Guy Trammell: Yes.

[35:34] Janet Sullen: —but—

[35:35] Guy Trammell: Say the thing, because it kind of blanked out a little bit when you were saying what you were teaching too.

[35:40] Janet Sullen: Oh, I was teaching art.

[35:42] Guy Trammell: Okay, go ahead.

[35:43] Janet Sullen: I was the art teacher. So, I had art activities for the young people. And they would be young people in the community that would come to the center. And we would, you know, we had a schedule, and we will teach them that. I would expose them to different art activities that I would get from my mother, because she was the art teacher on campus. So, she would give me some ideas on what I could expose the children to. So, it was, it was quite an experience for me. And that, I think that had a lot to do with my deciding to go into education, too.

[36:21] Guy Trammell: Yes.

[36:22] Janet Sullen: I really enjoyed working with those young people.



[36:24] Guy Trammell: Okay. And you mentioned Bell Street in Montgomery. But in Opelika, and Auburn, you said Auburn or Opelika?

[36:33] Janet Sullen: We went to—now I. We went to Auburn and Opelika but I don't remember where in Auburn and Opelika we went. But I know some of the names stuck out. Like I remember Pumpkin Bottom, because I just thought that—and it was up on a hill. So, I thought this does not resonate. But that was in Phoenix City. And Whitehall was of course where Whitehall is now, down going towards Selma. And the one in Montgomery. But we did go to Auburn. And we did go to Opelika we went to all of the surrounding areas. We were in Macon County as well, too. And we went somewhere around the City Lake, but I can't remember exactly where. But most of the places that we went were in outlying counties, in rural areas. We went to Shorter. But I don't remember where we went in Shorter. And the thing is, if I had known then that I was going to be asked this now I would have written all this down. But you know, just remembering those things that kind of stood out to me. And I felt privileged because I was the youngest one.

I was the only one in high school. Everybody else was a college student. Or they were, you know, we had supervisors who would send us out, but they sent us on a bus. And so, we had a bus driver, and we had the college students and then there was Janet. And I was the only one that was what 16, 17. I think I was 17 then. I was 17 years old. So, I thought I was somebody because I was with all these college students and I was teaching these kids so it was quite an experience.

[38:13] Guy Trammell: Now that, you know, to come up after you'd been in the village of Greenwood. Because something you hadn't really said which I know any reader needs to know about. Greenwood, all the businesses, all the schools, all the campus, all, everything in Greenwood was black. Okay.

[38:36] Janet Sullen: Right. Absolutely.

[38:38] Guy Trammell: Every place you went, the owners of the businesses were black. If you went to the cleaners or if you went to the shoe shop to get you—back then before they got new shoes, you got half soles [laughter]. They would fit you—

[38:53] Janet Sullen: Right, absolutely.

[38:55] Guy Trammell: So, oh and if you bought gas for your car you bought it from a [laughter]—

[39:00] Janet Sullen: Right because we lived right across the street from Mr. Frazier Service Station, the common service station.

[39:05] Guy Trammell: Yes.



[39:06] **Janet Sullen:** You know, we just crossed the street and got gas from him.

[39:10] **Guy Trammell:** Yes, owned by black people and by the—

[39:12] **Janet Sullen:** Right.

[39:13] **Guy Trammell:** I found out that Frazier was the only Black African American car dealership in the entire South. Okay.

[39:21] **Janet Sullen:** Right.

[39:22] **Guy Trammell:** There was—as far away as Texas—there was no African American car dealership. Florida, no place. The nearest one was up in Virginia. And he had the only one in the south, so.

[39:37] **Janet Sullen:** And I bought my first car from—my second car I bought from him. First car was Volkswagen. But the next car I bought, I bought from Mr. Frazier.

[39:46] **Guy Trammell:** Wow, wow.

[39:47] **Janet Sullen:** Strangely enough my husband now, before we were even married, bought his. He had a red and white Impala that he bought from Mr. Frazier that was in that showcase.

[39:58] **Guy Trammell :** Yes, yes. The one—

[39:59] **Janet Sullen:** That car was in there, and I would look at that guy every other day. And then all of a sudden, I, you know, end up married to him and he buys a new car. And that's the car that he bought that I had been looking at all those days in Mr. Frazier's. And Mr. Hall worked there. A lot of those people are our church members. And it was a village. You are part of the village, because you were right down the street, you were like younger, but you were right down the street.

[40:25] **Guy Trammell:** Yes and post office, everybody. So now, that is your background, that is literally life, that is what [unclear] life is. And now here you are traveling to all these other places with TICEP. And you're seeing people of a different skin tone. Okay. So, was there any? How did that? How did that process with you and everything? How was that transition?

[40:54] **Janet Sullen:** Well, it was kind of it was kind of strange, because I had not had to interact with anybody or everybody was black. And then when we went to some of these other places, there would be these disadvantaged white children. That and they weren't, they welcomed us with open arms. It was like, you know, here come people from Tuskegee, and they're teaching us this, that and third, and we fed them and those kinds of things. So, it was very new to me to have those people, the white children look up to me as an educator, and I'm 17 years old. So, it was new, because growing up in Tuskegee, very seldom did we go downtown. When they had



the boycott downtown, my parents went to notice, so the comments, and we didn't even drive in town.

So, you know, and a few white businesses that we would frequent were all, you know, those were grown people. So, I saw them as adults like Miss Price and Coggins Jewelry Store and Louis's Drugstore, but I never interacted with the children. I never had any dealings with anybody my age or younger, everybody was an older, was an adult. So, when I got a chance to go to these different sites, and I got a chance to teach the young people who were white, I was just, you know, that it was new. It was new, and it was kind of scary. But because of all of the Civil Rights stuff, you were here and they had the

Freedom Riders and all kinds of things going on then. But uh, you know, we just, we prayed every morning before we left, and we'll be, you know, praying when we got back. So, it was quite an experience.

[42:55] Guy Trammell: And talk a little bit about that the whole awareness at that time, because you're talking about right in the midst of it. You know, I mean, this is right now there's I mean, Montgomery wasn't that far away. Birmingham is not that far away. Selma, technically is not that far away. And all these things were taking place. What was happening on [laughter]. Yes, what was happening on the news was not something far away. It's actually something close by. So how was, you know, how were, okay [Pause in Recording].

[43:31] Janet Sullen: [Off Camera] Okay, well, hold on just a moment, I'm in an interview right now. I'm coming out.

[43:38] Janet Sullen: Okay. But what happened, and one thing that was striking to me at that time, was Sammy Younge was killed when I was 16. So that very next year, when I was 17, here I am, you know, going out to some of these places to teach these white kids. And they were, you know, black and white kids mixed, but it was a time where, um, what can I say? It was new to me, because I had heard about all the civil rights things and we're watching stuff on TV and my Daddy made sure that I was aware of what was going on. But then when Sammy got killed that brought it home, because his brother was a year ahead of me in school. And he was, you know, a college student and we all knew him and had interacted with him. So, when that happened, that really impacted us; so much so that we refused to go to school. We sat out there at the flagpole in front of the high school and would not go into class. And I knew if my daddy knew that I was not in class I was toast. But one of our teachers came out and told us, go to class because that's what they want you to do. They want you to be uneducated. Go to class, get an education, so you can make a difference. And so, you know, we all because, we were dashiki wearing, and I mean, we were really, we were upset about this. But to have to go next year, to all these outlying areas, and I applaud my parents for allowing me to go. Because that was something, you know, my dad was not going to take a lot of chances with me with things like that. But he allowed me to work and to do that.

[45:33] Guy Trammell: Yes, because it—because again, the—can you hear me? Let's see. Okay, you froze up a little bit.



[45:49] **Janet Sullen:** Okay.

[45:50] **Guy Trammell:** You froze up a little bit. You might have to say that again. Whatever you just did. Okay. Froze up again.

[46:00] **Janet Sullen:** I can hear you and see you.

[46:03] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay. All right. And I was just going to say, you know, because in a sense, it was a bubble in Greenwood. And like, why go out? Was that a major step for parents? Because they, I know how—I found out how protective, you know, later on, how protective they were. Watching every place we were, you know, in Greenwood. So, that had to be tremendous there. And again, Sammy Younge had worked for voting rights. And, you know, he was killed down at the bus station, and he was the first like, college student killed during the black liberation movement. So yes, that, like I said, had a major impact there. And were there any? I'll say because I know, sometimes on weekends with TIS/CEP, they might have joined some of the other activities like TIAL, Tuskegee Institute Advancement League, SNCC. They were working with the Black Panthers over in Lowndes County, did you come across any of the other activities when they were trying to integrate then?

[47:15] **Janet Sullen:** No, I didn't go to any of those. I just went during the weekday. So, I didn't go when they had something on the weekend, I didn't go to any of those. Because we would not have been chaperoned. See when we went to, when we went out to work during the weekday, we were chaperoned. So, you know, some of the others, some of the older students went, but I was a minor. I was just 17. So, you know.

[47:41] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. And what are some of the other things, any other things stood out about some of the places you went? Oh, anything in particular, possibly, with any interactions with the parents or any other things with the community?

[48:01] **Janet Sullen:** Well, yes, we interacted with the parents and the community, but what that, you know, the parents would come and bring the children. And they would pick them up, because we kept them the whole day. But one thing that stood out to me was the poverty. Because I was not—I hadn't been exposed to that kind of poverty, you know, with children's clothes not necessarily clean and they're, you know, very used clothes and those kinds of things. And the lack of exposure that the children had. Because as a teenager, growing up at the Carver Museum, and with educators and all that, there were a lot of things that I knew that I had experienced. And then if I didn't experience that they were vicarious, because my mother had traveled all over everywhere, you know. And I was educated by my grandfather so, in a very early age, so I was just amazed at what these kids did not know and what they had not been exposed to. That was, you know, as a 17-year-old, that was really striking for me. And to know that I could bring something to them that they had not experienced or heard of before, was amazing.



[49:20] **Guy Trammell:** And that really gets into something I'm going to ask you in a minute, but now again, have you maintained any contact with any the ones that you had met during the TIS/CEP time?

[49:36] **Guy Trammell:** Oh, any students or anyone working with it?

[49:40] **Janet Sullen:** Okay, now what we did last year, there was an organization that met where they asked us. Joan Hamby, I think she is Joan Burroughs now, and George Paris and Dr. Phillips was there. Joyce came and sang. Joyce German, came and sang. We were in Montgomery, we all met in Montgomery. At, they had rented a hotel and we had this ballroom where we met and had dinner. And then they had another presentation. Oh, well, that was just like a rap session where we were just talking about the experiences and then seeing these people that we had not seen, you know, in all these years. And then we had another session where we met again, and Joyce entertained us with music, you know. Because Dr. Phillips was instrumental in getting Joyce and the Joyettes together to sing. And so, you know, they gave us all of that history. And then we learned a lot about the farmers and how the black farmers were being—decisions were being made so that they couldn't sell their produce. And George Paris told us a lot of the history of that. So yes, we have met, and we have I think, that that was videoed. I think Kanyangwa [sp?] Dorothy Kanyangwa [sp?] was part of that too, because they did a video and they sent out the video to all of us on a flash drive.

[51:21] **Guy Trammell:** And that's really Bert Phillips. I think you mean when you say—

[51:25] **Janet Sullen:** Yes, gosh. If I say Stanley Smith. Yes, Bert Phillips is the one I'm talking about.

[51:30] **Guy Trammell:** Stanley Smith, I think was a grade teacher during that time.

[51:33] **Janet Sullen:** But it is. You're right. It's Bert Phillips. I get the two of them mixed up all the time. I'm so sorry.

[51:39] **Guy Trammell:** Those are more powerful civil rights [crosstalk]. Okay, so now and again, after graduation now you, I mean like I said, you completely got into education in a big way. And you mentioned you said D.C. Wolfe was the first place because I remember you were making a big scene there. I mean, you were bringing students on campus to hear lectures, college lectures. And you were sitting in the back of the auditorium to make sure to sign the papers because they didn't even know whether you were there or not to get the credit. I mean, you really brought it in a big way. And I mean, especially from D.C. Wolfe, which is, to kind of describe that whole thing, D.C. Wolfe is not in a metropolitan area. And you're bringing an exposure that is profound. Just, I mean, just talk a little bit about your time there because that was amazing.

[52:40] **Janet Sullen:** Well I was supposed to do my student teaching at Tuskegee Public, but Mrs. Hagens had a program where she was going to pay her student teacher, and I was assigned to her. And then when they found out that money was involved, well, you can't be paid and do your student teaching at same time. So, they had to send me somewhere else. And she had to get



another person for that job. So, they called Frank Lee, Mack Lee, I'm sorry, they called Mack Lee. I'm getting names all messed up, they called Mack Lee. And he said, Yes, he will take me, so I ended up at D.C. Wolfe at the last minute. I mean, it was like that day, it was like, you know, my car is headed towards Tuskegee Public. And then they say no, you can't go there. You have to go to D.C. Wolfe.

So, I ended up out there. And I did my student teaching and the lady, Mrs. Kendrick, that I was doing my student teaching under, was leaving because her husband was graduating in veterinary medicine. And they were going to relocate. So, Mr. Lee needed an English teacher and he offered me the job. So, before I finished my student teaching I had signed the contract, and I was ready to work at D.C. Wolfe. So, that's how I ended up there. And I stayed there until they consolidated. So, it was purely by accident that I ended up out in Shorter. Then I stayed there until the B.T.W. Booker T. Washington High School was built and they consolidated because D.C. Wolfe was going to no longer have a high school. It was just going stop at the eighth grade. So, I transitioned up to Booker T. Washington, but I enjoyed it.

One thing that I enjoyed most about that school was the connections you had with the parents, because my husband is from out there. In fact, that's where I met him. And if you go to—if you—when I went to church, there were parents there. You know, the parents were heavily involved with the school and they really supported. If the teacher said it was, that was it, there was no question. Um, so I would see them, you know, my husband played baseball out there. So, we would go to baseball games. There will be parents there. So, they were easily—you can easily put your hands on parents. And they supported you, you know, whatever you—now today is quite different. Because the parents would say, oh no, my child wouldn't do that. But if you said you had a problem, they took care of it. And the teacher was held in high regard.

So that's part of what—and it was small, you know—the senior class had like 30 people in it. So, everybody got to know everybody. And then they, we only had a few teachers. So, if you taught them in the 11th grade, you probably had them in the 12th grade, too. So, we had two English teachers. So, between the two of us, we taught everybody. So, if you had them in ninth grade, you had them in 10th grade, you had them in 11th grade, and you had them in 12th grade. They were your products, when they left there, and one thing that I enjoy also, they embraced having the opportunity to come on campus and go to the Christmas concerts. And they would get themselves up there, because I didn't have a CDL and could drive to bus and all that back then. But they were, Black History Month when the campus had its Arts and Lecture series, or they had Black History Month, they had people come.

My students would come up there, I would have just about 100% participation because they wanted that. They were hungry for that, and contests and all those kinds of things. And then when Charles Smith came, and he was the band, then became the band director. He started a band there, the lean, mean Green Machine. And they ended up going, you know, overseas to play. They were, I mean, that was the highlight for a lot of them. They had never been, some of them hadn't been out of Alabama and we had a connection. I made, I can since I sew, I made cheerleading uniforms, basketball uniforms, made Drill Team uniforms, Miss D.C. Wolfe, we would make her outfit. So, it was a more family kind of atmosphere.



[57:15] Guy Trammell: Yes, that. And that was amazing. Because I know I had my ombudsman under you. And she said, okay, we can't meet tonight because I've got to be at the chapel on campus [laughter].

[57:28] Janet Sullen: They enjoyed that a lot. My measure of that is when they say to me now—because some of it I— they had something on Facebook like "How old are your first students?" Well, my first students are like, 68, 67, 68 years old. But then my measurement of success was when they came back to me and they're in college, or they have a job, or they got kids, and they say, I took my kids to the museum. Or I took my kids, we went to the—I went to the Christmas concert and saw a student that was like 47 years old. I was just, I wanted to cry. And the student said "We went to the concert with you, and it was so much fun, I enjoyed it so I started bringing my family every year." So, when it perpetuates like that you kind of feel like it was successful, it was worth having them to go to that. And we never had any, you know, no accidents. Because I was worried about oh, they're going to drive up there and somebody is going to have an accident and going to be a big mess.

But no, nobody ever got in any trouble, they didn't have any accidents, all those times. Just God was just in the picture, in the mix. But yes, those were different times then you know. And when I moved up to B.T.W., I found out by accident that a lot of the students that I was teaching—that I was teaching up there were the grandchildren of some of the ones that I taught at D.C. Wolfe. And you know, I didn't find that out to the head parent neither they will come in to pick up a report card or somebody wanted to know about some grades and in walks one of my students from D.C. Wolfe, but they never would—they would never say I'm from Shorter and my parents are whoever. So yes, that was—D.C. Wolfe was a special time for me. I grew up. I grew up. I became a teacher at D.C. Wolfe.

[59:22] Guy Trammell: Yes. That's something else. Because it's like you went in a sense from that small pond into much larger and—

[59:29] Janet Sullen: Right.

[59:29] Guy Trammell: —was really embraced with like every aspect of education like you're saying and even to the point of driving the bus at times. So that's just amazing. And on, you know, with that and just say a little bit about any of the connection. Because again, like you're saying maybe was in, maybe that exposure you got a little bit going out into other places in TIS/CEP that you think that had maybe any kind of preparatory situation for you or just a kind of awareness for you that help later on in your incredible career in education.

[1:00:12] Janet Sullen: It surely did. It surely did. It opened my eyes to a lot of things. And I was not a child privileged by any means. But you know, I always had clothes, always had food, always had a car to drive, you know, gas station right across the street, you could just go there and get gas and sign your name and your parents pay for you gas. That kind of thing. You know, your parents were hard working college educated people, and then to go into TIS/CEP, and then go to communities where the exact opposite is happening, then you really



appreciate your upbringing. And then it makes you. . . it makes you humble, because you realize how, what a special upbringing you had, and all this exposure that you had. With your mother, being a friend to Dr. Carver, and you go to Children's House, and you end up at the university and all these kinds of things. And like you said, it prepares you because when you go out and work, there's no guarantee that you're going to be in a Crystal Palace and everything is going to be handed to you. So, when I went to D.C. Wolfe, there were some cases of students who were—who were kind of like the ones that I was exposed to the TIS/CEP.

And it makes you—what—appreciate what you have. But then it also makes you the kind of person who wants to help them in their situation, to help them have upward mobility. To show them that there's more out there, you don't have to necessarily work in the fields, because we had a lot of kids who did not come to school until maybe October. Because they had to help harvest. And so, you know, they miss a lot. And so, we, you have the opportunity to show them that, while you may want to apply, you may think that this is all that's out there for you, that there's even more. And one example is Emmitt Jolly because he is now a scholar out there. I've forgotten where he is. But he came back and he spoke to us at Tuskegee. And he's now Dr. Emmitt Jolly. And it was because of that reason, it wasn't me, but it was another teacher out of D.C. Wolfe, Mrs. White, who said to him, you know what, there's more out there that you, you know, let's expose you to some more things. And that's why I think the exposure is so important. Because a lot of students will feel like this is all that I can do. This is all that I have. This is as far as I can go. But the sky can be the limit. If you know that, well, the sky can be the beginning, really, when you know that there's more out there that you could do. There's the military, you know, there are all kinds of things that they can do to—for upward mobility. So yes, in a nutshell, yes. Being in TIS/CEP prepared me for the kind of career that I ended up having.

[1:03:19] Guy Trammell: Okay, now, on another aspect. Have you ever claimed a political party? And tell us a little bit about community activities too, because or civic activities I'll put like that.

[1:03:31] Janet Sullen: Oh, yes, I'm a Democrat. But I'm a Democrat who is that—it just so happens that the people that I endorse—endorse is a big word, but the people that I support and vote for happen to be the ones who have the same ideas that I do. If there's a Republican out there, who's a good person who can help our community and, you know, they have the nation at heart, then I'm all for it. And one thing that I remember when they had the funeral for—what is the man's name? I can't call names today. Oh, he ran. He ran against Obama.

[1:04:17] Guy Trammell: Oh, wait a minute. Oh, boy. Oh, yes.

[1:04:23] Janet Sullen: He had the lady that was his running mate.

[1:04:25] Guy Trammell : McCain? Was that McCain?

[1:04:27] Janet Sullen: Yes, McCain. Look at McCain's funeral. One of his friends was a Democrat. And he made the statement that McCain had said to him, wouldn't it be something if I ran for president and you were my vice president? McCain was a Republican, he was Democrat.



And he said, why wouldn't that, what kind of world would we have if we could do that? And they were, they were best friends. And he made that remark at his funeral. And I said, you know what, that's a powerful statement.

Because it says it well, it resonated with me because that's the way that I feel. It does not matter what their party is. But if they're a good person, and they have the right objectives and the right focus, I'm for them. It just so happens that the Democrats are the ones. Because there's some Democrats out there that not so, you know, good either. But I register as a Democrat.

Civically, I have to, well, I've started an organization called Moms Mentoring Our Males to Success is the acronym that we use for that. And so, I write little grants so that I can get funds to kind of help our young men. And we have a lot of young men who have filtered through our house, starting with the ones who were my sons' age. Now my sons in their forties now, but we had neighbors who had children and grandchildren who had not been exposed to a lot, and they were my children's friends. So, you know, we kind of embraced them, took them places. My husband took them fishing, they would come over our house and play. A lot of—one of them became an A.M.E. minister, because he started going to church with us. And now he's a Minister in A.M.E. Church. So that organization, I started a couple of years, maybe about ten years ago, to write grants so that I could get money to take them to college fairs, and you know, the Buckmaster's and egg discovery days and those kinds of things. Help them with ACT exams and then we did Too Good for Drugs, which started with Omar Neil.

They had a grant for that, and then Jackie Carlyle and I did the journalism portion of it. Well the rest of the program died but we kept Too Good for Drugs. So that's another program that I have civically, but it's with the youth. So now I go to Tuskegee Public, we do journalism, we do nutrition, physical activity, healthy activities, fitness and things like that. To try to keep our kids exposed. So, a lot of other organizations I don't belong to in Tuskegee. Most of the ones are professional ones, like National Education Association, and retired teachers of Macon County. And I think I need to pay my dues on that one. But, and I've joined a lot of organizations on campus. I belong to Epsilon Sigma Phi, which is an extension organization that promotes extension work. And we do the Scholar Bowl in memory of Thomas Monroe Campbell, you know, who was our first extension agent. And we do that for the kids in grades four through eight.

The community really supports us because they—the businesses give us money and we turn that money right back into the hands of the kids, to the winner. So, we do that every year this year and last year, we did it virtually because of COVID. But normally we have an activity in the Commissioner's Chamber, and the kids get to come with the buzzers and they get a chance to participate. So those are the kinds of civic, if we want to call them, things that I'm involved in. I like working with the youth and giving them opportunities that they may not otherwise have and expose them and let people see. My position on a lot of things is you know, we always have some sort of athletes, we have football players and basketball and all that kind of stuff. But we have some brains out there. And so, we need to kind of nurture that as a competition as well. Because I started this Scholar Bowl when I was at D.C. Wolfe and Sergeant Whitehead supported it financially and would give the prize money out. And so, when I went on to B.T.W. and now



that I'm away from B.T.W. we have it and we have it as an extra activity. But we named it the Thomas Monroe Campbell Scholar Bowl so because now it has an extension flavor to it.

So those are the kinds of civic kinds of things. I try to support the young people. You know, they have this youth council now, I don't go but I support them because I'm not a youth, I'm like the Grandmama's age. But whatever they need for me to do, you know in terms of, you know. A lot of times when your Grandmama or other Grandmama figures are there they don't talk like they would if they were by themselves. So, you know, whatever they need for me to do I'll do, but I don't show up because I don't want to stifle you know, their openness. But those kinds of things, we're working with the Alta grant now that they're putting the benches in the park in the square, and we're working with the pocket park that we have there to kind of make it so we can have a little stage, little amphitheater sort of thing. Getting bicycle pass. For those of us who are bicycle enthusiasts, I'm one but I only do six miles every time we ride. So those are the kinds of activities that I find myself involved in now because I think that's where I can make the biggest, the biggest difference.

[1:10:52] Guy Trammell: Okay. Last few, to ask you. What about any government positions you've held and—

[1:11:00] Janet Sullen: No.

[1:11:01] Guy Trammell: Tell us about your husband too.

[1:11:02] Janet Sullen: I'm not a politician, no, I haven't held any government positions. Don't want to. I'd rather be to do up in the back. I'd rather be the worker, you know, tell me what you need for me to do. And I'll do it. I don't want to be. I'm not a leader like that. I lead from behind. You know, let me let me support you in that kind of thing. I think that's where I make the biggest impact.

[1:11:30] Guy Trammell: All right, and tell us about your husband.

[1:11:33] Janet Sullen: Okay. My husband is presently a captain with the Macon County Sheriff's Department. He started in—well he worked with SEASHA as a carpenter, he in fact, he built our house and several of the houses around us. And then when he left SEASHA, he went to Tuskegee University as a security officer. And from there, he went to police academy. He moved from Tuskegee University to the Macon County Sheriff's Department under David Warren. And so, he moved up in rank and now he's Captain. He's retired so, he only works three days a week, you probably see him out there in front of the bank. And so, he does, you know, escort funerals, he sits out there and does security. He was sitting out there guarding the statue the other day, until eleven o'clock at night. He was like, oh, my goodness, I've got to guard the statue. But uh, you know, that's what his job entails for him to do. So, he's retired but he still drives the school bus.

[1:12:37] Guy Trammell: Give us his name. And also, yes, that's all going to say—the school bus because I didn't hear you mentioned it. Go ahead.



[1:12:42] Janet Sullen: Yes, his name is Lennon Sullen, Sr. And we have three children then Lennon Sullen Jr., Daniel Sullen, who is the Macon County Four H agent. Tiffany Williams, who is the principal of Tuskegee Public School [laughter]. And then that's what, she was coming. She was the one who came in here saying "Mama, Mama" and I was trying to say, "I'm on the—" [laughter]. So, she's going down to her school now to do CPR training. And we have Javante Grant, who we adopted when he was—not a, well, we got legal custody of him when he was probably in the sixth grade. And he's been with us ever since. He is now a security officer on campus. And he's finished high school. He's done two years at Southern Union and he's planning to go back to school, maybe go in the military, but he's gainfully employed. And he has his own place now. So, we're very proud. He's part of our Mentoring Our Males to Success crew. And a lot of people knew me by my crew because I had like six or eight young men. And when I showed up, I showed it with my crew. So, he's one of the crew. Some of the others are Jamil Newton, he's in the National Guard. Aubrey is in the Navy. Tyson is at school on campus. So, we have quite a bit. There have been quite a few of them that have filtered through here. And they've done quite well and we're very proud of them.

[1:14:21] Guy Trammell: Okay, now, last question, which again, concept-wise: are there any aspects that you recall from TIS/CEP that could be applicable today, or any aspects of how it was operation or whatever? Basically the themes or whatever, that were part of TIS/CEP that could possibly be answers to some of the things we're facing in the world today?

[1:14:50] Janet Sullen: Yes, and I think the concept of once you learn something, you teach it to somebody else and you help pull them up too. You know, if I have a skill, or if I have something that I can expose you to, that can help you be a better person or to help you grow, or help you with upward mobility, then it is my duty to share it. And I think that's what the concept of TIS/CEP was to go out and to show, you know, exposure, expose these kids and these families, you know, and help them to grow. And that has been, I don't want to say my mantra, but it's been something that I have enjoyed doing. When you get the, when someone comes back to you and says, Oh, I thank you so much for showing me how to do all you know, I learned how to do a research paper, I read this book in your class, I learned how to do this when you came out to my community, and showed me how to do this, and look at me now. So that kind of thing is rewarding. It's not about money, because if I want to be rich, I wouldn't been teacher. I would have done something else. But that's where the reward comes in. I think TIS/CEP had a big part in helping me to see how we help others and how we pull others up. And, you know, expose them, and it's good to see them go ahead. Some of them, you know, I've taught some people who are now doctors and all kinds of things. And it is rewarding for me to see that they have progress. That we had a teeny little part, just teeny part in helping that happen.

[1:16:41] Guy Trammell: Absolutely. Yes.

[1:16:42] Janet Sullen: And I hope to be able to do more. I just wrote a grant to Black Belt Community Foundation that came through, they just gave me a—they sent me an email, they said, "Oh, your money is going to be deposited." I was like, Yes. Okay, so I got that little grant. We're going to—we got to have that grant to work for us so that we can help our kids, help our



community, and help our young people. It's all about the young people. We got to get them to stay here.

1:17:07 Guy Trammell: Absolutely

1:17:08 Janet Sullen: We don't want to leave, they got to come on back.

1:17:11 Guy Trammell: Yes. And then you have always embodied when we miss, you know, put that spiritual part out there, the Tuskegee spirit, and know, with the effort that you are making, definitely we're going to restore that, you know, back to the community. We're working on the Greenwood project and like I said, you've already been a big part of helping to kind of keep that alive. So really appreciate that and all that you've done too. So, thank you.

1:17:41 Janet Sullen: Well, thank you so much. We're going to keep working.

1:17:46 Guy Trammell: I know that's real. And no, you didn't mention but also that granddaughter of yours, she's right in your footsteps.

1:17:53 Janet Sullen: Oh, yes. She's working with the young people too. She's all about the young people and they're having an opportunity to express themselves and be a part of government and growth and all that kind of stuff.

[1:18:07] Guy Trammell: Well, again, thank you so much. Thank you for the interview.

[1:18:10] Janet Sullen: Okay, and thank you for asking me.

1:18:12 Guy Trammell: Okay, no problem. Okay. We're going to end the interview now and end the recording. Alright, thanks. All right. Have a great day.

[1:18:22] Janet Sullen: Okay, you do the same. Thank you.

[1:18:24] Guy Trammell: Okay.

[1:18:25] Janet Sullen: Stay safe.

[1:18:26] Guy Trammell: You too. Okay.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

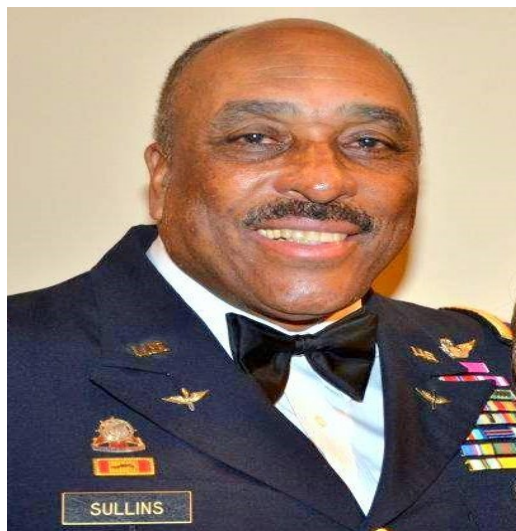
Narrator: Palmer Sullins/Slidell LA

Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham AL

Date: March 29, 2021

Transcriptionist: Joan Burroughs

Palmer Sullins, a native Tuskegeean, attended both high school and college in his hometown. After receiving a Bachelors Degree in Physical Education from Tuskegee Institute. Palmer, under the tutelage of Chief Anderson, received a pilot's license while he was an undergraduate at Tuskegee Institute. After college, he was commissioned Second Lieutenant and became an aviator in the United States Army. Sullins has served, since 2009, as chairman of the Board of Directors for the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site.



Palmer Sullins

[00:21] Joan Burroughs: Good morning

[00:23] Palmer Sullins: Good morning. How are you?

[00:57] Joan Burroughs: Well, I'm going to start the interview. Today is March 30, 2021. No, 29th, I'm sorry, March 29, 2021. I'm Joan Burroughs and I'm here to interview Palmer Sullins. It is now 9:04 am in the morning, and I'm calling from Birmingham, Alabama.

[01:56] Palmer Sullins: I'm Palmer Sullins, retired Colonel, residing in Slidell, Louisiana. I am a native of Tuskegee, Alabama.

[01:37] Joan Burroughs: Okay. Can you talk about the TISEP program, and I know that you were involved in that somehow, during its tenure at Tuskegee Institute. And so, my first question is, do you remember how you heard about TISEP?

[01:57] Palmer Sullins: Oh, of course, TISEP was kind of a staple around the yard at that time, with Dean Phillips actually starting, you know, working with that program. Early on, I was not involved with it initially but got involved with it later, during the summer. It was an opportunity for me, when I was talking with Dean Phillips about some of the things that I really enjoy doing, which was flying, of course. And he said, "Well you know, we'll be able to work that into the program." So, that got my interest even more.

[02:20] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so you heard about the program from Dean Phillips, you think?



[02:44] Palmer Sullins: Yes, but also from students as well.

[02:45] Joan Burroughs: There were other students who were involved and that you heard it from them also. Okay, so that was in your freshman year of college? What year was that in, that you heard about it and that you started working in TISEP?

[03:00] Palmer Sullins: Well I heard about it when it first came on campus, I mean, but I was aware of it. Let's put it that way. When it first started and even when it was just a concept, okay. But only got involved with it later on. I think it was my sophomore year.

[03:16] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I'll just tell you a little bit about the history. Dean Phillips started other groups that were kind of like community education programs that kind of evolved into TISEP. During the summer, I think you were a 1964-65 freshman. So, TISEP, the summer program began in the summer of 1965. Okay, what did you know about the program? What did you think about it in terms, of how you conceptualize TISEP when you heard about it early on. You said you talked to Dean Phillips so what did you expect the program to be about?

[03:57] Palmer Sullins: Well, everybody that was involved with it was very excited about being a part of it. And, so it was just a natural thing for me once I got involved, I got involved with a position that I could assist with it. That, you know, I expected it to be a lot of fun as well as rewarding. You to be able to be in touch with kids and expose them to things that they've not been exposed to before.

[04:29] Joan Burroughs: I guess it was kind of wide open back then because there weren't many opportunities in a lot of Black communities. So, what did you do Palmer? So, Dean Phillips helped you to decide to be in TISEP and you were excited about joining the program and because other people were in it that you knew. What do you remember most about the program and about what you did and your participation in it?

[05:00] Palmer Sullins: My participation in it was unique because it was something that was way outside of what the norm was for everybody else. My addition to it brought in aviation as an exposure for young people. And, of course, when Dean Phillips was talking about it, you know, I said: "You know, we can fly an airplane up there and then have model airplanes." And he was all for it. And he said, "That's a great thing to do." And so, it was just moving forward and provided what we needed. We used Chief Anderson's airplane. You know, he fathered the Tuskegee Airman. At that time, I'd gotten my license and so had Lavega Green, who was in the Air Force ROTC and doing pilot training also. The two of us teamed up and put together a program to expose the kids to aviation.

[06:03] Joan Burroughs: You know, I didn't even realize that at the time. This is news to me also. I knew that people were involved and had the latitude to focus on their strengths when they went out into the communities. And I know that yours was with the airplanes. And so, do you remember any specific event with the children making model airplanes or seeing an airplane up close?



[06:32] Palmer Sullins: Oh ,I remember all of the visits that we made. We would fly to the airport within the cities that had airports close by and the other TISEP program personnel that were involved with the students, local students, would bring them to the airport. So, that was a real high point for those kids because many of them had never even been to the airport, never seen an airplane up close. I would say that was the case for most of them. So, that was their first exposure. And of course, the assignment worked for both me and Lavega. We felt that we were opening up a new horizon for these kids. Probably without TISEP, that never would have occurred, especially that early in life. And so, we enjoyed it thoroughly and it also gave us an opportunity to build a little full time for ourselves in the airplane because we were both newly rated pilots and with our pilot's license and we needed to get more time in the airplane. So, it was a win-win all the way around.

[07:41] Joan Burroughs: So, that was Lavega Green? I didn't realize that he was a pilot also.

[07:41] Palmer Sullins: He was a [unclear] pilot

[07:41] Joan Burroughs: Okay, so you worked basically in the counties and in the areas where there were airports, and we could get to them. That is amazing. Do you remember any of the other people any of the other people that you've worked with, maybe in the communities or some of the workers?

[08:12] Palmer Sullins: Not really, Joan because were just in and out so we weren't with them day-to-day and that sort of thing. Most of our meetings were: let's go there you know, and you know I mean, we'd spend the day doing what we would do as far as aviation exposure is concerned. And then, we'd be off to the next location or back to Tuskegee.

[08:36] Joan Burroughs: Yes, that's amazing. Do you think they were prepared for your visit by the teachers who were on site?

[08:48] Palmer Sullins: All of it was prepared. It was a matter, you know, of getting the kids there and we did the rest. Of course, you know, getting the kids there was their responsibility and they did well with that.

[08:58] Joan Burroughs: How long did you work with TISEP/TICEP?

[09:08] Palmer Sullins: Just one summer.

[09:10] Joan Burroughs: Just one Summer.

[09:15] Palmer Sullins: One summer I worked with TISEP and it was, like said, a very rewarding summer, period of time. I actually had a job, of course. I was a lifeguard at one of the local swimming pools in Tuskegee and I left that job, maybe about mid-summer. That's when I became involved with the TISEP program.



[09:38] Joan Burroughs: I see. Well, I kind of jumped right into this. Can we take a minute and let's kind of backtrack a little bit. So, Palmer, go ahead and just tell me a bit about yourself and about your time at Tuskegee. What did you do after and who you are.

[10:00] Palmer Sullins: I was born and raised in Tuskegee. Born on the campus of Tuskegee Institute, now university, and went to high school at Tuskegee Institute High School. And, of course, my mother tells me that I was interested in aviation from the age of three. Aviation and airplanes seemed to fascinate me. I focused on wanting to, to learn to fly airplanes and use aviation as a career for myself. But I was also interested in physical education, which I have pursued at Tuskegee. My degree is in physical education. I think you were somewhere around at that time, those places. But at any rate, I spent a lot of time at the airport with Chief Anderson and that encounter with him was really unique. He had two sons, one named Charles and one named Alfred. Alfred was older than me by about one year and Charles was younger than me by two years. He was in class with my brother. And, of course, I was trying to figure out how I could get Chief Anderson to know that I wanted to be a pilot.

Well, it just so happened that every Armed Forces Day, the ROTC program would set up exhibits in front of Logan Hall. And now, they've been doing that ever since I was a kid. And I would always go up there on that Saturday morning to see what the displays were. Miraculously, Chief Anderson's airplane would also be there. I couldn't figure out how it got there, because there is no runway, no airport, you know, on the premises at the university, but the airplane was there. And I was walking around the airplane trying to figure out how to introduce myself when I heard him tell one of the people that was around the airplane, at the time, that he was somewhat disappointed that his sons were not really interested in flying the way that he wanted them to be. And when I heard that, I walked in behind him and kind of pulled on his shirt tail, and I said, "May I be your son?" He said: "You want to fly?" I said, "I sure do." And so, from that point on, from the age of nine until his death in 1996, I was his third son. And I owe almost everything to him as far as, you know, my careers and successes now, in aviation. And especially, owning the airplane that you see in the background.

That was all because of him and his love for aviation and the love for teaching kids and people in aviation. As far as, I guess you know, he was the father of aviation, well, father of Tuskegee Airmen. Actually, he was one that really pushed the program and gave Eleanor Roosevelt a ride in the airplane when she was visiting there in Tuskegee. And so that photo is really something that you see when you go to the museum in Tuskegee now. And speaking of the museum, I am, since 2009-2010 timeframe, I've been chairman of the board for the Tuskegee Airman National Historic Site. And that is one of the highlights for me, being the chairman of the board. And what we do is look at trying to make sure that the legacy, Tuskegee legacy, never goes away. And that the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, I should say, never goes away. So, we're constantly raising funds and getting support for the site out at Moten Field, through financial support. And so the group has been successful in maintaining or assisting the Park Service in its endeavors with maintaining the Tuskegee Airmen legacy.

I did graduate from Tuskegee in 1968 with a degree in Physical Education. After graduating from Tuskegee, the coach, the head swimming coach, Coach Leftwich, was moved up into the athletic



director's position and that left his job open. And so the university asked me if I would mind stepping in his shoes and working as the head swimming coach and working on the faculty at Tuskegee; which I did for one year. I got a delay for departure for the military. I'd spent four years in the Army ROTC and I was commissioned Second Lieutenant, and awaiting orders to go on active duty. But when that opportunity came to stay around Tuskegee, I did that and taught at Tuskegee in the 1968-1969 school year. Then I departed to become an aviator in the U.S. Army.

[15:35] Joan Burroughs: I wonder if any of those kids got inspired by your flying, the ones in TISEP. That's amazing. I had no idea that that was a part of TISEP also. This is news. It is really a good thing.

[15:53] Palmer Sullins: Well, the unique part about it is that Dean Phillips, himself, was taking flying lessons with Chief Anderson. And so, when Chief needed, well, after Dean has started taking his lesson, you know, Chief would say, "Why don't you go out with Palmer and get, you know, a different perspective." And so, I would fly him around, also fly with him. He was, you know, trying to get more time the controls and whatnot. And I would pass on to him those things Chief had passed on and given to me. And so, Dean Phillips was well aware of the aviation aspirations that I had. And, so when the opportunity came to work it into the program he most surely did.

[16:37] Joan Burroughs: Yes, he really tried to broaden the experience for everybody: the tutors and the people who were being tutored in the communities. He was trying to expose them to as much as possible. Let's see, do you think your experience with TISEP, did it in any way influence you for later in your life?

[17:00] Palmer Sullins: Well, the experience itself was beneficial in that it gave me an opportunity to pass on to kids, you know, my passions. Which I've done pretty much all my life, even with swimming. I taught half of Tuskegee to swim. I started, when I was 10 years old, I was teaching adults how to swim. And so giving to kids and passing on the things that I cherish the most was just a way of life for me, growing up in Tuskegee. Of course, growing up in Tuskegee was unique experience anyway, during those times. Experiences and opportunities I'd never relinquish or trade for anything. They're just too valuable. Meaning you and your sister and your relatives, and all of my classmates at Tuskegee Institute. That's just a great thing to have happened.

[17:58] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I remember once you and some of the fellows from Birmingham flew into the Birmingham Airport. That's because your wife, your wife now, was visiting. She was with us for that weekend, that vacation and you flew over on one of the airplanes. I thought that was so fabulous and so unique. Now, did you, I'm going to read something to you. Were you aware that the Southland Education Foundation report for the fall of 1965 listed TISEP as: "Tuskegee had another kind of demonstration in the Black Belt, a new kind of civil rights demonstration." The article is talking about the TISEP program. So, do you, how did you understand the civil rights activity that was going on at Tuskegee while you were there? And particularly during the summer of 1965? Did you in any way see TISEP as supporting civil rights somehow?



[19:16] Palmer Sullins: Well, the idea that you were educating people about how to improve their opportunities on the political side was a, you know, just a unique thing in itself. Of course, around the country, they were, you know, starting to move on civil rights. And so, we were, we cherished the opportunity to expose the people in the communities to dimensions outside of the boxes they were thinking in or living in. By talking to us, or having an opportunity to be around us, and when I say us, I mean the students that were involved in the program, it offered another dimension to them. And I think, hoped too, that things would get better. And so, of course, education was a big part of it that we really stressed. And so through the civil rights era, during those times, I thought, and looking back at it, there was a very important thing or concept for those people who have that opportunity to be exposed to students who were in college and looking for higher education attributes. And so that added to the progress that many of the people in these areas experienced later on, the changes that took place in their areas in that the hope that TISEP program added to their dimensions in sort of thinking outside of the box.

[21:16] Joan Burroughs: Did you participate in any way, in the actual civil rights movement?

[21:23] Palmer Sullins: I did, mostly in and around Tuskegee. As an athlete also, our training was pretty tight. And I participated in two sports at Tuskegee—swimming and football. And so, it was necessary for me to devote a lot of time to training and making sure that my body was ready for whatever sport I was dealing with. And, of course, football and swimming are two opposite types of sport when you look at muscle conditioning. And, so I had to, to take special care. So, I wasn't able to participate a lot in the civil rights things that were going on civil rights, not as much as maybe yourself and many others. But when I had the opportunity to do so I did.

[22:22] Joan Burroughs: Just on a personal note, I remember riding to a demonstration on the back of your motorcycle one night after I'd finished swimming. And that was, I remember that, trying to get to a demonstration and you rode me to it on your motorcycle. That, that was a part of our life, that was a way of life then. You know, things will come up and you just didn't know you had to.

[22:50] Palmer Sullins: You know, things going on around you and then you hear about them. And then you say, "Well, I gotta go be a part of that. And that's pretty much happened when I could I was certainly out there trying to support the efforts.

[23:09] Joan Burroughs: And so one of the things that happened, I know you were probably quite busy, because you were, you were an athlete, a student, pilot, you were doing a lot of things, you know. And so—

[23:31] Palmer Sullins: When I was ready for college, I knew where I wanted to go, I knew what I wanted to do. I wasn't searching for anything. It was just a matter of trying to grasp the opportunity with both hands.

[23:42] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I understand. So, the TISEP program, as it ran on after that summer of '65, you just weren't able to participate in it because of your other duties. But that



summer, can you think of any one particular incident? I mean, I know you were involved with the children. Can you remember anything specific that happened during that 1965 summer?

[24:11] Palmer Sullins: I really can't think of any one specific thing. Again, the biggest thing for me was flying the airplane. Part of the program, and then getting to the airport and have those kids—yes, that was, you know, you didn't know if the kids are really going to show up.

[24:30] Joan Burroughs: Right?

[24:31] Palmer Sullins: All of the students that were assisting with the TISEP program made sure that they were there on time. And so we pull up and they got a chance to see us get out of the airplane. And, and so that, to me, was a real highlight that we had thought about. Lavega said, "Those kids who see us just get out of the airplane, rather than come there and we're already out of the airplane."

[24:54] Joan Burroughs: Yes, you had to stage that moment.

[25:00] Palmer Sullins: We had it set up on a time schedule, to try to get there exactly when we said. So, we did. And in almost every case, the students who were handling the programs and getting the kids out there, had them there exactly when we requested. So, we go out of the airplane there. They actually saw the airplane taxiing and then see these Black men get out of an airplane.

[25:26] Joan Burroughs: That's amazing. That is amazing. And I wonder, how they got those children there. You we had a lot of transportation things going on. So, that had to be kind of well-coordinated.

[25:45] Palmer Sullins: Apparently, it was. And I don't recall if there were buses or exactly how they got there. I just know that when we arrived at the airport, they were there.

[25:55] Joan Burroughs: Yes, because transportation was a real issue. And I think that a lot of work went on to make sure that we had the transportation that we needed to do everything—

[26:04] Palmer Sullins: Let me also point out, Joan, that there were a couple instances where they couldn't get the kids to the airport. But they were able to provide transportation, for us after we landed, to the schools or wherever the groups were meeting and to make our presentation on site.

[26:25] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I think people were very inventive and very creative in how they made sure that everything happened that was supposed to happen during that time. I'm trying to think if I'm hitting all the spots. You know, during that time, were you able to interact with some of the other people who were not Tuskegee students. Because I think that there might have been about 12 different universities and colleges represented during TISEP. Did you meet any of the people from other places?



[27:06] Palmer Sullins: People from St. Olaf.

[27:08] Joan Burroughs: You met people from St. Olaf, yes.

[27:10] Palmer Sullins: The people from St. Olaf were down. And they were part of the primary ones, because I think they sent the most students. And those students participated in what was going on. Those are the ones I remember the most.

[27:25] Joan Burroughs: You remember the St. Olaf students the most. Well, they stood out more because that was a unique experience. And Chief Anderson, how did he feel about what you were doing? Did he ever say anything about the TISEP program?

[27:51] Palmer Sullins: I don't know if he knew that much about the TISEP program. But, Chief, Chief and I, like I said, were like father and son. So, the things that I to do and get engaged with, he was 100% for. To include, parachuting, which I have my logbook that has his name, and I had about 10 to 15 jumps out of his airplane at various times. But I wasn't jumping with the people that I learned to jump with. That group was out of Auburn. And they, they said they thought I was kind of crazy because I had to come to Auburn by myself. In fact, Lavega and I both would go, went out there to do PLF, which is parachute landing form, and do that little training.

And so, the guy's years later, I'll say about five or six years ago, one of the guys came down and brought a picture of me in this trailer. You know, outside of the trailer with all of these white guys, you know. And they were saying they thought it was, looked real crazy, coming into those backwoods during those times, you know. When it came to jumping out of the airplane, Lavega wouldn't do it. I ended up going up there by myself. But it was a real unique experience for me and, like I said, Chief had about five to ten jumps out of his airplane at Moten Field. Yes, at Moten Field. Subsequently, we arranged for them, maybe pressured them, to come to Tuskegee to jump and that's where they jumped up until maybe a couple of years ago. So, they stayed around in Tuskegee for 50 years. 40 years, 40-50 years, you know, after that encounter with me. I arranged with Mr. Logan and Mr. Price to have them come to Moten Field. And they said they thought it was great as long as I was jumping. And so, I said "I'm jumping", and they said we'll come to see you. And they did and the rest is history.

[30:14] Joan Burroughs: Yes, well, is there anything else, any other comments that you want to make about your experience? Anything that you remember and might want to emphasize?

[30:26] Palmer Sullins: Not really Joan, just thankful for the opportunity to have that experience. A lot of credit, again, to Dr. P. Bertrand Phillips and his ideas about things at that time. He was a man ahead of his time, as far as I was concerned. And the students just loved him as Dean of Students. Not one to dress above us, he dressed like us. And we identified with him and gave him all the respect that he demanded, commanded right, he didn't demand respect but commanded respect just by being himself. And so I'm just thankful for the opportunity to have been with him and have him have the kind of confidence that he had in what Lavega and I were trying to do the kids in TISEP.



[31:23] Joan Burroughs: That is amazing. It just goes to show we all had specific roles to play. And so some of us had no idea, we just went out there to do what we had to do and didn't know all of the things that were going on in that program because,

[31:41] Palmer Sullins: Very diverse, very diverse. Of course, we brought another dimension with aviation. You know, it's still not in the forefront of a lot things. We still don't have enough Black pilots and the shortage of pilots now coming up brings tremendous opportunity for young people today to get involved in the field of aviation. So, I'm still pushing that today with local groups, and also our national and forward. I'm the past president of the black Pilots of America. It has about 20 chapters throughout the country. And our focus is on youth and youth exposure to aviation as well as maintaining those old folks, the adults who support the youth as well as supporting themselves and learning to fly and are interested in aviation.

[32:34] Joan Burroughs: I just wonder, if any of those children that you saw out there in the counties, if any of them pursued aviation, pursued careers in that?

[32:44] Palmer Sullins: I can't say that there was any follow up on the specifics of those kids out there. I do know that the other dimension that Lavega and I brought to the forefront there was that we were both ROTC cadets. He was Air Force, and I was Army. We did talk about the opportunities in the military. As we know, when we talk to kids about aviation, we know that not all of them are aspiring to be pilots. We talked about the opportunities that came with being a pilot, but also the opportunities that came with the support jobs and support people that are around aviation in general. So, that was another focus that we had when we made that presentation.

[33:35] Joan Burroughs: That's excellent. That's well, you touched a lot of lives. TISEP touched a lot of lives. And I just don't know what to say, except that I had no idea. That's all that I can say. I had no idea that that was happening.

[33:47] Palmer Sullins: You were working so diligently, diligently with what you were doing.

[33:55] Joan Burroughs: Everybody.

[33:55] Palmer Sullins: Yes, everybody was dedicated and in their lane that they were supposed to be in. And so we just added another dimension, all you have to do is just in the cases of bring the kids out, you know, get them there, and then we'll take care of the rest of it.

[34:13] Joan Burroughs: Yes. Well, is there anything else you'd like to say before we close? You're in New Orleans now?

[34:23] Palmer Sullins: I'm actually in Slidell, which is about 20 miles outside of New Orleans. Okay, we were in New Orleans until Katrina.

[34:31] Joan Burroughs: Okay.



[34:33] Palmer Sullins: Lost the house in Katrina. It had about nine feet of water in it and we lost that house. And we moved across the lake. This is what you refer to it now, on the north shore. That is where we are now. And the house that we're in did not flood, so that's kind of the prerequisite that we were looking for.

[34:57] Joan Burroughs: Well Palmer, thank you so much.
[Portion of conversation omitted]

[36:00] Joan Burroughs: Okay. Thank you, Palmer. I'll be in touch though. I'm going to I'm going to send you a transcript of this that you'll look over and if you have any, any corrections or anything, you'll just kind of—you could add them at the end or type them up your separately. Just so you can see the transcript and see that we reporting accurately.

[36:50] Palmer Sullins: Okay, no problem. Be glad to take a look at it. Appreciate the opportunity to talk a little bit about this. This actually brought back some memories and some thoughts, and you know, they were kind of lodged way back in the years before. So, I had to pull some of those thoughts out because I hadn't really thought about them a whole lot, but it has been so long ago, but there were certainly things that I value.

[37:18] Joan Burroughs: If you think of anything else, write it down. We'll attach it at the end of the interview and add it as addenda because I want as much as can be remembered to be included in this.

[37:32] Palmer Sullins: I wish I had more to offer. This is good but not as, I guess, we're say as in depth as some of the people that went there and lived, you know, lived in the homes and, and just became a part of the community. And my part was, you know, really a little part of the big picture. But we really loved that opportunity to share.

[37:56] Joan Burroughs: It was an important part. Thank you, Palmer, I'll be in touch.

[38:04] Sullins: Okay. All right, Joan

[38:04] Joan Burroughs: Okay

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Narrator: Barbara Terry Sullivan/Long Beach, CA

Interviewer: Calvin Austin/Millersville, MD

Date: June 24, 2021

Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Barbara Terry Sullivan received graduate and undergraduate degrees at Tuskegee Institute (now university). Her formative years were spent in Birmingham AL. She is an Immaculata High School (a small parochial school that became a TIS/CEP center) graduate. A staunch advocate for the development of human potential and community development Barbara has served extensively on advisory, non-profit and national boards of directors. Barbara Terry Sullivan founded Sullivan Associates which became, in 1996, Sullivan International (a human resources consulting company that offers virtual organization).



Barbara Terry-Sullivan

[00:01] Calvin Austin: Good afternoon. It's 1:55pm Eastern Daylight Time, on June 24, 2021. I'm Calvin Austin in Millersville, Maryland, here to interview Barbara Terry George, who's in Long Beach, California. This interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committees TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of Interior's National Park Services.

[00:39] Barbara Sullivan: I am Barbara Sullivan George Terry. I'm being interviewed by Calvin Austin. Today is June 24, 2021.

[00:54] Calvin Austin: Barbara, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. It's, I know, it's been a while since you worked on TIS/CEP and I look forward to getting your comments about the project and your experience. I guess we have to start off with some fundamental information. What was your name when you worked on the TIS/CEP project?

[01:19] Barbara Sullivan: Barbara Terry.



[01:21] Calvin Austin: And your date of birth? Where are you from? Well, just give me some general information about who you were when you came to Tuskegee, where you came from, and how you got to Tuskegee.

[01:33] Barbara Sullivan: Okay. When I came to Tuskegee, I came from Birmingham, Alabama. And my birthday is 7/16/43 [July 16, 1943]. I came from a small parochial school, which was called Immaculata, I think we had 14 in my graduating class. I selected Tuskegee because one of the people in the neighborhood in which I grew up in—which was Southtown Projects, government projects—was going to Tuskegee. And I figured if she could go to Tuskegee, I could go to Tuskegee too. And they had a tour, and I don't really know how I got on the tour, but I went on the tour to visit the campus. And I fell in love with the campus. And I came back, and I told my mother that I was going to Tuskegee, and she looked at me like really weird, like, I know what she was thinking, now where do you think we're going to get the money to send you to Tuskegee. But between she my art and all of my mother's friends, I was very active in Birmingham, I was always in fashion shows and doing all sorts of things. So, the Beauticians Association of Birmingham, of Alabama, for the state of Alabama, raise money. And that was my first money that I had going to Tuskegee. So that was how I got there. When I got there, there were all the students from Almond, Parker and all those places, and they looked and said, you're from Birmingham. [Laughter]

[03:15] Calvin Austin: I can believe that. Only fourteen. Tell us a little about Southtown Project because by being from Birmingham, I know a little about, you know, the area you grew up, you grew up in and—

[03:28] Barbara Sullivan: Fascinating, fascinating, fascinating, because at that time, the project was a place that you had to qualify to get. You didn't just get into the projects. You had, you know, you had to have a clean moral standing. And it was you know, I guess for us and growing up, it wouldn't be upper lower class, you know. Because we just had a lower class and middle class you know. You had your friends who parents were doctors, lawyers, and [unclear] and then the us who lived in the projects and then the people who live in the whatever, ghettos, or whatever you call it. So, growing up in projects was very interesting because I grew up Catholic. And I—to this day, my sister and I asked, how my mother decided that she was going to be Catholic. But she did. And so, we got an opportunity to go to parochial school. And everybody in my neighborhood, grew up and went to public school. So, I was forever fighting. Because the other kids would say, oh, you guys worship the idols and so forth. And you don't have a football team. And so, it was quite a battle, and I got a lot of battle scars to show for growing up. And my sister was very timid, so I had to fight her battles and my battles. But it was fascinating to grow up in that neighborhood, because it was really a cross section of people in terms of religion and, you know, education, and urban versus growing up in the country. So, I learned a lot of lessons there.

[05:17] Calvin Austin: Also talk about the Birmingham environment. Again, being there I know what was going on from a civil rights standpoint. Help me understand how, what your experiences were during that time.



[05:30] Barbara Sullivan: Well, my mother was very big on our being successful. And so, she's her—her best friend went to Europe or somewhere and went to modeling school. And so, she put us in modeling school, and we went to dance classes. And we did all of those things in Birmingham, that when you really look at it, we came from a neighborhood different than those people who were on the hill in Smithfield in some of the other areas of town. So, we got exposed to things from our neighborhood that a lot of the young people in our neighborhood did not get exposed to. Birmingham was a very interesting town because of TCNI, the big plants there. And so black people there, were not in total poverty is as I recall. You know, you had your pockets, but you also have some up and coming, folks that education was well respected, and it was expected that you are going to go to school, and you are get an education.

My idol, and I have his picture to this day, was a man by the name of A.G. Gaston. And A.G. Gaston I had to pass by, because I had to take a bus—two buses to get to school from Southtown Projects to Titusville. So, I pass by and saw A.G. Gaston had a little insurance company. Then he had a school because he needed people to sell the insurance and he needed stenographers and secretaries. So, he started his own school. Then he had a restaurant. Then he had a motel. And this was a man with less than an eighth-grade education. And he built his little empire in the middle of a totally, totally segregated area. The big dog in Birmingham was Bull Connor. Total Ku Klux Klan, I'm sure. But he put the fear of God in all black people. And we were young and every time we went out, if you were riding around or whatever, you were aware of the police. And he—and back then our you know are black young men were trained and taught just as they are today. Still, that that was an environment that you had to be really, really careful in.

[08:13] Calvin Austin: Okay, that's interesting. Okay, we have you've got the Tuskegee now. What were you majoring in?

[08:27] Barbara Sullivan: I started out majoring in and social what was called sociology then I think they changed it to social science. Later, but when I entered it was sociology.

[08:40] Calvin Austin: And you—how did you, how did you blend in with the students at Tuskegee once you got there? Were you—did you blend in or was it a slow development of friendships and things along those lines?

[08:59] Barbara Sullivan: Oh, no. My mother used to tell me I'd talk to a brick wall. If nobody's around the wall, I'm going to talk to the wall. So yes, no, I had no problem from the time I entered. Oh god, what was that? Thrasher Hall. Wherever I was. As a freshman, I came right in and I made friends, my roommate and I, and I got involved. My mother was a PTA mother. And if you've ever had a PTA mother, you're used to bake sales you're used to being involved in stuff. And even though she was a—worked in a laundry. She moved herself up to a supervisor, you know, in the laundry. And so, she had a "high position" for a black woman in the laundry. So, I knew when I went to school, I had to, you know, I had to represent. I had to join these things I had to be active.

[10:03] Calvin Austin: Okay. Do you remember any of the things that you were involved in?



[10:08] Barbara Sullivan: I was involved in this at—in the—what is what was our campus newspaper called? Campus Digests?

[10:15] Calvin Austin: Yep, that's it.

[10:16] Barbara Sullivan: I was a writer in the Campus Digest. I was with the students for United Nations. I was very interested in the world as a whole and we had a campus group that worked with the United Nations. I worked with almost all of the campus leadership organizations on some committee. I never was a part of the leadership in terms of running for any position. Although when I was in high school, you know, I ran for student body president. And I remember my friend saying, Now, you know, you're the most qualified, but you're not going to win because you're running against Donald Jackson. And Donald Jackson is captain of the basketball team. I said, Yes, but he's dumb. You know, I know, I'm smart. I know, all the girls are voting for me. Well, the election came, and the girls did not vote for me. That was my first lesson [laughter] on how unfair the world can be. So, when I went to Tuskegee, I always took—I always loved being in the second role and working behind the scenes.

[11:32] Calvin Austin: Okay. Okay, well, let's see. The TIS/CEP program came on about your, that would have been your junior year or senior year.

[11:47] Barbara Sullivan: Yes, junior, or senior year, somewhere in there. I was trying to remember that last night at the exact time. But when I was looking at the document that I had before, there was a summer intern program, and the first program was in '64.

[12:09] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[12:10] Barbara Sullivan: Tuskegee Institute Community Action Program.

[12:13] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[12:14] Barbara Sullivan: And then that started in 1964. And so that was probably my, you know, my first foray into that, and that morphed into Tuskegee Institute Education Program.

[12:30] Calvin Austin: Okay, so I know you had a, I guess, a resué that you read about what you did with TIS/CEP, why don't you read it off for this? Just, you know, the—

[12:45] Barbara Sullivan: Okay, the Tuskegee Institute Community Action Program, which started October 1964, as a volunteer aid to the community program, and which was later funded by OEO. And I was chairman of the group in charge of community development and beautification. This was a student directed program. In the second poverty program, the Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program, I was in charge of physical training, and I was a leader in that. And we had training sessions before all of the programs. That was our gathering. That was how we all came together on campus before you went out to the counties, all the places that you went out to. And I had the girls because they had the girls and the boys separated and so



I was in charge of that. And then I worked in the area of research testing and evaluation at the beginning of the program. Terribly important skills which I'll talk about later. And then for the—in all three programs I was a member of the proposal writing team.

[13:55] Calvin Austin: So, you, you were—you worked pretty close with Dean Phillips then?

[14:01] Barbara Sullivan: Very close with Dean Phillips, he was my idol and still is to this day. To this day, I have never—he and another influencer—well two more in Tuskegee. Dr. Stanley Smith.

[14:16] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[14:17] Barbara Sullivan: And Dr. Gomillion. Those three men. When I look at who I am and where I found courage. I look at the three of them.

[14:31] Calvin Austin: Okay, you, you named three. Although there were a lot of giants down there. You name three of the giant giants. He says smiling. Okay, so that was—do you remember what counties you went to when you were working on the TIS/CEP program? Or did you go to all of them or?

[14:51] Barbara Sullivan: I was a part of all of the teams because in the evaluation portion of the program, the job was really to go out with the teams. And it wasn't necessarily that we were doing the education. We weren't doing the task. Our role is kind of a ride along role, and to see how things were being done, versus how they were designed to be done. So, there were programmatic aspects that were supposed to be put in place and done a certain way. And so, our job was to evaluate how the program was going? What were the people saying, and I cannot remember the tools that we used. Whether it, you know, I think it was probably more qualitative than quantitative.

[15:42] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[15:43] Barbara Sullivan: Yes.

[15:45] Calvin Austin: Okay. Okay. So, and you worked on tests on the program, two summers? And then I guess you were, you're graduating. You graduated in? What year did you—what year did you graduate? '65 and '67?

[16:07] Barbara Sullivan: Right, '65. I looked that up, so I'd be right. And from '62 to '65, that was the BS degree. And then the Master's in education was '65 to '67.

[16:24] Calvin Austin: Okay, and when you left Tuskegee, where'd you go?

[16:29] Barbara Sullivan: When I left Tuskegee, I came to Los Angeles. I had a job in a—in a placement office sitting in actually, what do you call it? I was a headhunter. My very first job, was working in an employment agency.



[16:48] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[16:49] **Barbara Sullivan:** And I worked at an employment agency because I kept interviewing for jobs, where they had counselors in Woodbury colleges and some of the colleges here. And it was that if you didn't graduate from a school in California, like USC, or UCLA, or whatever, the experience and the degree was not as acceptable. And I had that happen to me in New York, too, for summer jobs. There was, I felt, a disrespect, I think, for all of the work that we did at Tuskegee versus going to one of the major colleges or universities. I can recall in New York one summer, going to City College, and I got a paper, my girlfriend got a paper, I got a D, or C or D, and she got a B. And I asked the—yes, I read her paper, and it wasn't all that great. And I asked the instructor, and he said, well, we understand that those of you who go to school in the south into the southern schools don't have the depth of information and instruction and resources. And so, I, you know, your paper was good, but I know that you could not have gotten what any student that came out of the New York system—that was a whole long lecture and I'm looking at him like, are you crazy? Look, you got all social pro and academic pro, if you—I would take any of our students against any other students who are sitting here in this classroom, because they didn't let you slide. You were on probation if you didn't make the grades and those instructors were difficult. Well, anyway, I don't know how I got off on that. But yes, I came, and I got a job in an employment agency. And then I placed myself. As I was going through, it was one of those jobs where you worked on commission. And that's where I learned to be a salesperson.

[19:00] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[19:00] **Barbara Sullivan:** I worked on commission, and I saw this job for Cedars Sinai Medical Center, which is one of the largest medical complexes in California, in LA. I went in for an interviewer. I applied, and as I was waiting for my interview, the door opened to where I was going to go in, and there was a black woman in there. And I thought, oh, God, I ain't going to get this job. Because they already have—

[19:41] **Calvin Austin:** Have their one [laughter]. They got theirs.

[19:46] **Barbara Sullivan:** They got their black person; I may as well go home. But anyway, I went in and I interviewed with her. Her name was Faith Fuller and she became my mentor. She hired me. She had gone to Hampton, and she lived in my neighborhood. So, I rode to work with her. I mean, so I, over the years, you know, she just when she started working, when she was in Corporation she left there, and she went to ARA Food Service. And she got the President's Medal, and she started a fantastic nonprofit. So, I got my professional learning at her, you know, at her [unclear], in her [unclear].

[20:34] **Calvin Austin:** Wow, that's great. It's—well, speaking of that, you know, coming out of college, she was your mentor. Did you have any others that helped you get to, you know, provided you with the insight? Because there weren't that many of us out there during that timeframe. We were probably—you were probably first or second.



[20:58] **Barbara Sullivan:** I was always the first everywhere.

[21:00] **Calvin Austin:** Yes.

[21:00] **Barbara Sullivan:** During that time, I was the first. And what used to annoy me though, they would always look at me, and say "well, what do you think the black community would think about that?" I don't know. I don't know what all the black people think. But I can tell you what black person thinks. If it was too far out, they were going to probably use the 'most of the black view' and not be happy with my position. So yes, that was, that was one of those times where you always, whether you wanted to or not, you had to represent.

[21:37] **Calvin Austin:** Absolutely.

[21:38] **Barbara Sullivan:** But I, one of the things, the feelings, I started to think about TIS/CEP and that whole period. I don't remember many details because it's been a long time ago and I've been very active in all kinds of stuff. But what I do remember about TIS/CEP, and Dean Phillips, was the feeling. The feeling of being able to do whatever you thought you wanted to do. You are given that opportunity for leadership in a safe environment. We all felt, if you ask any one of us, I think we all felt that first of all, we were Dean's favorite, you know. And that because he would talk to you and it was just like, what's the saying about Clinton? You know, when people talk to Clinton, they would say, you know, he acst just like he's talking to me and nobody else was around. Dean Phillips had that. And he allowed us to do things that we had never done. But would be what we learned from doing that, like the research papers and the evaluations and all, those were skills and experiences that we took into our future. And he did that with a graduate intern program. And with TIS/CEP. The graduate internship program and the TIS/CEP program were tied together because we were his staff. There were other students and people in the program, but it was primarily the people who were in the graduate internship program.

[23:34] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Okay. So, give me a little of your work history. All those are just a portion of your accomplishments because we—I don't want to have you here talking to me all day about everything you've done, all the great stuff you've done, so.

[23:52] **Barbara Sullivan:** Well, my—as I said, my experience in working in college placement allowed me to get into the area of human resources. My first jobs were in human resources, in companies and primarily in hospitals, Cedars Sinai Medical Center, Children's Hospital. Then I saw an ad in the LA Times. I would have been a very good spokesperson for LA Times, because I think three of my jobs, I just got them from the newspaper. I look for the paper and sent my resume in and I got a job at Children's Hospital. I got the job at the city attorney's office in personnel there, first personnel director for the city attorney's office. And I, when I got that job, it was working for a public official who was an elected official. And I was told: the rumor was that I got the job because I was a minority. I was African American, and they needed an African American in the department of the city attorney's office because most of them were white. And I went to the Times, and I said, you know, 'there is a rumor that I've gotten this job because I'm African American', and I'm not—at that time, the words, unapologetically black were not in. But basically, I said, you know, I'm African American.



And he said, I don't know why anybody would say that. We hired you because of your experience and specifically because of your experience working with doctors, in medical centers, like Cedars Sinai Medical Center, and those things. And we've figured that if you could work with gods [laughter]—and that's the [unclear]—then you can work with attorneys, because we're on the right hand of God. So, you know, [laughter] I took a step down in coming to work with attorneys leaving the guys, and that was just so, that was so refreshing. And that's how I was allowed, again, in an environment with a group of folks who were respectful of what I brought to the table. And that I was not being judged in that environment by color, which was really refreshing. Because we had in the city of Los Angeles, that was a time Tom Bradley, and you know, you had black folks in charge. And so, I had so many great role models. Okay, so from there, I went—I, you know, it was like sort of robbed in the credit union, I'm going to be here forever. And I've always had an entrepreneurial dent. I'm the lemonade stand girl, you know.

[27:05] Calvin Austin: Okay.

[27:06] Barbara Sullivan: So, and as you, as you heard a lot of my early on jobs were in sales kind of environments. So, several of us got together to, we were going to open an employment agency. And then, I, when it came time to put up the money, it was like, okay, who's going to leave their job and who's going to, who's going to start this agency? And everybody was kind of ah, so I said, well, I'm ready to go anyway. So I went, and I opened a cleaning service though first, and then I went into the employment agency business. So, I've been a serial entrepreneur. Always looking for where the need is in a specific area, though, and that is employment and training. And when I look back, you know, at my degree in sociology, in my master's degree, I've always had that desire to put people on jobs, train them.

[28:22] Calvin Austin: Okay. So, what are you doing now?

[28:27] Barbara Sullivan: Well, now, my company is Sullivan International. We are still in the area of training and development. We have, we work with community colleges. We work with West LA College locally. I work with corporations like Southern California Edison, I designed a program for them early on in their supplier development area, which says that the company is supposed to do business with a certain percentage of the population that it serves. And there was no mechanism for doing this, except one of our House of Representative people, Gwen Moore some years ago, passed ordinances GO156. That said, this is what you should do, you should be spending your money with the minority community, the women, and now it's morphed into LBGT, the veterans and everybody and their mother comprise that segment of outreach and business with the utilities in California. And they're like 27 regulated companies, and they all are supposed to have a certain spin with vendors. So, we have a vendor training program for business owners. We have a program for workplace skills training. And we have a program that is a coaching and soft skills training. So, everything is in either HR or training.

[30:14] Calvin Austin: Okay. So, I remember when we had our initial discussion, you told me about some type of virtual arrangement you had or?



[30:27] **Barbara Sullivan:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[30:29] **Calvin Austin:** Talk to that for me, about that. Your, the—

[30:33] **Barbara Sullivan:** The virtual training?

[30:35] **Calvin Austin:** No, the virtual company that you set up.

[30:38] **Sullivan:** Well, when I first went into business, it was Sullivan and Associates. We're now Sullivan International Inc. But it was Sullivan and Associates. And the model for me early on was bringing together other business owners in the same sector. Not doing the same thing, but that could support each other because we talked to the same audiences. So, if you sold employee benefits as an insurance person and I had HR, were talking to the same people. So, my idea was if, I—we didn't have any money, so how are you going to, how are you going to be able to do this at any grand scale by yourself? Well, if you all come together and form a virtual organization under the heading of one organization, so whoever goes out to sell, you're selling the other five or six, or whatever companies that you bring to the table. So that was my plan from the very beginning. It was very difficult. Because as I've experienced over the years, being a subcontractor or being a virtual has its challenges.

[32:18] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. And how did you resolve those challenges? Or did you? How long did this portion of the business last?

[32:28] **Barbara Sullivan:** Well, actually, it's lasted until where I am now to be true.

[32:33] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, so. Okay, gotcha.

[32:35] **Barbara Sullivan:** Yes, I just learned that you have to be discerning in your selection process and who you're working with, you—it's like marriage. You know, when you select someone to work with you, there are certain expectations that you have of them. Some are negotiable, and some are non-negotiable. So, I had to become clear about my non-negotiables. Those values have been my saving grace over the years. It's also been my destruction over the years because people can fool you, you know, or you can see something that's not there, and you're just wanting to make it there. But that's been the model. I've been able to do large projects, through working with other consultants.

[33:53] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. What's the largest project you worked on?

[33:54] **Barbara Sullivan:** The largest one was the Southern California Edison project. Well, you know, that wasn't the largest one. Actually, the largest one was as a HR person. Did I tell you I did the staffing for the 1984 games?

[33:58] **Calvin Austin:** No, you didn't.

[33:58] **Barbara Sullivan:** How did I leave that out?



[34:00] **Calvin Austin:** You're just being modest [laughter].

[34:02] **Barbara Sullivan:** You know, sometimes. This is one of those times where, if it's the truth, it ain't bragging.

[34:12] **Calvin Austin:** It's true.

[34:13] **Barbara Sullivan:** And so many times I when I'm talking to people, I know they must say, please, how could you do all of that? You know, how did you do that? So, I think I have selective memory.

[34:30] **Calvin Austin:** No.

[34:32] **Barbara Sullivan:** But in 1984, I had a company in 1983, '82, '83. Because I had a company that did temporary service. And the games came about. I was staffing the games. I was providing temporary service for the startup of the 1984 games, right? And I was asked if I would come aboard to do the short-term staffing for the games, which were all of the folks that worked the games.

[35:22] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[35:24] **Barbara Sullivan:** And in about five venues. And I thought I was going to have a huge staff, only to find out I was going to have to work with volunteers. And I had a short staff and in three different areas. But I was successful. We had successful games, and it was a beautiful, beautiful experience. But when the decision for the Atlanta games was made someone asked if I was going to Atlanta to work the games? No, done there. Been there, done that. But I learned, again, a lot of—a lot of wonderful experiences. And it was like the kind of project that we're talking about when I say virtual, because my role was to bring the pieces together to get the work done. And that entailed, you know, people talking to me about selling something to the Olympics, and they would go away to go ask their boss, if they could donate whatever it was, they came to try and sell the 1984 Olympics. So that was a skill, you know, that I developed with Peter Ueberroth.

[36:36] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Now is Peter Ueberroth still alive?

[36:40] **Barbara Sullivan:** Yes, he is. The last I heard he was, he had a—what do you call it after the, after the games? He went to the baseball commission. I think it was a commission.

[36:51] **Calvin Austin:** Yes. Right. That's right. That's right. That's right. Okay

[36:54] **Barbara Sullivan:** I think he's still alive. I haven't really [crosstalk].

[36:58] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, that's just an aside. But okay. Okay, let's see. You. Let's see. So, what are your political affiliations? What do you consider yourself?



[37:18] **Barbara Sullivan:** I'm registered as not declared. That is a, that is a designation in California. And that gives me you know, the opportunity to go any way I wish, but I typically go democratic. As a matter of fact, I've never gone republican. I just have that out there. Like if I wanted to, I could. And in the, in the past, it did not allow you to vote in primaries, but they've changed that law in California. So, I can vote in primaries.

[37:59] **Calvin Austin:** I guess if you're, if you're not declared, do you get as many phone calls as you do if you were democrat or?

[38:04] **Barbara Sullivan:** I don't think so. But I think the democrats have found me [laughter].

[38:09] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, okay. What about any? I guess you've indicated that you grew up Catholic. Do you still practice Catholicism?

[38:22] **Barbara Sullivan:** No. Mmm-mm [negative]. I haven't been to church in a while. I've moved to sort of Religious Science. And then now I am, I'm not affiliated with any church.

[38:37] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[38:38] **Barbara Sullivan:** But I consider myself a real true Christian.

[38:43] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, but you, I can just tell that you are a spiritual person.

[38:47] **Barbara Sullivan:** Very much. Very much. I don't know how people don't believe in God. I don't even know who they are. I don't even know. No, I'm a God-fearing person.

[38:57] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. And you've never really held any government offices or anything along those lines, have you?

[39:03] **Barbara Sullivan:** No, they—I've been asked to run for like City Council for the city of Los Angeles when I lived in San Pedro. But they were too limiting to me because, first of all, they didn't pay very much money and then everything you did could be a problem. I know with black folks it would always be a problem. So, I decided I would donate to whomever I supported.

[39:30] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. So, you're married for how long now?

[39:35] **Barbara Sullivan:** 27 years.

[39:38] **Calvin Austin:** Do you remember the date? [Laughter]

[39:40] **Barbara Sullivan:** October 21st, 1994

[39:47] **Calvin Austin:** '94, okay. So, just so you'll know—you came very close to being married on a really great date, the 20th, which is my birthday, but that's okay.



[40:00] **Barbara Sullivan:** Okay [laughter] October 20th.

[40:03] **Calvin Austin:** Well before '94, but in any event. But so, what is your, what's your husband's name? And what does he do?

[40:14] **Barbara Sullivan:** Louis, L-O-U-I-S, George, and he is a real estate professional, commercial real estate professional, he works with corporations and land acquisition.

[40:27] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Now, so, are there any? Oh, if you were to have to give me a life changing event for you? What do you, you know, what was the biggest life-changing event that occurred for you? Or did you have one or you just steady on the go going in the direction you are going?

[40:56] **Barbara Sullivan:** Yes, I think I had so many, but they all were leaning in the direction. For instance, I was, at one time, I had a huge IRS bill for my temporary service. And I thought that would kill me. And I, you know, I had a payment plan and arrangement. And when I got audited on that, the guy said to me, you're probably one of the few people who pay according to their arrangements. But you know, it was one of those things that in business, I learned a lot of lessons and I had a groundbreaking experience. And if I had had that information before, then it might have looked different going through that.

[41:54] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[41:55] **Barbara Sullivan:** I had those kinds of experience. I had to sue my biggest client, which was Southern California Edison, because I refused to let them get away with a change in leadership who decided they were going to change the game. And changing the game would have put me out of about \$240,000. And I refused to do that. And everybody said, oh, you know, if you sue Edison, nobody else is going do business with you again, and blah-de-blah. I said, you know, I don't care, we're doing this. And I learned during that time, that you have to have the courage of your conviction. And if you, if you let people walk over you, you're not going to have anything anyway. And I got a lot of lessons during that time, God has just been great and guiding me, because even then—when we got the judge, that was going to be the judge for our case. Something said, look that judge up. I looked the judge up, he used to work for the people we were suing. He worked for Southern California Edison. Yes. So, all through life I have just been guided, truly guided. And I, my big thing is recognizing early on that I'm a servant leader. And my role is to move as I'm instructed.

[43:49] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. Okay, now you've done all these things, you've been through quite a few events. Let's go back to TIS/CEP. Was there anything that you took from that program that carried you through all the stuff that you've been through in life?

[44:16] **Barbara Sullivan:** Yes, as I was mentioning early on, I think the confidence and the tenacity of the TIS/CEP experience, you know, that came with the participation in the TIC/SEP experience has given me what I needed to go through all the things that I've just mentioned.



From the building of businesses. If I had not done a proposal, I would not have known what a proposal looked like. And government proposals are very complicated, but so when I first saw a proposal. You know, it was an RFP. I knew what an RFP was, because we were exposed to it early on. Being able to evaluate programs, to critically think. I think critical thinking was a part of what we were expected to do in the program. So that skill was honed. And leadership without a doubt, because we were given projects and programs that we had to do, things that we had to perform. And so without the myriad of stuff, including your lens on what is now called equity, inclusion, and diversity. We had that early on, we knew what we had to do. And when I was on campus, I was one of the founding members of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. There were three of us who went to Atlanta and brought Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael on campus. So, in that era, at that time, when TIS/CEP came about, it was an extension of all the things that were going on in the world. And we were sitting in a position to really learn and grow and develop and be involved. We were involved.

[46:40] Calvin Austin: So, in addition to what you gained from the program, do you, can you talk a little bit more about the impact that the TIS/CEP programs had on the civil rights movement back in the '60s, when you were working with it?

[47:01] Barbara Sullivan: I feel very strongly that a lot of the leaders that work in the movement came out of the TIS/CEP program, we were on the ground. Those brave students that went into Lowndes County in all the different areas of the belt—of the Black Belt, to register voters and to educate people, I think, I know it had quite a profound outcome in that you had people who are not afraid to go out. And even if they were afraid, they got what it took to get up and go out and register to vote. And then the education piece that the students brought to the folks in those counties so that they were prepared to go out and vote. And I really think that if even today, when you look at the leaders in the southern states, in the southern area of Alabama, those folks who were—what was the guy who was the mayor of Montgomery? When you look at all those towns, they have black leaders, because first of all, you had to have black voters. And you had to do.

So that education piece and that leadership training piece was very important for the civil rights of yesterday, but is also important today. Because folks come up with a mindset that they don't have to just accept everything, and that they're as smart as anyone else there. Recently I've been reading a book, and I'm so impressed because I hadn't even seen, I hadn't thought about this. But the book is called *Buried in the Bitter Waters*. And it's *The Hidden History of Racial Cleansing in America*. And its evidence of mass racial cleansing and how in some of those counties that are now lily-white counties, when you know they had some black people at one time. But they ruled those people out and many of it, many of them, I think, was the result of folks just becoming educated. Those that were left becoming more educated through programs like the TIS/CEP program.

[50:16] Calvin Austin: Okay. Wow, this is great. I really, really have learned a lot from you. So, tell me what, what's next for you? What do you plan on doing?



[50:42] Barbara Sullivan: Well, what I'm working on now is a certification program. And true storytelling. There's an organization called the True Storytelling Institute, it is an international institute of white people [laughter] who, you know, they founded this whole platform and model for true storytelling. My friend Oscar Edward formed the group, and we're being certified because we know that the world recognizes certification. Even though you may have all the skills, if you're not certified by someone, then your credibility and validity can often be questioned. So we decided that we're going to take this true storytelling. First, we took the program, then now we're in training the trainer. It is for us, a change model. Our group is called DEI group. And we've all been involved in diversity training, you know, two hours of diversity change, check the book, check the box, dah-dah-dah. And it has no impact. It has no truth about the kinds of things that have to go on internally to change perspective. Because you can't change behavior, unless you can change the perspective, and the belief, and the values. And we feel that we want to use a platform like this, but we have to contextualize it by our community. We want to use this kind of platform going community to community. . . . whatever we can do to get the dialogue going on. So that not only are we wanting to work with interracial and intercultural groups, but with our own, with black people. Like sit down, let's talk, and let's tell the truth. Let's tell the true story. Let's talk about the truth.

[53:13] Calvin Austin: Okay. Well, okay, well, look, I guess, I want to thank you for agreeing to do this, to participate in our project. I really appreciate all your comments. I think you've added some valuable information into what happened. And from your perspective of the Tuskegee community's summer education programs. And it's, it's being of that era. I know what was going on. And I really appreciate what you did in the development of the project and those type things and the carrying it out. So, on behalf of the committee, thank you, and we appreciate your participation.

[54:18] Barbara Sullivan: Thank you. My pleasure.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Narrator: Margaret Taylor

Interviewer: Lisa Daniels

Date: September 4, 2021

Transcriptionist: Kevin Holt

Margaret Taylor, a graduate of Birmingham area Hooper City High School, received a bachelor's degree in education from Tuskegee Institute (now university) in 1968. She successfully completed Master of Science and Specialist degrees in education. A retired educator, she is also the mother of twins, Carol and Daryl, who are both Tuskegee graduates. Margaret Taylor tutored at TIS/CEP's Pumpkin Bottom site.



Margaret Taylor

[00:02] Lisa Daniels: Good afternoon, this is Lisa Daniels interviewing Margaret Taylor. It is September 4, 2021, at 5:20 pm. Thank you, Margaret, for being with us today. Could you go ahead and tell us a little bit about yourself, please?

[00:20] Margaret Taylor: I am a 1968 graduate of Tuskegee Institute. And I'm a retired teacher ending my career in 2009, as a fourth-grade teacher. I went on from Tuskegee to get my master's here in Augusta. I have to tell you about that later, how I got to get that for free. And then from there, I got my specialist degree from Lincoln Memorial in Tennessee. I have two children who are twins, Carol and Daryl; they did not graduate together, but they both are graduates of Tuskegee, '92 and '94, respectively.

[01:04] Lisa Daniels: Awesome. Thank you so much. So, we are interviewing you today to learn about your experience with the TIS/CEP program. Could you tell us a little bit about your role? And could you walk us through a day in the life as a member of the TIS/CEP program?

[01:21] Margaret Taylor: Okay, now, that's been more than fifty years ago. So, I do remember us getting up each day, Monday through Friday, and going to this like a little one room schoolhouse and tutoring children. I don't know how we recruited those children. Maybe we went to visit the houses to let them know that we were doing the program. But they showed up. And we tutored them during the day. I don't know what time we stopped but we served them lunch. And what I remember is that every day they delivered the lunches. And in that lunch, there was always milk, which I loved to drink. Can't drink it now, but anyway. So, that's basically what we did, we tutored children in things like math and reading. And they walked back home as far as I can remember. And that was how our day went each day Monday through Friday.



[02:20] Lisa Daniels: And was there--were there any arts provided, any electives provided to the children?

[02:26] Margaret Taylor: If you can call it that, we did like little poetry reading. We had little programs, I remember that. So we would teach children, different poems and different songs. And then I don't know if we did it like at the end of the week, but they would sing and recite the poems and we'd have like a little program where they would, I guess, show what they had learned during that week. But and we did art seems like, but I don't know if it's like real art. Like we didn't have a real art teacher. But we, back in the day, I think when I first started teaching, we didn't have a real art teacher, or real PE teacher, a specified person for that. So, we probably did that, did all of that. We tried to teach them music. And we did P.E., and we did art. So, as much as you can call it art. We weren't art teachers.

[03:26] Lisa Daniels: Could you tell us about the schoolhouse? What did it look like?

[03:32] Margaret Taylor: Like an old—the schoolhouse was like, in my mind it's like a little old shack. Because seems like the steps up to the building, up off the ground, seems like the steps were wobbly and I'm a scaredy cat. So seems like we stepped down and they kind of like creaked and wobbled because it was an old, like an old abandoned building. But in that building, it was like a little auditorium. Like it was a little stage in the front. And in the back was like, had maybe a desk or two and an old green chalkboard. And that's what we used to write on for the kids or whenever we were teaching. We taught from that little chalkboard, but it was mostly like tutoring because we didn't have that many students. Maybe if I remember correctly, maybe five, five per little section, because there were like, four of us. So everybody had their own little group of students. It might have been like three or four students for each person to work with if I remember correctly.

[04:44] Lisa Daniels: And where did the teachers live?

[04:48] Margaret

Taylor: We lived out in the neighborhood. We lived in the community. There were two Tuskegee guys, they lived next door and I can't remember who they lived with. I guess it was a family. Maybe it's a husband and wife, I don't remember. But we, the girl, the female and I, we lived with the lady who was a widower, I think. I don't remember men being there, it was just her. And she was elderly. Of course, back then I was young, so everybody looked old to me because I was young myself. But we lived in, actually, we roomed and boarded, in the neighborhood, in our private homes. And I guess the TIS/CEP program paid our rent, because of course, we were students, so we didn't have any money to pay rent.

[05:41] Lisa Daniels: And could you tell us a little bit about the house that you stayed in?

[05:45] Margaret Taylor: Well, I thought it was a kinda nice house because they had a screened in porch, which I loved. And it seems like it had two entryways to the house, because you can go through the porch that was screened in into the living room. But you can also go on the side, into



our bedroom because our bedrooms, like the bedroom where my roommate and I slept. Now there was not a twin bed in there, it was a full-size bed. And so, we slept in the same bed. I remember that. Which I was used to that because there were 10 of us so, some of us, I mean, had to sleep with somebody else if you wanted to lay down in a bed that is. But anyway, so you can enter that way. And I thought it was a nice house, it was. She had a living room, which we never went in, except when Dean Phillips visited and we were allowed to sit in there. But basically it was like a regular house. It had an indoor plumbing. You had to go. But there was no hallway. So, maybe back in the day, they didn't build houses like they build them now where you have a hallway, where you come out into the hall. Because seems like we would go from our room, to her room, and then we could go into the bathroom. There was no hallway to come out of your room and be and walk down the hallway and go to the bathroom. I do remember that now. But I hadn't thought about it in years. But she had a nice house. I think it was made of wood, though. But that seems like it was white. So, yes, it was nice. To me it was a nice house because I was from poor family and my dad built our house. So, her house looked better than the house that I lived in, to tell you the truth. So.

[07:31] Lisa Daniels: Tell us a little bit about your connection to Tuskegee. Did you get a chance to go to Tuskegee while you were in the in the TIS/CEP program? Were you able to go to the campus while you were in the program?

[07:45] Margaret Taylor: Yes, we went back to campus several times. I think we had some meetings. I don't remember what they were about. They probably were like, checking on us to make sure we were doing what we were supposed to do. And that we were working with the children in that neighborhood. And it was called Pumpkin Bottom. It was like country, country, country. Seems like the roads were dirt roads if I remember correctly. And it was like, I guess, it was poor. I didn't. I was poor myself so, I didn't see it as poor, but I guess. Oh, I know what they did for activities in the neighborhood. I think it was on Sundays or Saturdays. They went to a ball field. And seems like the grownups played baseball if I remember correctly. I remember that now. Okay, so that was activity like the neighborhood activity was going. Where grown people, I mean, grown men and women, mostly seems like men, were actually playing baseball for their entertainment. Huh, I hadn't thought about that. Yes.

[08:58] Lisa Daniels: So, can you tell us what was it like in 1965? What was Alabama like in 1965?

[9:05] Margaret Taylor: It was very rural, especially in the part where we were, but amazingly, like she had indoor plumbing. Because that house the first night we stayed in Pumpkin Bottom we were in a nicely built house, but it wasn't connected to any indoor plumbing and that's why they had to move us to the old lady's house who had indoor plumbing. But the roads were dirt roads, and she didn't drive but I think somebody in her family drove her, would come and pick her up. And maybe they went to the nearest city which was Columbus, Georgia, to shop. I don't remember us shopping. But it was very rural. You walked basically. You walked in the neighborhood, and we didn't, like I don't remember us going to church or anything like that. But whatever activities, like I said about the ball game, wherever that ball field was, and it was like an open field. It wasn't like a real ball field. But you know, they had some like wooden benches



with bleachers kind of, sort of like but made out of wood. But you walked everywhere. We didn't have a car. And I think most of the people in the neighborhood didn't have a car, but there was no bus. So maybe they walked wherever they went to work. And they walked back as far as I can remember. But there were no white people. We never came in contact with any white people.

[10:42] Lisa Daniels: So, the students who came from St. Olaf, you didn't have a chance to work with them?

[10:49] Margaret Taylor: I never met them. I never worked with them. They never came to Pumpkin Bottom, Alabama. Oh, I know, the biggest city was Phoenix City, Alabama.

[11:00] Lisa Daniels: Okay.

[11:01] Margaret Taylor: Right. So, I never encountered any of the white students. I know we had some white students at Tuskegee when I was there, but I thought they were from the University of Maryland. I may be wrong because I can't remember. But I know we had some exchange students. But I was in elementary education. I don't remember any of them being with me in my major. So, I don't know. I never really came in contact with them, not even in the cafeteria. But then I'm from Alabama. And so, we didn't really, I was not, I didn't grow up during integration. So I didn't really seek them out, try to be friends with them, or see what they were talking about, or what they were majoring in. I really didn't. I didn't have any connection with them.

[11:49] Lisa Daniels: So, what was it like to live in the segregated state of Alabama?

[11:53] Margaret Taylor: I suppose it was difficult for those who had to come in contact with white people. But I lived in a neighborhood where all the people were black. And I went to school on a bus that may have passed by a bunch of different white schools. But I went to an all-black school. So, and I pretty much didn't like go downtown shopping. We were poor anyway. So we only went like for like the Fourth of July to get some things and at the beginning of school. And that was basically it. So, but my dad always had stories to tell about white people because he worked in a, made mattresses. And so he had to come in contact with white people on a daily basis. But the way he talked we didn't try to make contact with or socialize with them. So I don't know if other kids did. But I know we're from a big family. So we didn't really. Our friends were in our family. I mean our sisters and brothers were our playmates and maybe somebody in the neighborhood. But basically, we had our own playmates.

[13:08] Lisa Daniels: So based on the information you're providing to me, you went to a historically black high school, Hooper City High School, and you graduated in 1964. Is that right?

[13:21] Margaret Taylor: That's right.

[13:22] Lisa Daniels: So now, when you graduated, did you apply to any schools to help integrate? Or did you decide to primarily apply to HBCUs?



[13:33] Margaret Taylor: You know, what happened was, as young people say, my daddy did not even graduate from high school but he was a historian. He was very much in. I mean, he knew all, so much history, that my little mind can't even hold it. But he loved, loved, loved Tuskegee. So my sister, well it was a bunch of us, but the one who went to Tuskegee and graduated, she went to Tuskegee first. So it was like a given that that's where anybody else who's going to go to school and get any money from him, that's where they were going to go. So I may have applied to other schools, but I don't remember. And I remember as a negative, that--and I hope that that's just the way I see it and I hope nobody else sees you that way because I am still a member of the Hooper City High School Alumni Association. So, but I was, we were poor. It was a bunch of us. My counselor did not try to help me do what I needed to do. My only saving grace was that we were taught to learn, I mean that was something that my daddy required. So my sister who went to Tuskegee was the valedictorian of her class, and so was I. So, we were like, the smart kids. We were poor, but we were smart kids. So, I don't remember my counselor ever meeting with me, and telling me about the different options, which may not have been that many options, I don't remember. But I don't ever remember her even saying, calling me into her office. She did have an office. I don't remember her ever advising me on taking the SAT, which I did take. And I did make the highest score on the SAT for black kids. I don't know what the white kids did. But they, I remember that distinctly because I got an award. And it was a monetary award because I remember my mother taking me shopping that very day when they gave me my money. I can't remember if it was \$100, \$50, I can't remember, but was enough for me to buy some things. But I think the next year, or maybe the year after that. It was shortly thereafter that was integration. But I was not a part of that. I was already out of high school. And I was already going to Tuskegee at the time, because that was basically, my daddy chose that school for us so we went there.

[16:37] Lisa Daniels: What was your experience like after the program? And did it help you prepare to become a teacher?

[16:46] Margaret Taylor: Well, to tell you the truth, I always wanted to be a teacher, I practiced being a teacher when I was a little girl. But basically, I was not aware of all the different jobs that you can have. I really wasn't aware of that. The people that I knew, and I loved, and I held in high esteem, I didn't--I probably shouldn't even say this--but I did not even know that my teachers actually went to the bathroom. I didn't know that. I couldn't even picture. I mean, they were just like so pristine. So, I mean, they were like the upper crust of anywhere I've ever been. I mean, they had cars, they had nice clothes that I thought, and they live good. They lived on the good side of town. And I mean, so those are the jobs that black people that I knew of you're either, I guess you could be a preacher. But hey, I didn't want to be a preacher. But now my sister who graduated before me majored in biology, which she could have gone on to be a doctor because she was that smart, but some other emotional things happened, and she didn't do that. But she was a scientist, because she went on to California to work in some kind of scientific lab. But I didn't follow that, because I had already made up in my mind that I was going to be a teacher, because that's what I wanted to do. Because I loved my teachers, and I did a lot of little teaching things that kids do. Like, I know this is crazy, but they used to keep roll or attendance or something in some kind of book, and you had to write the names out in longhand, and in cursive,



and my cursive was perfect. So my teacher always let me write in that book. It was some kind of state book, I don't even remember because I don't remember doing that once I got out and got the job. But you had to keep up with that attendance and write the kids' names down in there and everything. And she let me write all of that stuff. And the permanent records. I did that in my teaching career, where you actually wrote. You wrote in there. You didn't print it out and put it in there. You wrote on there. So, I was like, "Oh, yes, I'm gonna be a teacher." And so, I didn't even know that I could have been some other things. And now that I'm old, I could have been, oh, our time is up? Good.

[19:23] Lisa Daniels: No, you're good. You're good. Continue.

[19:26] Margaret Taylor: That's it. I mean, that's that was all I could talk on and on. I live by myself. So, my girlfriend and we try to out-talk each other. My son says "Mama, when you all get together, it's like chatter, chatter, chatter." I said, "I know, we live alone so we talk a lot."

[19:43] Lisa Daniels: So, okay. So, tell me before you head off. What are some, maybe one big lesson you learned from that experience?

[19:55] Margaret Taylor: The biggest lesson I learned was to be patient; that it takes time to learn. And I'm learning that even in my old age, it takes time. You can't just jump in a swimming pool, which I have taken lessons several times. And I'm still not a swimmer. But it takes time. And so, I've learned how it's not as easy as it looks just because you can learn easy, doesn't mean everybody can learn, or you know, like you say, "Oh, yes, that makes sense. Blah, blah, blah." But it might not make sense to everybody and what's easier for you may be very difficult for somebody else.

[20:45] Lisa Daniels: Awesome. Thank you so much. This is Lisa Daniels with Margaret Taylor. It is 5:41 pm September 4, 2021. Going to stop the recording.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Narrator: Lucy Thomas/Rockport, TX

Interviewer: Guy Trammell/Tuskegee Institute, AL

Date: March 2, 2021

Transcriptionist: Joan Burroughs

Lucy Thomas, of Hopkins, Minnesota, majored in Latin at St. Olaf College. In 1965, after completing her sophomore year at St. Olaf College, Lucy travelled to Tuskegee Institute and participated in TISEP. She taught 7th and 10th grade students English at Macon County Training School. Lucy Thomas later continued studies in computer science and became a specialist in computer education.



Lucy Thilquist-Thomas

[00:02] Guy Trammell: Okay, here we go. Okay. It is a 12:00 pm noon on Tuesday, March 2, 2021. I'm Guy Trammell in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama; here to interview Lucy Thomas, who is in Rockport, Texas. This interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's History and Impact Project, under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights Historic Division of the Department of Interior's National Park Service.

[00:57] Lucy Thomas: Okay, this is Lucy Thomas in Rockport, Texas, and continuing the video interview with Guy Trammell.

[01:10] Trammell: We can start with Lucy. Could you tell us just a little bit about your background, where you came from, and your family?

[01:18] Lucy Thomas: Yes. And I would like to make one correction in the previous interview, mother's occupation. That caught me a little bit by surprise. And her occupation, you might say is secretary not homemaker.

[01:34] Trammell: Gotcha. Okay. So, this is—tell us a little bit about your background.

[01:48] Lucy Thomas: And yes, when I joined TISEP, I'd had virtually no contact with black people. I did in my junior year at Tanda mission study tour of Central and South America. That



was six and a half weeks in the summer, and I did have some contact with darker skinned people there. But, Guy, at St. Olaf College we had in our class, I think one. One token black, whom I had no contact with. So, my contact was with black people was limited and we as tutors in the TISEP program were told to teach whatever we were comfortable with. We didn't have a have to have a teaching degree. So, I chose English, and I taught English to seventh and 10th graders at the Macon County Training School

[02:57] Trammell: Okay, if you could come sit back a little bit. Okay, I you. Okay. Okay, perfect. So, okay, let's go back a little bit. Now, again at St. Olaf had you known anything about the Civil Rights Movement coming up?

[03:18] Lucy Thomas: Very little knowledge and certainly no firsthand knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement.

[03:26] Trammell: Okay. And, again, where were you from?

[03:31] Lucy Thomas: A suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Hopkins.

[03:35] Trammell: Okay. Okay. So, in high school, they didn't really come in contact with black people.

[03:45] Lucy Thomas: No, we had no black people in high school. Had no black people and high school and said we had one black person from Chicago in my college class.

[04:00] Trammell: Okay, okay. So how did you end up going to St. Olaf?

[04:05] Lucy Thomas: Well, I had been a guest of next-door neighbor for a weekend. She had me down for a weekend visit and I got to attend one of the classes with her. And a beautiful campus and I knew that St. Olaf was the college I would attend. I graduated eighth in a class of about 400 at in Hopkins. So I studied a lot.

[04:41] Trammell: Yes, so um, once at St. Olaf. Um, what were you majoring in?

[04:49] Lucy Thomas: My major was Latin I and I took education classes. I completed a major in Latin, but I left St. Olaf after three years and to get a degree, well, I, it wasn't a priority because I got into the computer field. And I did take some courses in the 90s, early 90s, some night classes, but I didn't apply for a degree.

[05:27] Trammell: Okay. Again, at St. Olaf, being on campus with the students, was there any discussion or anything about the civil rights movement going on at the time at St. Olaf, with professors or with any student groups or anything ?

[05:43] Lucy Thomas: No, there wasn't there was one, we had daily chapel there, Lutheran orientation and one English professor, Dr. Richard Buckdad [unclear] talked about the



opportunity they, that he had for tutors to go down to Alabama. And like I said, we didn't need to have a teaching degree we could teach whatever we were comfortable with

[06:16] Trammell: Okay, so that was your first contact with TISEP?

[06:21] Lucy Thomas: Yes.

[06:22] Trammell: Okay. All right. And then going down, there, then what year was that?

[06:27] Lucy Thomas: That was 1965.

[06:30] Trammell: Okay. So, what, when was the time that you actually went down? Was that in May, June?

[06:38] Lucy Thomas: Probably in June? Yes. June of 1965.

[06:43] Trammell: Okay, now, thinking back now, had you ever been that far south before?

[06:50] Lucy Thomas: I had been to through Mississippi and to and to Florida with my grandparents in about 1956 or 57.

[07:05] Trammell: So, so you've never been to Alabama before?

[07:09] Lucy Thomas: Well, I think just to travel through it. No, I had not. I essentially had not been to Alabama before.

[07:20] Trammell: Okay, okay. So how did you get to Alabama?

[07:27] Lucy Thomas: I took the train. And to Chicago, I took what was called the Hummingbird Special. So, I took the train to Montgomery. And I don't remember how I got to the campus. 40 miles or so, I guess.

[07:47] Trammell: Okay, now, let's go back then. So, when you first got to Alabama and then to the campus, what were, any memories of that? And impressions, things like that?

[08:04] Lucy Thomas: No, I ah, the first part of the summer I shared a dormitory room with another tutor. Her name was Velma Wilcox, and she was from Mobile, Alabama.

[08:20] Trammell: Okay, so, um, let's say so you actually stayed on campus? Yes. Do you remember what dormitory that was?

[08:28] Lucy Thomas: Ah, Rockefeller Hall? I remember it. Yes.

[08:33] Guy Trammell: Okay, excellent.



[08:34] **Lucy Thomas:** Yes.

[08:36] **Guy Trammell:** All right now. Let's see, and where, did you all eat your meals on campus?

[08:41] **Lucy Thomas:** Ah, yes. I think it was Washington Hall or Tompkins.

[08:45] **Trammell:** Tompkins

[08:47] **Lucy Thomas:** Probably Tompkins. Yes, right.

[08:50] **Guy Trammell:** And I just kind of noticed that when y'all came down for the anniversary, we call it the like the square. the part between Tompkins Hall and white Hall. Is that a place that y'all used to meet or gather at different times?

[09:13] **Lucy Thomas:** It could be, I don't remember exactly.

9:20: Guy Trammell Okay, okay. All right, when you first got here, did you actually have orientation?

[09:27] **Lucy Thomas:** Yes, we had some orientation. We had 6:00 AM physical training each morning, all of us tutors. I didn't know, at the time, that Dean Phillips was trying to find us funding for this program in Washington, DC. Many trips, I guess. But uh, as a tutor, I was unaware of that.

[09:56] **Guy Trammell:** You can kind of back up just a little bit. We're getting your chin cut off.

[10:02] **Lucy Thomas:** Oh, yes. Okay.

[10:05] **Guy Trammell:** Tilt the camera down a little bit. That'll be good. But yes, perfect. Perfect. There you go.

[10:11] **Lucy Thomas:** All right. Yes. I have to ask you, how did you adapt to the summer in Alabama too, because I know that had to be an issue also.

[10:25] **Lucy Thomas:** Oh, yes, I guess I get used to the climate, always hot and humid. Yes. I guess I adjusted.

[10:39] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Okay. Now in the training. How did they prepare you? How do they prepare you for your, your particular area? And what did you do? What was your assignment during that summer for TISEP?

[10:55] **Lucy Thomas:** Yep. I didn't know at the time, at the training period what I would be doing exactly. But I was placed as a tutor of English to seventh and 10th graders at the Macon County Training School.



[11:13] Guy Trammell: So you had transportation each morning to get there?

[10:55] Lucy Thomas: Ah, yes, I think we took a school bus. And we would stop and pick up students who enrolled were enrolled for the summer. We were told that the students were eager to sign up because they, they got out of field work. And it was about, though Macon County Training School, was only about 10 miles from my—from Tuskegee. And the bus ride was about 45 minutes, a long bus ride. So four of us tutors got together. And we each put in \$50. And we bought like a 1950 Chrysler, so we could travel back and forth and in a shorter amount of time rather than taking that bus ride. So we christened that. We called that we call that car Booker T. And yes, that shortened our commute time considerably.

[12:36] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now, what was your impression of the areas that the children were living in? And you seen things like that? And what did you see? What were you seeing?

[12:49] Lucy Thomas: In most cases I think the students walked out to they walked out their driveway to the road, the county road, so we didn't we didn't actually see any. We didn't see any living quarters close up.

[13:09] Guy Trammell: Okay, okay. And how was the receptivity of the students to the program?

[13:16] Lucy Thomas: Oh, the northern whites, we northern whites were kind of a novelty. They really didn't know. What do I expect from these creatures? But they Yes, they welcomed us warmly.

[13:33] Guy Trammell: And did you have particular things used to kind of break the ice and was that on a regular basis? Or was it daily? Or was it maybe at the beginning and then you kind of transitioned into a more regular routine?

[13:51] Lucy Thomas: Yes, that's the students they welcomed us, and they seemed to value the education, they seemed to value, the you know, the time in school and so forth.

[14:05] Guy Trammell: Okay. Now, what particular things were actually tutoring, and did you have the materials provided?

[14:14] Lucy Thomas: We had some guidance from some of the year-round teachers that had volunteered for us also. Volunteered to the program. So we got some, some guidance and direction from them. I don't remember actually, what I taught I, I did introduce drama to the 10th graders, they had never had the idea of putting on a play. So they welcome that and as I mentioned earlier, they during a closing ceremony, I think or they taught us their soul dances and we taught them square dancing. They had had no concept of square dancing. So we taught them. We had an exchange there of dancing.



[15:14] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent. And I'm sure it was, like using a record player at the time, because I don't think that cassettes were—

[15:24] **Lucy Thomas:** Probably that was the only technology at the time. So we, we probably had the radio and the record player. Right.

[15:34] **Guy Trammell:** Now, you mentioned there was some individuals that assisted, what were some of the other names out there? I know definitely, Dean Phillips. Are there any others, you that you remember that were particularly helpful that were part of where you were, with the program.

[15:53] **Lucy Thomas:** I wish I did remember some of the names of the teachers there, but I don't remember any, anything. As a, as a tutor, I was, I guess, not exposed to anything else in the program, I knew that there was a traveling choral group. There was a touring drama group, I guess. But I was kind of unaware of the rest of the program, the counties that, you know, some of the students lived out in the counties and taught under, under trees. We were pretty privileged, though, I guess, in that we had a school building that we could actually use.

[16:50] **Guy Trammell:** Tell me about the, like a typical day. You said there were four of you. So did you kind of tag team or how exactly did you do that?

[17:02] **Lucy Thomas:** Oh, we had a little contact with other tutors or student groups. During the day, we had our own class. I remember we had Physical Ed time. We go out into the field and play softball or whatever. And I just remember it being the hot part of the day. And during the lunch hour lunches would be brought out to us by car, I suppose prepared lunches, sandwiches and maybe something to drink. I don't remember too much about that.

[17:47] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, yes. And what was what was it like the environment there at the school? As you said, it was about 10 miles away. Was it surrounded by a community?

[18:02] **Lucy Thomas:** Yes, like we got to know the students a little bit. They, they warmed up to us tutors readily and kind of accepted us as importers of knowledge. So, yes, yes, we had we had good, good relationships, I thought with the students.

[18:31] **Guy Trammell:** And could you relate maybe some of the memories you have of the time, maybe leading up he was saying they had the closing ceremonies. Did you all have to do preparation for those? How long were you there also?

[18:50] **Lucy Thomas:** Well, we taught for about eight weeks from mid-June to mid-August. And we had some kind of closing ceremony at the end of our time there, end of August. And it was during that time that my 10th grade English group put on a short play, I guess.

[19:20] **Guy Trammell:** All right, well then, they had to be excited about getting ready for that too. Great. And so the so they actually took to the drama also?



[19:32] **Lucy Thomas:** Ah, yes. They liked the drama, and they, they kind of thought it'd be kind of funny at first, but I think they really welcomed that. And, you know, like I said, we broaden their horizons. We taught them a little bit about drama, and you know, the square dancing, which we kind of took for granted, was something foreign to them. And they enjoyed teaching us like their, their soul dances and yes.

[20:14] **Guy Trammell:** And just wondering too, with the square dancing, did you all bring some music in or did they have anything there?

[20:23] **Lucy Thomas:** I think we provided that I don't I don't recall. Exactly. Yes.

[20:31] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Now, while you were there that summer, did you participate in other activities with the student groups? Because I knew there were other civil rights groups on campus.

[20:43] **Lucy Thomas:** Yes, no, as tutors, we were advised not to engage in voter registration. So we didn't do that. And I think that actually is why none of us were killed, because we didn't in engage in voter registration. You know, once the local people found out that we were down there for educational purposes, they pretty much left us alone.

[21:15] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Now, did you? Did you come across any situation that seemed threatening or anything that summer, in between times with the children or maybe while you were back near campus or anything?

[22:22] **Lucy Thomas:** Well, one Sunday morning, we decided that we were going to integrate, we were a mixed group of tutors, and we decided that we wanted to integrate some of the white small white churches in Tuskegee Institute. So we marched there as a group, and we found that the front doors were locked to us. We went around to the back door try to get an entrance that way, and those doors were locked too. So as a mixed group of tutors, some black some white. We were unsuccessful in integrating the churches there.

[22:22] **Guy Trammell:** This is a Sunday and churches were locked?

[22:28] **Lucy Thomas:** Yes. Ah, yes, we found that once the attendees saw that we were coming they locked the front doors.

[22:44] **Guy Trammell:** Wow. How many churches did you try to attend?

[22:49] **Lucy Thomas:** Oh, I think there were three or four, maybe. And this was a quite a number of weeks after the Methodist Church. A news photographer was trying to film the front integration there and his camera was smashed, my guess. And my parents, back in Minnesota wondered what had they sent their daughter to? You know, what kind of environment? But we didn't have any contact or any, there was no participation in that event. But it did make national news.



[23:43] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. So there were reporters there? Do you remember about how many people were with you when you went by the churches? Was it just a handful?

[23:55] **Lucy Thomas:** I would. Yes, I would say maybe 11 or so it was a small group of blacks and whites, we decided that we were going to integrate those churches.

[24:10] **Guy Trammell:** Was in a pre-discussion on it to say what to expect?

[24:17] **Lucy Thomas:** No, no, it was something that was decided, I suppose the day before, excuse me, and no, it was nothing, nothing official. We, we'd looked upon it since it wasn't voter registration, we thought it was maybe a harmless activity.

[24:46] **Guy Trammell:** And so the—was it possibly one around breakfast or something that you were approached or started planning to do to attend that?

[24:57] **Lucy Thomas:** I think we went out on maybe 10 o'clock or so it was mid-morning.

[25:05] **Guy Trammell:** And just you just walked there from the campus.

[25:08] **Lucy Thomas:** Right. We walked there from the campus. Right.

[25:17] **Guy Trammell:** Let's see. Did you have any deliberation afterwards among, you know, among yourselves to talk about what took place?

[25:28] **Lucy Thomas:** I don't know. There are I don't recall any we probably were a little surprised that the doors the doors were locked, you know, front doors, the back doors. We were told that we weren't welcome there.

[25:47] **Guy Trammell:** And had you been to that part of town before while you were there?

[25:54] **Lucy Thomas:** No, I think at the time we arrived there was a boycott of businesses stores there. The blacks were not welcome. But we whites did, did some shopping and so forth before the, some of the businesses, without the black business, had closed up, you know, weren't able. So in essence, I guess, the boycott by the blacks kind of brought the downtown businesses to, to their knees really.

[26:45] **Guy Trammell:** Now, um, let's see, now were any other activities with the businesses or any other particular actions that that you remember, that might have done, as far as either integration or anything with civil rights.

[27:04] **Lucy Thomas:** I remember going to one cafe on the outskirts of town in a mixed group, a small mixed group, maybe two or three whites, two or three blacks. I remember going in there in an evening and being refused service. There was no contact or altercation or anything, but they just managed to let us sit in a booth and we never got served.



[27:38] **Guy Trammell:** I want to name a couple names and see if you remember any of these names. Do you remember Wendy Paris or Sammy Younge or Gwen Patton or Simuel Schultz?

[27:54] **Lucy Thomas:** I think, I think Gwen Patton addressed the tutors, Sammy Younge, I didn't know but he was murdered on the, later in the day at the same spot in Montgomery where I bid farewell to the young black man that I had a late summer romance with. I was I got that book about Sammy Younge Jr. and it's one of my prized possessions. Like I never met him. But the bus station where the boyfriend and I, where I boarded the bus earlier in the day, it was right at that filling station where Sammy Younge was killed later on in that day when he refused to read the or go, abide by the sign that says said blacks use the back. the back of the building.

[29:13] **Guy Trammell:** And were there any other leaders or different ones that you remember, who were the students or the young people there working with civil rights.

[29:31] **Lucy Thomas:** No. Like I said we were encouraged not to participate in voter registration and just to concentrate on our education or our teaching mission.

[29:48] **Guy Trammell:** Right. So, let me just ask, while you were there, because the tutoring, that was mainly what, Monday through Friday is that right?

[29:57] **Lucy Thomas:** Right.

[29:59] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, so on weekends were there other activities than the ones TISEP was involved in? And did they have activities or training sessions for you?

[30:10] **Lucy Thomas:** No, our weekends were pretty much our free time. Let's see, the Central American and the African students at Tuskegee Institute were excluded, by the American blacks, for parties. So some of us St. Olaf students, since we were also outsiders considered outsiders, we would attend of the parties that were hosted by the West Indian or the, the African blacks. The American blacks didn't like the West Indian and the African blacks because the West Indian and Blacks didn't bleach try to bleach their skin to be their faces to be to be whiter. So, they were shunned. shunned from the parties that the South American blacks participated in. So, we St. Olaf students, on the weekends, we would sometimes party with the West Indian and African blacks.

[31:42] **Guy Trammell:** Was that like in Tompkins Hall or in common room in the dormitories or Logan Hall?

[31:49] **Lucy Thomas:** No, these weren't any of the campus buildings. These were like in an off-campus homes.

[32:00] **Guy Trammell:** Excellent. Excellent. Did you remember anything about, possibly the neighborhood Greenwood?



[32:08] **Lucy Thomas:** I don't remember that. No.

[32:10] **Guy Trammell:** Okay. Or Carter's store or Holland's or anything like that. Okay. So, um, what was your general impression with the campus? And the kind of area around it? What things you remember?

[32:35] **Lucy Thomas:** Well, the campus was very clean. And the buildings were well kept up. Many of the older buildings, yes, much, I guess. Although the architecture and building materials were different, it was much like, say, the St. Olaf campus.

[33:01] **Guy Trammell:** Give me some of your overall impressions, or memories with Dean Phillips. Because he spoke to the group at different times?

[33:14] **Lucy Thomas:** I guess, though at, in meetings, but guess as a tutor, I was kind of distant from any of the leadership there.

[33:32] **Guy Trammell:** Now, were you able to actually see any of the other sites that they had in the program?

[33:40] **Lucy Thomas:** No. Our transportation was arranged, and we had very little, we had no contact with any of the other tutor sites.

[33:59] **Guy Trammell:** Tell me what it was like when those, you said there was two traveling groups that would come through.

[34:04] **Lucy Thomas:** Oh, yes.

[34:05] **Guy Trammell:** What were those days like? They would let you know ahead of time that they were coming to prepare the children or how did that work?

[34:14] **Lucy Thomas:** Yes, I don't I don't remember. I don't remember either the traveling drama group or vocal group. Yes, I don't remember those, those groups coming to the campus.

[34:32] **Guy Trammell:** Did they come to the school to your classes?

[34:39] **Lucy Thomas:** I yes. I just don't remember any of those. Paul Benson said he was part of the traveling drama group. Well, I don't I don't remember anything about that. About that group coming to the campus, though.

[35:00] **Guy Trammell:** Okay, so maybe they were going to play, since you already had drama going. Drama program. Okay. Now have you been in contact with any of the ones with the program since then?

[35:15] **Lucy Thomas:** Oh, yes. The fellow that I dated from Uganda was black and attending the vet school there at Tuskegee, and but he returned to Uganda only for a short time and ended



up as a professor of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. And so, 30 years later, I married him and lived for 20 years in Ames, Iowa.

[35:58] Guy Trammell: Beautiful. Okay, okay. And are there any of the others that you were in touch with?

[36:08] Lucy Thomas: Paul Benson sent me some photos that he had taken. He had, he was one of the few people down there, I guess, with a camera. And he sent me a picture taken on the field at the athletic field at Macon County Training School, and that had Dr. Richard Bucls [unclear] in it. He came down from Northfield, Minnesota to see what those students were involved with. And I don't remember, you know, his coming out to the school, but Paul Benson furnished those. He was living in Dallas, Texas at the time. And he sent me 8x10, black and white copies of some pictures that he had taken. And so I have brought those two those pictures to various reunions that we have, and I was probably one of the last people to see Dr. Bucks [unclear] are alive. He had gone from administration back to the English Department and was a professor there for many years. But he had Alzheimer's disease, and he said he didn't remember anything about the Tuskegee Institute summer.

[37:53] Guy Trammell: Now did you and your husband ever go back to Tuskegee for the symposium or any other activities at the institute?

[38:04] Lucy Thomas: Yes, we, we traveled from the Atlanta, Georgia area with another veterinary school alumnus from I think he was from Guyana. And we did see the campus in about oh, I'd say 2005 maybe.

[38:36] Guy Trammell: So, all right. Now, I just want to ask you, from the experience that you had with it, I was gonna say later on, did that affect you as far as, were you involved with things in the community? Or have you seen how that might have kind of influenced some of the things that you've done later on in life?

[39:09] Lucy Thomas: Um, my first husband, who was white, and I adopted Scott, a black American baby from Texas, in 1975. And Scott has gone on to be executive director of Magnet Schools of America. He has been a school principal and is currently studying for a doctorate in education in Minnesota. And then we adopted him as a baby and four years later, we adopted a dark-skinned Indian daughter, I mean, India from India, and she has two daughters in their 20s. And so my son and his husband have three adopted children, dark-skinned children also. So, yes, there, there were some lasting effects of my experience at Tuskegee.

[40:25] Guy Trammell: And it sounds like both the multicultural aspect, but also the education you have continued to mention that as you go along. Were you looking into education, before you had done the TISEP experience?

[40:42] Lucy Thomas: I did take some education courses. I was intending to be a Latin teacher, but I didn't feel that I was, was ready for, you know, a paid teaching responsibility. So I, I chose not to continue in that, in that pursuit.



[41:14] Guy Trammell: But you got involved in computer education after that?

[41:17] Lucy Thomas: Yes. When I was attending St. Olaf computers were not really in existence. We did have a computer date night, but computers were kind of in their infancy. I got into the computer business after I left St. Olaf.

[41:41] Guy Trammell: Okay, were there any other memories or things that you, you know, kind of stand out about your experience at TISEP? And again, could you name, it was it was the Tuskegee Institute Summer Education Program that you were involved in?

[41:59] Lucy Thomas: Right.

[42:01] Guy Trammell: So any other things that maybe stand out you'd like to share? Or?

[42:09] Lucy Thomas: Well, I think, sometimes I regret not participating more now in the Black Power Movement. You know, I've kind of retired from that, I guess, from that activism.

[42:35] Guy Trammell: Okay. And I'm just saying, like a takeaway for someone. In other words, what I want to say is, would you recommend a program like TISEP for those people, you know, especially for those who possibly would be in college? Say, if there was something like that, even today? Do you think that type of maybe the, you know, the structure, the philosophy behind it would assist students? You know, in college today?

[43:44] Lucy Thomas: Oh, yes, I would, I would heartily support initiatives of its type. We were, you know, we as northern whites were, we're just probably so much more blessed than the students that we taught. But it was also a valuable for the students to, you know, they, they just probably had the orientation that you know, you be careful, and you respect whites. But does see, to interact with some, some northern whites on a friendly non-threatening basis was just great. I certainly would hope that, you know, initiatives like that would occur.

[43:09] Guy Trammell: Okay. Again, Lucy Thomas, thank you so much. Appreciate you, you know, giving of yourself to sharing this project.

[44:20] Lucy Thomas: Sure. Okay. Thanks, Guy. It was good to meet you and contact me again, if you have any further thoughts or questions.

[44:30] Guy Trammell: Okay. That will end our recording.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History and Impact

Narrator: Carl Trimble/Atlanta, GA
Interviewer: Joan Burroughs/Birmingham, AL
Date: April 14, 2021
Transcriptionist: Joan Burroughs

A native of Opelika, Lee County, Alabama, Carl Trimble graduated from J.W. Darden High School before attending Tuskegee Institute. Carl majored in architecture and for many years operated a highly successful architecture firm in Atlanta, Georgia.



Carl Trimble

[2:32] Joan Burroughs: It is 7:44pm on April the 14th. I'm Joan Burroughs, in Birmingham, Alabama and I'm here to interview Carl Trimble who is in Atlanta, Georgia. And this interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact Project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

[3:24] Carl Trimble: My name is Carl Trimble. Today is Wednesday, April 14, 2021. I'm Carl Trimble again, in Atlanta. And I'm being interviewed by Joan Hamby Burroughs.

[3:35] Joan Burroughs: Thank you. Okay. So, Carl, I'm going to start off the interview by asking you this question. Do you remember how you heard about TISEP?

[3:47] Carl Trimble: I don't. The specifics of it I don't recall but I remember word was going around campus, about the program and someone, I'm not sure if it was maybe Julius Chatman or somebody, mentioned it to me. It might be Julius who first mentioned it to me, I think, or Calvin, one of the two. Calvin or Julius who mentioned it to me about the program and where they were going to be. And at that point I realized it was going to be operating in my hometown, Opelika. So, I was very excited about the prospect of going to tutor the kids in Opelika.

[4:16] Joan Burroughs: So, what year was that?

[4:20] Carl Trimble: That was '66.

[4:20] Joan Burroughs: Not '65?



[4:30] Carl Trimble: I'm thinking '65, '66. Actually, I'm wondering.

[4:34] Joan Burroughs: What year in college were you at the time?

[4:38] Carl Trimble: I think I was in my sophomore year. So, it had to be. '65. Yes.

[4:44] Joan Burroughs: So, it was your sophomore year, in the summer, of '65.

[4:44] Carl Trimble: That was '65.

[4:44] Joan Burroughs: Okay. All right. So, what did you understand about the program when you began, what did you know about the program?

[4:58] Carl Trimble: Okay, I heard, you know, let's put it in the context of where we were at that time, in 1965. Civil rights was booming. I guess you might say the movement, itself, was booming. We had a lot of SNCC people on campus. And I'd heard about it, that there was going to be an opportunity to work with kids, over the summer, and we would get paid for it. Of course, that was always in the center. Yes, but I think that was my first hearing about it was an opportunity to do something in my hometown. Anyway, to work with kids over the summer in program, so I was very excited about that. I had no plans for the summer 65. It had to be the summer of '65 because in the summer of '66 I interned at [unclear]. It had to be the summer of '65.

[5:45] Joan Burroughs: Okay, and so you were excited about working in Opelika, your hometown in Lee County.

[5:55] Carl Trimble: Lee County, yes.

[5:56] Joan Burroughs: So no, tell me what you remember about the program then; about the work that you did.

[6:06] Carl Trimble: It's been a sec, it's fuzzy, but I will say that we worked out in one of the schools in Opelika. I think was Darden, the high school that I went to. I think we actually worked out of Darden. I was very familiar with that. And kind of a tutoring program, we were tutoring kids, and other part of the program, we fed the kids. So that always helps get a good set of students in an area where you, you've got them in and when kids, sometimes they don't have a healthy meal. So, we were in a social service as well as an educational project. I think we were perhaps very successful at doing both shows. And it was a fun time. I was 18 years old myself at the time and I'm a kid still. Yes, I was thinking about it. I wasn't even, it was kind of an awakening of sort into a adulthood, but I still didn't think about it as an adult at that time. So, I was two years out of that senior high school and I was working at it. Which was kind of unusual, I think.



[7:13] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, so you attended Darden High School, and then you were able to work there. So, that must have felt pretty good. To go back to the community and do something in the school that you graduated from. Yes?

[7:29] **Carl Trimble:** Yes. Absolutely! As I was two years removed out of the school myself, but the age we're dealing with, they were much younger kids and junior high school kids too. But it was a broad, broad spectrum that we were able to work with. And it was new to me. I had never it taught anything. You know, I was hardly out of high school myself hardly, but I knew enough to pass on the information to kids. Not just from the standpoint of education, but from the standpoint of experience. But we provided aspirational capital for these kids. More so than immersing in knowledge base, it was aspirational based.

[8:09] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes.

[8:10] **Carl Trimble:** Aspirational based. The idea that they can see, they see role models, like us: you, myself, Calvin and the rest of us, they .they could identify with. From my best recollection, I never got that. I'm just only two years removed. I don't recall anybody doing anything similar at our high school, coming from the outside.

[9:01] **Joan Burroughs:** So, what did you, what was your area? The area that you worked in, that you taught? You were a tutor.

[9:10] **Carl Trimble:** My area was science and math. I was teaching math and science over the summer there. Because kids were probably seventh and eighth grade. Wasn't a difficult subject. I was I was fairly decent in science and math. That was I was when I was teaching.

[9:27] **Joan Burroughs:** That was remarkable. I'm learning so much doing these interviews because there were things that I didn't know about the program. And so, I never did. I was in Lowndes County. And so that was kind of, I mean it was good. Some people were able to go back to their hometowns and you were one of them. That was an extra bonus. So, you could stay with your family when you worked.

[9:58] **Carl Trimble:** I did stay with my family. And in retrospect, as you brought that up, I think I've talked about the context of 1960s. It was pretty racially in the south, so being at home versus being in Lowndes County, my prayers were would have gone out to you if I had known. Because Lowndes County, it was hot. Wilcox County was hot, they were super-hot. So I was fortunate enough to have the security of family. And a tremendous sense of security being there. We faced incidents where I felt somewhat threatened. We were still only about ten years past Emmett Till. Really, only ten years out.

[10:51] **Carl Trimble:** So, it's not that comfortable. Riding around in cars with white kids in the south was very dangerous incident. I mean, possibly, incidents could have occurred. We were fortunate enough that we were able to escape that kind of violence. But the mental picture was always in my brain that we were in a very dangerous social experiment; social political experiment we were engaging here. But both sides of it, you know. It was a good side, I think I



mentioned this. It was our first time socially interacting with whites at any level. Other than “yes sir” and “no sir” type of arrangements. But these kids were like the same age, exhibiting no sense of prejudice. And so it was, it was a n awakening for us to actually have that experience.

My first experience with any social interaction with whites, I was apprehensive I think I told the story about the time that we went downtown, I was with Larry Jones in his car with this blonde, Nordic girl from St. Olaf College. And we talk about Nordic, I mean blonde, blue eyes the whole bit. And we were sitting there, she sitting in the middle on the front seat. And I got of the car, and she didn’t move over. She was sitting in the middle of the seat next to Larry Jones. And it’s like in a small town. Before I got home, my dad, somebody called my dad and said, ‘your boy is downtown in a car with this white folk. And my dad gave me a phone call and he explained to me the geography which I was occupying was Alabama. So it was kind of funny, come to think of it. But that was the environment that we were in. Even though it was a great experiment [unclear] but it was dangerous times.

I can recall an incident where we were all sitting the porch together at the house one day. There were two young ladies from St. Olaf, myself, a white guy, me, Larry Jones, I think and maybe Billy might have been in the program too. We’re just sitting there on the floor and talking. All of a sudden, these cars started going up and down, very slowly. Up and down, very slow, up and down the street. We were alarmed. They would come by, cut the lights on and drive by, stop, come back by the house . . . [unclear]. . . We sat on the floor just in case something happened. So, it was an interesting time. Let’s say that. It was interesting times.

Even at night, I went home, from my house to where Abrams was staying. And my house was probably, a half mile away. It was dark as you walk home. And I remember that night, as I was heading in. I see this car coming behind me very slowly. I actually took off and ran into a field a next to my house and laid down. Thinking that, maybe my paranoia, perhaps the fear of it led me to run and to lie down so I could not be seen. I never forget that, how the imprint, 50 years later, it still rings, is that you know you have to be cautious. But in the end, if I had to do it again, I wouldn’t hesitate a second. Not one second were I to have to do it again.

[14:38] Joan Burroughs: Well during those times, and during these times also, evidently.

[14:42] Carl Trimble: We have to make sure we remember Tuskegee. 1966 we had Sammy Younge. We were in the cafeteria at breakfast, and I remember Simuel Schultz who was a friend of Sammy’s. He walks through the cafeteria say, “Sammy’s been shot, Sammy’s been shot.” So after that summer we at Tuskegee actually experienced Sammy Younge’s murder. It challenged Tuskegee. It was Goodman and Chaney who were killed in Mississippi. Sammy Younge was the first in Tuskegee. It could have happened to anybody, in retrospect.

[15:35] Joan Burroughs: Dangerous times. Now, can you think of some of the people that worked with you or some of the community members who participated in TISEP? Because, you know, TISEP was a cooperative venture. The community people were involved as well as the people who were out there tutoring. So do you remember anybody in particular in your community who assisted with TISEP’s work?



[16:12] **Carl Trimble:** There were several people, because we were in a school, where I went to school. Obviously, the principal was engaged at a distance. We had several teachers accompany us. Mr. Gibson was one, he was my 7th grade teacher. He was participating in the project as sort of a mentor to us. He was my seventh and eighth grade teacher. I think Mr. McBride was a history teacher. Also, we had several teachers there who participated in oversight, and they weren't in the classroom when we were tutoring, but they were there under the direction of the principal, Mr. Morton. Mr. Morton who was our principal and Barry Jones, who was [unclear].

[16:57] **Joan Burroughs:** The principal's name was what?

[17:02] **Carl Trimble:** W.E. Morton, Mr. Morton. He was actually from Selma. Selma, Alabama. He was an Alabama State graduate. And he was there because he actually opened the school up for us, of course. He took care of that. He was doing things for us. So, Mr. Gibson, was instructing us [unclear] and then Mr. Morton. They were there over the summer while we were there. There was myself, Larry Jones and Billy Abrams, Billy might have been a part. I think Billy Abrams was there.

[17:36] **Joan Burroughs:** Billy Abrams, okay, yes. Okay. Yes, he lived at home also.

[17:40] **Carl Trimble:** We were at home. As I recall, Billy was there. But I don't specifically remember, but we were all sitting around. We were all from Tuskegee. We all got to Opelika. It was an experiment.

[18:05] **Joan Burroughs:** And how did the students respond to you all being there, in that capacity?

[18:12] **Carl Trimble:** They had never experienced anything like it. You know they accustomed to stuffy teachers, you know teachers. And we were like, student teachers. They've never been in contact, I didn't have that experience it was always teachers the older teachers. 30 years older than you are. You know, average 50s, you know some in their 60s instructors. So they could interact, could be a lot more flexible. And freedom and freedom that they didn't have in their traditional classrooms of strict discipline and sit down and do what I say do kind of stuff as opposed to interacting. I think that was a good, probably a good kind experience. To be able to interact in a horizontal hierarchy as opposed to a vertical, up-down teacher to student experience.

They were more level in our interactions across that greater hierarchy experience in the traditional classroom teacher experience. So they would interact more freely in expressing themselves, in retrospect.

[19:15] **Joan Burroughs:** Do you remember any special programs coming through, you know, other than the day to day that you did. Do you remember other things like music, or art or anything from Tuskegee?

[19:30] **Carl Trimble:** I don't recall any at the moment.



[19:33] **Joan Burroughs:** You mostly stuck to the routine.

[19:37] **Carl Trimble:** Yes. It was very, tutoring might be an overstatement of what we were doing. I think it was, tutoring I think was a more academic kind of thing. We were as much conversational, it was as much conversational with students about everything. How you fell, tells us about this, tell us about that. That tutoring name maybe overstated and our goal and mission was pretty loosely structured. We didn't go to summer school. We talked a lot about goals and what you can do, real examples of those kind of this as much as

[20: 21] **Joan Burroughs:** Motivational huh?

[20:20] **Carl Trimble:** Yes, motivational. Academic, I don't even think that was the direct mission, but to interact with students on a social, daily basis. As I said, aspiration and motivation, to encourage them, have a meal, they can go home, be comfortable. And we'd be back the next day. They could look forward to coming back. It was fun for a change and without the rigors of a heavy curriculum. They look forward to coming back having fun because with us only a little older than they were, without the pressure of having to prove themselves to us. We went there for that purpose to interact with them aspirationally, they would see an example they might want to follow.

[21:33] **Joan Burroughs:** How long did you work with TISEP, totally?

[21:42] **Carl Trimble:** Just over the summer.

[21:42] **Joan Burroughs:** You didn't work during the school year?

[21:45][**Carl Trimble:** No. Just that summer.

[21:47] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, so talk a little bit about the community then, Opelika. I knew you grew up there.

[22:02] **Carl Trimble:** Opelika, let me tell you about my high school first of all. first of all, the ratio spread. We talked about segregated schools, I would tell anybody my school would rival any white school in that area academically. I think we would probably outperform them. We had students coming out of Darden who would be equally if not better academically prepared for any education environment as the white students coming out of Opelika High. Because we had the best teachers in the world. I mean honestly, we had we had great teachers. People would say, you went to Tuskegee and you look down on Alabama State. I said, let me explain something to you. I had the best teachers in the world. Alabama State had, was a teaches college. We weren't pumping out teachers. So I said, Alabama State is pumping out teachers and we had the best teachers coming from there. So I give Alabama State and their teachers credit. I said if it had not been for Alabama State teachers, I would not have been a success at Tuskegee. My principal was an Alabama State graduate and almost everybody (teacher) in the school was an Alabama State graduate. My guidance counselor went to Tuskegee and that what got me in Tuskegee. That's



how I got there. She was a graduate and lived in the Tuskegee community. She got me into Tuskegee.

But the school was an exceptionally great school. I'd say probably in the top five in the state in terms of performance, National Merit Scholars. I got a scholarship in my junior year in high school to go to college. I chose not to go, I wanted to play basketball another year. That was my logic, I wanted to play basketball. But I was 16 when I went off to college. So, that was the community that I grew up in very tight, very small. I would say it's probably population 10,000 people at the most, very segregated. But again, academically we were tight. And after athletics I was pretty much an A student. I played basketball, track, baseball, all of the above. But we were a very small community of people. One school one, high school, two elementary schools. That were five or six churches. Everybody knew everybody in town. We were just a tight school.

[24:39] Joan Burroughs: Okay. Do you think the TISEP Program, did it influence you later in your life. I mean, the direction that you took. Did it help to enlighten you or prepare you in any way?

[25:01] Carl Trimble: I think back to the racial issues of, of the students coming down from St. Olaf is that you cae to realize that you're smart as they are. You are academically as bright is they are. Skin color difference. Their experiences are different from mine. But I guess I learned that I was capable of competing with peers from different places and ethnicities. I was as . . . [unclear]

So my anxieties were about thinking that I didn't have the verbal skills to compete. But that experience in interacting with them, sitting on the floor talking every day. You know, the skin color, skin color experience is different. But I think we were, I learned that I had the ability to compete, interact, socialize with kids from different backgrounds. I think that was the takeaway for most us. We probably learned that interaction as much as anything as much as thing this whole summer, that's part of that experiment. And it was an experiment, social difference experiment that we were engaged in. And they, the younger kids also that was our first interaction. They were younger than we were, but as a few years younger, they were in interacting in different. We didn't have any white teachers in our school. So the kids were interacting in a different way with people of very different social cultural background. Which I think was good for them, their experience.

[26:43] Joan Burroughs: Do you remember the six o'clock workouts that we had before the program started? We used to go down to the football field to exercise at six o'clock in the morning. Did you do that?

[27:09] Carl Trimble: If they did, I skipped it. I had an excuse. I had a medical excuse. I would oversleep, that was my medical excuse. That was a joke. Joke, Joke, Joke.

[27:24] Joan Burroughs: Well, I recall getting up at six o'clock in the morning, having to do calisthenics and running. And I remember that.

[27:38] Carl Trimble: And if I did remember doing that, I would try to forget it.



[27:42] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, so what did you know about, I'm sure that you probably did know. But what did you know about civil rights when you were a student. What was your understanding and your stance on that?

[28:02] **Carl Trimble:** Well, I'll share a story. Every year, we would have the big Christmas parade in Opelika. I was in the band and our band would always be the last band that played. We would bring up the back. And one year we decided we were not going to be in the back in that parade. I was in the 11th grade. And we were tired of it. Being in the back of this parade. The bring it up every time. My friend in high school. You remember Buck Cooper. We both played drums. We decided that we, a couple of us, that we were not going to play in this parade. So that was kind of my introduction. I'll tell the kids another story. My favorite one, I'm gonna write a book about it. It's going to be called "Louise Live Here". The policy man came to the house to collect the insurance policy. You know? He asked, you know, I was sitting in the yard. I was 10 years old. He asked: "Is Louise here?" I said to the guy, "No Louise live lives here. Do you mean Mrs. Trimble?" I was 10, I was crazy. But, that was, I guess, my early militancy that started at that point in my life. At that point in my life I knew that I had a certain respect, and I was always going to demand that respect, even at that age. I did know that there was no Louise that lived in this house. That was Mrs. Trimble. I was very stern about that. . . .[unclear]. . . .But, I've always been in that mindset of activism and demand for respect, culture. My peers, not just my immediate family, that was my introduction to civil rights.

I went downtown, we used to go and sit at the lunch counter. I mean, boys and girls. We go downtown, we'd drink out of the white water fountain. (Inaudible). We had a big statue in Lee County, I grew up in Lee County. In Lee County, there was a big statue of Robert E. Lee. I'd look at that all the time and think, one day I'm going to go and paint him. That was my thought. I was young and was my thought and knew what that statue in that square downtown. One does want to paint this thing black one day. I was still in high school. So, my civil rights engagement, militancy and civil rights engage goes back to that. I think it was in the spring of '66. When Martin Luther King went from Selma to Montgomery. When was that?

[31:14] **Joan Burroughs:** That was in 1965.

[31:17] **Carl Trimble:** '65. If you recall, the students from Tuskegee took a bus to Montgomery, King was coming from Selma to Montgomery. And I was in Montgomery to hear King's speech. That was the scariest day of my life, so to speak. Two things I had a fear of that night, the cops came by horses, coming at us. I was frightened and I was even more frightened that my mother would see me and kill me. That was my biggest issue because I'm gonna die with those horses or Mama's going to see me and kill me seeing me sitting here. But I had too much pride to get up and leave. So I sat there, right in there and got through it. And King delivered his speech. As we sat there in the capital, in the streets in Montgomery, the next day jubilant. I was rejuvenated being in that environment. I tell my kids that I was very proud of that. Dean Phillips had us all very active. We had many buses to go to Montgomery. The ability to go and encouraged us obviously. It shaped my vision of activism throughout my life. I have somewhat of a reputation of being a bad boy.



[33:00] Joan Burroughs: You know, I'm going to come back to this, but I want to talk a little bit about your family. How, you grew up in Opelika. I know you said, it was close knit but just talk about your family in Opelika.

[33:30] Carl Trimble: I had two mothers. My aunt is my mother, and my mother is my mother. I got confused about who my mother was. I joke and tell people. I said, I'm an architect, you know.

I've designed houses that have bigger closets than our entire house. As I look back at it, our house was probably 300 to 400 square feet. The biggest joke is, "how many bedrooms did your house have Trimble". At night we have four. In the daytime, we had one. We have four bedrooms, I tell them. Joking aside, it's a very small house. And my aunt lived next door. So I'd go and sleep at my aunt's house. Because my mom had five boys before my oldest died when ye was young. Four boys, no girls. I was the baby boy. I was naturally spoiled. And we were a very tight knit family. And I didn't know the family that I came from, until much later, in the social status game. As my mother passed, she had a best friend who said, "Your mom and I were best friends since we were kids." She said, We couldn't play with anybody unless they were named Pollard. My dad would not let us play with anyone unless they were Pollard children. We couldn't play with anybody else." So I had no clue about that.

[35:30] Carl Trimble: My oldest brother was a musician. He was excellent musician, my second brother, a third brother, the musician also. And everybody knew that, so I got to be known as Are you his brother? That was my name, are you James Trimble's . . .[unclear]. . .brother? Is your name Carl, That's not the question. In this family, all of my family went to college. We are first generation college. My mom graduated high school. My dad went into fourth grade, if I recall correctly, but the unique part about my family was my dad worked for Dr. Darden, the school was named after him.

[Unclear] years old. His wife died. He was seventy something. And so she died. He was 70 something. Please do bear that out. Mrs. Darden just died. And I have two brothers named after doctors. Now one of them is connected to Tuskegee. My little brother was named Warren Logan Trimble. You know Logan Hall, one doctor's name is Doctor Warren Logan. So my brother's name Warren Logan. My next brother was named James Bowden named after Dr. James Bowden. South Carolina. Dr. Darden had the privilege, strangely enough of naming, that's how tight my dad was with Dr. Darden. My Dad was with Dr. Darden when was just fourth grade educated. He was a hard looking dude, about 5 feet tall. He loved work. He just worked. He worked in a mill. Opelika was a mill town. It has cotton and that was the biggest industry, cotton. And I grew up in that town, my mom was a nurse's aide in a hospital. And so that pretty much it.

My aunt worked in the cleaning service, in the laundry and dry cleaning. And that was it. My first cousins were like my brothers and sister. They all went to college, two of them got doctorates. One of them got a masters from Tuskegee and got his Ph.D. from the University of Alabama. That's a good thing from a family of first-generation education people—educated people.



[37:55] **Joan Burroughs:** That was remarkable.

[37:55] **Carl Trimble:** I mean, absolutely. Yes, but in retrospect that was no less. I never questioned whether I was going to college. That question didn't even need to be answered. I was obviously going to college. And I went to Tuskegee on a scholarship. The first year I was on a scholarship. When I pledged, my grades went very, very low. It was very low. But, I've always tried to strive to do . . . [unclear]. . . I had a chance to teach college a couple of years. But in Opelika, again, we had an excellent academic program in the school there. A very tight knit family. So like my family, my first cousin, we were like sisters and brothers. We still communicate, those who are still alive.

[38:59] **Joan Burroughs:** What was your professional career like as an architect?

[39:07] **Carl Trimble:** I'm saying how it started out? Very small. But I've had some great success in my practice of working on projects from Mary was basement to Grady hospital which is a \$236 million project. My fee on a private \$2.2 million in my to my cup and \$2.2 billion fee. If you come to that you go out on the aircraft Delta Airlines renovation project, I did a renovation project for Federal Express, ,or the mail comes to UPS, bank of America. Corporate type projects, but what I enjoy most is work with Miss Mary in her basement. So I coordinate those corporate projects. Because my thesis everybody deserves good architecture, I'm gonna give it to him. And my theory is architecture is that I don't design buildings. I said No, I do not design it, what do you do? I design experiences, obviously from experiences, obviously my friends, as an architect, the architect has primary responsibility is to enhance the life during the expiration, quality of life of man while on Earth. So my job is encode the experiences that you have on this planet. That's my design philosophy, is design experiences as material materiality, but spirituality, spirituality at one point is more important metaphysically. My research in architecture is in, what I refer to as cultural. How does culture manifest form? That's my thesis. That's right, my. . . [unclear]. . . research to hopefully get this book out is important. But that's a great career. I wake up in the morning with architecture every day, that gets the car going. And they paid me for it.

[41:18] **Joan Burroughs:** And you get paid for doing what you love. That's wonderful. So now, let me, I'm going to go back to the civil rights part. So, were you aware of an article in the Southern Education Foundation report during the fall of 1965 that lists TISEP of Tuskegee as another kind of demonstration in

[42:04] **Carl Trimble :** A different kind of civil rights activity. That was part of civil rights, certainly, in terms of the resources. The social experiment was, there was no activism in terms of demonstration, in that light. But the question is, what happened? What was the outcome, this outcome? I think it was a, it was a vision that was created that we could see, you know, see the possibilities The social interaction, it came later. But I think that it was a good experiment in the civil rights. That we were participating and, perhaps without actually knowing, what the outcome would actually be. But you know, in retrospect, it was one. . . [unclear]. . . experiment for the time. For that time we were doing that, '65? Was a serious time.



[43:08] **Joan Burroughs:** Okay, so did you participate in any other civil rights activities, you said you went on the march, the Selma March?

[43:34] **Carl Trimble:** I remember 1968, when King was killed we were seniors. April 5, we were seniors. And strangely enough I was fortunate enough to be in Dorothy Hall. I get kicked out of school. 12 or 13 students that got kicked out. I was one of the fortunate ones who happened to be in Dorothy Hall on that particularly evening. I think all of us participated in marches. I've got a photograph of Sammy Younge. When Schultz came to the cafeteria, I would say that within one hour, there had to be 1,000 students downtown Tuskegee on the square. I have photograph of Palmer Sullins and others, you know Wendell Paris, you know Wend, you know Palmer. I have photographs of other guys, I don't know the other guy's name. He was an activist. Tuskegee was an activist community. At Tuskegee we saw Malcolm X speak at Tuskegee. We saw Stokely Carmichael who spoke at Tuskegee. That was an activist campus, Tuskegee. I can't think of many African American colleges that can say that people Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X there. I think that Tuskegee was kind of like a hangout for the civil rights activists. I remember George Ware, Michael Wright. Yes, I remember Michael Wright, he has a book out. Dr. Michael Wright.

But it was an everyday occurrence. SNCC was on the campus. In Tuskegee, there was an awareness, first of all. It's actually a sense of activism that was not foreign because we were exposed on a regular basis.

[46:15] **Joan Burroughs :** So overall, you were an activist and Tuskegee was a place of activism. You have named people that you knew as activists.

[46:55] **Carl Trimble:** Here's one that we didn't talk about, she was the president of the student government. Her name was Gwen, Gwen Patton. There were women, and women out front. And that was it. We're talking about Gwen Patton. I think the student center should be named Gwen Patton student center. She was a leader. And I don't want to use a gender reference to her. But, as a black woman at that time, she was amazing. I mean, there was like no fear, no fear did she have. She went out there in the streets and on campus and took charge. And, we listened to Gwen Patton. And I cannot think of a woman who was more brave, than Gwen Patton. She was amazing.

[47:49] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, there is a book now that she was writing. I think she was trying to write it before she passed away. I think it's called *My Race to Freedom*.

[47:58] **Carl Trimble:** That's great.

[48:07] **Burroughs:** The work that we did in TISEP, you know, I think you've already stated how important it was but it did tie in, in as far as you are concerned, with what you were doing. I think it kind of bolstered, to me, the civil rights movement because you were out there at a time when it was critical. You know, that summer in 1965, was a very critical summer.



[48:37] **Carl Trimble:** Very much. And yes, so it was the awakening. I would call it the awakening. We were becoming aware of the circumstances. You were in Lowndes County and we're talking about the hotspot. You were braver than I was.

[49:07] **Joan Burroughs:** We lived down there.

[49:07] **Carl Trimble:** I know, I know you did. That's what I'm amazed at. I'm not sure that I would have handled that so well.

[49:21] **Joan Burroughs:** So, is there anything else that you'd like to talk about, about TISEP or any way that it might have influenced you later in your life?

[49:38] **Carl Trimble:** You know when you're in the moment you don't really get to observe it, your mind is active and not focusing on it. But when you look back you, it's another thing. TISEP, in retrospect, I can think of things. That was a opening awareness and social experiment. I think I wrote it down. We were kind of , in the fear mode but optimism in the same boy was there all at the same time. This conflict of enthusiasm and fear was coexisting in our young body at that time. But it was really molding us. It would make my top ten list of things that make me who I am today. It was the summer of '65, that I can say without reservation, that influenced my life, in that short period of time, made my top ten.

[51:14] **Joan Burroughs:** Yes, Dean Phillips was, he really was a visionary with that, you know, with that program and making it happen. All of the different pieces that were involved, transportation, you know, all those kind of things. I just, I, I'm just going mention this, because it was something that I found out, I didn't realize that they had the aviation part, you know, with Palmer and LaVega bringing an airplane. I mean, flying to places that had airports so the kids could come out and see an airplane.

[----] **Carl Trimble:** Yes

[51:55] **Joan Burroughs:** There were just so many components. And during the interviews that find out so many things that I didn't know, because I was in one place, and we kind of, you know, just there in Lowndes County. So you didn't hear about all the other things going on in me, but so many wonderful things happen during the summer of 65. And then throughout 1968, because this how long it lasted.

[52:20] **Carl Trimble:** And you know in the background of 1965, you had Aretha Franklin singing and Chain, Chain Chaining. She was singing. The fact that she was singing and changing even the backdrop of 1965.

But what you said about Palmer was the beauty of the program. That it wasn't so structured, that it did not allow for systemic spontaneity. Whatever flexibility was there.

[53:07] **Carl Trimble:** It was, it was good. That was the beauty of it, the lack of too much structure. It was situational. Your situation was okay. It was like, 'this is what we're going to do



today'. There was no syllabus where like, 'today we're going to do X and kids when you go home bring this back tomorrow'. It wasn't that kind of structure. It was 'Today we're going to talk about X'. Yea, that was the beauty of it, your good to be spontaneous. And educational, interesting stories, and relating to them and letting them ask questions as opposed to that one-way educational model. That was the way it was, I think it was new to them, that kind of education. That they had been structured in a very structured program, but we were young kids and we really didn't ourselves know what a syllabus was at the time.

[54:00] Joan Burroughs: Do you remember any of the students who attended the program that summer, from Opelika?

[54:06] Carl Trimble: I'm trying to think. I remember when one kid, Douglas _____. He went to college. He went to A&M. There was Van Mitchell. Let me think, Ann Ross. She was one of the students, she went to Tuskegee. Our mothers were good friends at that time. These are eighth and ninth graders at the time.

[54:45] Joan Burroughs: Do you know where they are now? Have you been able to keep in contact with them?

[54:50] Carl Trimble: I think Ross lives in, he might be in Huntsville. Ann Ross I think, lives in Detroit. She and her parents moved to Detroit after she graduated. I think she's still there. But, I don't get home as much as I used to so I haven't been able to stay in touch.

[55:17] Joan Burroughs: We'd like to get in contact with the. We'd like to interview some of the tutees who were in Opelika.

[55:23] Carl Trimble: I'll see if I can find out and follow-up. See if anybody's still there. I'll see if Billy Abrams can give us some names.

[55:40] Joan Burroughs: That's why we're doing this now, so we can come up with these things. So if you remember any, it would be great to have a couple of interviews from tutees of the program. That would be a great thing.

[55:56] Carl Trimble: I have a full time job, trying to find Carl Trimble. That's my full time job.

[56:05] Joan Burroughs: Yes, I know. We all kind of go through that, trying to keep up with ourselves. Is there anything that you'd like to add or anything else that you'd like to talk about?

[56:22] Carl Trimble: Let me, let me be gracious for a second and say that the work like people like yourself is putting in is really appreciated. You know, you are doing the hard work. It's appreciated. But for the people like yourself, what you are doing, you should be applauded for that.



[57:18] Joan Burroughs: We have to be applauded. It's very important that this remains for posterity so that people know that this happened in 1965-1968. And, it was pivotal, a pivotal moment in history. And there's still a lot, I think that it can do for today and maybe the future.

[57:22] Carl Trimble: Well, Joan when you first came to me about this, I was like 'Wow, exuberant'. Many of the Tuskegee students now, on campus, don't really understand what Tuskegee has. That's my immediate concern these days. People ask about what the campus is like. Campus life does not exist. When you walk around campus, you don't see students sitting out on campus. The university should become student focused again. Right now half the students are in Auburn or Montgomery. They don't even live on campus. I've told my alumni friends, for breakfast for example, the average number of people who eat breakfast in Tompkins hall is less than 300 students. 300 people eat breakfast at Tompkins Hall. We had 3000, when you talk about campus life. And that is of concern to me. . . [an architect, I see that we had a system on campus. They came to Tompkins Hall and Huntington Hall. You were forced to come to the center of campus. Now we have a peripheral campus, everything is on the periphery. So there is no. . . [unclear]. . . to come to campus anymore.

[58:54] Joan Burroughs: Would you like . . . [unclear]. . .

[58:56] Carl Trimble: I would gladly. To understand the campus, you have to understand the nature of how people can operate. That was a magnet. Everybody went to Huntington Hall. You'd see everyone on campus. Now you see nobody on campus, Vet School, Ag School over there. On and on and on. The Vet School and Ag School are not in the center of the campus. With that magnet that was there, they stood together. That was Huntington Hall, the center of the campus. And we should make that known to the administration. Tuskegee is more than a series of buildings.

59:35 Joan Burroughs: I'm going to turn off the recording and we can continue to talk.

[End of Session]



TISEP/TICEP History & Impact Project

Narrator: Joyce Bivins Watson/Ashton, MD
Interviewer: Calvin Austin/ Millersville, MD
Date: December 2, 2022
Transcriptionist: Alissa R. Funderburk

Joyce Bivins Watson, born in Ozark, Alabama to Mr. Spurgeon Aaron Bivins, Sr. and Mrs. Ruth Bernal Wiggins Bivins. Joyce graduated from D.A. Smith High School. After high school, she became a student at Tuskegee Institute, receiving a degree in Nursing. Joyce was employed by TIS/CEP in 1966. Her post-Tuskegee career includes 30 years in the military and an additional fourteen years working in community hospitals.



Joyce Bivins Watson

[00:01] Calvin Austin: Good afternoon. It's 1:55pm Eastern Standard Time on December 2, 2022. I'm Calvin Austin in Millersville, Maryland. Here to interview is Joyce Watson, who is in Ashton, Maryland formerly Silver Spring. This interview is a part of the TISEP/TICEP Organizing Committee's TISEP/TICEP History and Impact project under the sponsorship of Tuskegee University, made possible by a grant from the African American Civil Rights History Division of the Department of Interior's National Park Services.

[00:48] Joyce Watson: I am Joyce Bivins Watson in Ashton, Maryland. I'm being interviewed by Calvin Austin. Today is December 2, 2022.

[01:07] Calvin Austin: Okay, first Joyce, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed by us for this project. I hope you're—I know your inputs will be useful for well the history of the TISEP



program and the civil rights struggle back in the 60s. First, I'd like to let the people get to know a little bit about you. So, can you tell us about yourself? Where are you from? Your family? You're growing up through elementary and high school.

[01:47] Joyce Watson: I'm originally from Ozark Alabama. My mother was Ruth Bernal Wiggins Bivins. My father was Spurgeon Aaron Bivins Senior. I graduated from D.A. Smith High School. I was a member of the band. I was very active in school. And I was very interested in the sciences. Always wanted to be a nurse.

[02:24] Calvin Austin: Tell us about Ozark. Growing up there, what was the environment like you know what [crosstalk]?

[02:31] Joyce Watson: Ozark was a very rural town, very small. And my mother was a cook at Fort Rucker. My father was a truck driver and he worked for the MO Carroll Grocery Company. And he also was a butcher, you know, at butcher plant there in Ozark. I grew up learning how to work. My mother and father taught us very early about work ethics, especially my mother. So, I always have worked. I used to when I was a young girl. I did babysitting, you know, in homes. I also did shuck peanuts, I picked cotton, I worked in restaurants, and I did wash dishes. I—there was nothing that I didn't do as far as earning dollars. And so, I've always been a hard worker and like to think that I still am.

[03:57] Calvin Austin: So how was your education? How did you consider the schools in Ozark? What did you think about them and, you know?

[04:05] Joyce Watson: Okay, Ozark I thought that the school system was very, very good. One thing about being in a predominantly black—no, it was completely black when I was growing up. I was at an all-black school and the teachers were very interested in the students. Made sure that we had great education even though we had secondhand books. You know, we, all our books, even the desks that we sat were used. Back in the day that was that was the norm in small towns back in Alabama. You did not get new books. They were passed down from the white schools to the black schools. Even though we had secondhand books, and our desks were often marred. We had great teachers. The teachers were interested in you as a student. And they made sure that you succeeded.

I remember that my brother, when he was in fourth grade, he wasn't doing very well. And the teacher talked to my mother and said that they were going to keep him back for a year. That's how interested the teachers were back in the day in your education. I recall that I had a science teacher, who was very, very interested in my learning, because I would, like I said, I was always interested in the science. And a lot of the girls in my hometown, because my hometown was next to Fort Rucker. And a lot of the girls were, at that time in high school, were interested in the soldiers. Of course, I was never and of course my parents would never allow us to date a soldier. But a lot of the girls were, and they were not, and they did not get a chance to—it was unfortunate, they did not get a chance to finish high school, or even go to college, because some of them, you know, became pregnant. And so therefore we were.



And so back to my instructor. He saw that I was interested in school, so he asked if I would, wanted to go to college. And I said, yes, I wanted to go to college. But I knew that my parents did not have the money to send to me. He said, well, you just keep your studies and I'll make sure—we'll make sure that you get to college. He and his wife took me under his—under their wing. His wife was also a nurse. And she had graduated from Tuskegee, and she worked at the VA hospital there and she would come home on the weekends and invite me over to their home. And she taught me some of the social graces. She taught me about life and living and gave me the thirst to want to continue my education.

So, they helped me fill out government forms to go to college. And I went on government loans. And because of them, is the reason that I was in college. And the Kirkpatrick's is—were my mentors. Rhoda and James Kirkpatrick were my mentors. And even when I was—when I started Tuskegee, Rhoda would always come back and give me a couple of dollars to help me in school. So I had very strong teachers, also my English teacher, she was very instrumental because she was a woman that I wanted to be, I aspire to be like. And so I had, I think I had a strong educational background starting in high school.

[08:29] Calvin Austin: Well, you just took away a few questions I was going to ask you, that's great. So well, I'm sure they were instrumental in your getting to Tuskegee. What did you find when you got the Tuskegee? This little girl from Ozark, Alabama, coming up to the big town of Tuskegee?

[08:50] Joyce Watson: Well, even though I came from a small town, Tuskegee was large compared to Ozark at that time. If you recall, Tuskegee was very—was thriving. There were a lot of businesses, there were a lot of—many things to do. I mean, I was in awe when I came to Tuskegee, even though in my hometown, all of the—we had—all the black businesses were there. We did very little business with the whites except for the things that we had to have, clothing and things. Some clothing because our neighbor was a seamstress and made a lot of our clothes. But black business thrived, and when I got to Tuskegee, I really got a chance to see the businesses thriving. I saw, I mean, I met people from all different background. And I had to grow up because of being in a small town and then meeting girls from large cities and but I think that my background has helped me to wade through some of the things that some of the girls were going through at school.

[10:19] Calvin Austin: While you were there on the TIS/CEP program, we'll come back to that again in a minute. But when you finished in nursing—

[10:35] Joyce Watson: Yes.

[10:36] Calvin Austin: What do you do after? When you finished Tuskegee? What did you do?

[10:42] Joyce Watson: That's when I joined the TIS/CEP program. Right in 1966, after, right after I graduated, I joined the TIS/CEP program that summer. And I worked throughout the whole summer. Mainly through the TIS/CEP program.



[11:00] **Calvin Austin:** Okay.

[11:01] **Joyce Watson:**

That's when I joined in 1966.

[11:05] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, now. Okay, I guess that sort of begs the question, tell us, what you did while you were working on the TIS/CEP program.

[11:16] **Joyce Watson:** When I looked at the TIS/CEP program, I was considered, like a public health center—public health nurse, we were working in conjunction with all of the programs through referrals. We met every morning at this TIS/CEP Center, with the students, the kids that were going to the TIS/CEP program, the I guess they were preschoolers. And every morning, we, the nurses, would get an assignment to go out into the community, like, and then we were assigned a driver. We had a driver that was [unclear]. Now all of the programs were interlocked. If I went into a home, and I saw that they had a well, then I would refer them to the engineers, or someone that could handle the wells, because they have to, they would have to come out and put chemicals into the wells. Because, so, to purify the water because some of the wells had germs in them, and they would go back and treat the wells.

If we saw a home, if we were in a home and did—and if they owned the home, then we would refer them. Because if they, you know, they had the poor living conditions, houses and homes were in disrepair, we would refer them back to the builders to then they will come out the construction department would come out and they would maybe rebuild our do the repairs on the home. Far as the nursing was concerned, I had students refer to me that I would have to go and visit their home because maybe some of the kids might have a disease or not have something like bites all over them. And I would go into the home to find out what were the conditions.

And this one home I went in . . . they had about, it was eight of them. And I don't know if you recall the shotgun homes, where that you go in and you just go straight and you look straight from one end of the house to the other. And on each side, there was bedrooms, and then kitchen on the other. Well, they had eight people living in this home and it was only like two, maybe three, two bedrooms. And what I found there were rats in this home. A lot of rats. And they were—even the baby had one of his fingers eaten from rats. And so what we did was we treated, we would treat the immediate conditions and then we would refer these people to further the Department of Health so that the Department of Health would come in to help. Maybe get pest control in to take care of the rats.

And like I said we would treat the children and also if they were, if there were more kids that were able to go to school, we were asked, you know, that they would see how that we would get them in school. Ah also I had a case where the nurses, when this young man came to school and he had a disability, he could barely walk. And at that time, they had a Crippled Children's Clinic in Birmingham. And we—and I referred this family to the Crippled Children's Clinic. And we made arrangements and we paid for the family to go to Birmingham to have this child taken care of. And eventually, in about a year, I understand that in about a year or so that the young man was walking again. Those are the types of cases that we had.



We were mainly, the students where the early learning took place, they would refer a student to us or a home to us, and we would go out and investigate. We also went and we visited women who had never had pap smears, or never had seen a doctor really, for anything other than a emergency. And as you recall, we had roaming doctors. They had vans, and we would make arrangements for these women to go to this van. The doctors would come down from the north, and they would volunteer their services, all of this was free.

And they would volunteer their services and we would take them to these vans so that they could be examined by a doctor for the first time. Or they would—and then they would have a pap smear, some of them never had one and they had maybe ten or twelve children and never had a pap smear or never had been seen by a physician but more midwives. They had been seen by midwives and not necessarily have been seen by doctors as well. So, we would make sure that they got physicals. We would take them, and physically, you know, sometimes take them there if they had no transportation.

The TIS/CEP program was, to me, was a very, very compelling program. I enjoyed every aspect of it because like I said, everything was a referral. If there was something wrong with the home, you refer them to someone else that they would come out and make sure you took care of that well water, or you would make sure that if they own the home that it was repaired, and you would take care of that. Not only their mental state, we had nurses that were in mental health. We had mental health doctors that would—that was volunteering, and they would come out and they would help these people. I think it's working with the TIS/CEP program was the most rewarding work that I've ever experienced in my entire career. And I've been, you know, I've worked in the military. I mean I was in the military for 30 years; I've worked in community hospitals for 14 years. And so, 44 years of nursing and that was one of the most rewarding work that I've done.

The sad day came. I think one of the sad things for me was when they closed it because of political reason. At that time, Governor Wallace, you know the political setting. They didn't want that care because it was moving the community forward. And they will have been forward thinking and they did not want—he did not want it. So, he said that the physicians that came down were not licensed in Alabama. So, he closed the whole program down at that time. I left the program before it closed but when I heard that it was closed, I was very saddened because it was like I said, we helped people. Everybody in the community, we helped I think in one way or the other. For everyone that worked on that program, I think that they had a sense of contributing to the community. I think that they would have a feeling that it was a good feeling for them to help our people and not just think that it was a great program. I cannot say enough about that program. Like I said, I was very saddened when it closed.

[20:00] Calvin Austin: So, one thing that we didn't cover. You graduated from Tuskegee in '60?

[20:10] Joyce Watson: Sixty-six.

[20:11] Calvin Austin: With a BS degree?



[20:13] **Joyce Watson:** BS degree in nursing.

[20:15] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. And that was during the reign of Dean Harvey?

[20:21] **Joyce Watson:** Yes.

[20:22] **Calvin Austin:** The great Dean Harvey.

[20:24] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I don't think that they, I don't think that Tuskegee will ever have a dean that was as caring or worked as hard. Or the—her nurses—or was as hard on her nurses as Dean Harvey. You know, as I look back over the years, and we all complained about how hard she was. But I know that she did it for purpose. When her nurses came out of Tuskegee, we were prepared. I did not know how well prepared I was until I start working and I worked along, beside my counterparts. And I realized that they didn't know anything. I mean, we got the best training, not only did we get training in the rural communities, but we also got training in the city hospitals.

So, we had. It was like a double-edged sword for us. We were always prepared in everything that we touched. We started as freshmen going to hospital, back in Tuskegee. We started as freshmen and we finished as seniors, and we took over the floors as head nurses. And that prepared us. I did not, like I said, I did not know how well prepared I was until I got out there. We were hard workers; we could think on our feet. We, in emergencies, we could think very clearly and act. And we didn't get rattled. I just think that Dean Harvey was, she was great.

She made sure that there was someone sitting on the boards every year to review the boards to make sure that what was being taught was what we're going to have to cover on the board. Not only the work that we did, as nurses, but also, she made sure that what was covered on the boards that we were taught and that we could cut, we could pass the boards when we finished. She was a no-nonsense Director. I recall that I was sleeping in class because I was pledging. And she said to me, and one of the instructors reported that I had been sleeping. So, she said, I don't care about you. I don't care that you pledge. That's okay with me. But if I catch you sleeping in class again, you're going home. And that was when I stopped pledging at that time.

[23:26] **Calvin Austin:** You woke up.

[23:29] **Joyce Watson:** I did in many ways.

[23:31] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. So, tell me about—you started to talk about some of the things that you had done after you left Tuskegee, work wise. I know you traveled a lot. But tell us where you've worked and your roles there.

[23:51] **Joyce Watson:** Okay, I'll start when I left the TIS/CEP program. I came back to Washington, DC and I worked at the time it was called North Cambridge Memorial Hospital. And I wanted my love. My first love in nursing was going to be OB GYN. I love OB GYN because my grandmother was a midwife for 75 years. And so, I always want—I always admired



her and her tenacity for work and how she delivered babies no matter what, you know, she delivered babies for chickens. You know, there was no payback. There was not any money exchanged a lot of times back in the day. So, you know, she worked very hard and I wanted to be an OB GYN nurse. And I get most of my strongest scores in nursing was OB GYN and then when I passed the boards. However, when I started working at North Cambridge Memorial Hospital, they did not have an OB GYN floor. So, they put me in, they started me in surgical nursing. And as it would be when you go to your next hospital—because my husband was in the army at the time, and so I was moving quite a bit, you know.

And so therefore, my next—my experience was in surgical nursing, post-surgical nursing. So, that's, this is the trend that followed me for quite a while. For about 14 years. And then, as my kids grew, I went from—I was, when my husband went to Vietnam, I worked out at a nursing home in California, on a post-surgical floor there. And that was out in Berkeley, California. And then in 1970—that was '68, 1968. December '67 to December '68. When my husband came back, January went down to Fort Sam Houston. At that time, I did not work for a while, a couple of [unclear] a year, because we were there for six months. But then I came back, we moved to the Edgewood area. I worked as a volunteer in a community center. And I was in charge of all of the distribution.

At that time, those communities, those centers were geared toward all of the communities. The community centers then where we took care of families that came into the base. We provided furniture for them; we took care of their children. When the husbands were on leave when they had to go on TDY we had to take care of them as temporary duty. We had to. We took care of their families. We made sure that if the women were pregnant, they had doctor's appointments that we would provide the service for them to go to doctor's appointment. We would provide babysitting services for them, we would provide furniture, baby beds, all dishes and everything for them for the families. And so I was in charge of that. And I had some 50 volunteers working with me at that time. And also of course, I was on a bowling league. And then that's when I first started my first New Year's Eve party in 1971.

[28:14] Calvin Austin: Okay, we will talk about those [laughter]. And Edgewood was Edgewood, Maryland or?

[28:21] Joyce Watson: Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland.

[28:24] Calvin Austin: Maryland.

[28:25] Joyce Watson: In Edgewood Maryland.

[28:27] Calvin Austin: Okay. So, you worked for, you also worked for the government in a number of positions? What positions did you have, you don't necessarily have to detail just—

[28:39] Joyce Watson: Okay. Okay, my husband went over to, we went to Thailand in 74 and I worked there as a—first started working as a teacher as English as a second language. So, then I worked there for about, I was there, I was in that position for about a month or two. And then I



started working for the director of the school. And I was in charge of programming for the teachers and making assignments for all the new teachers and for the program and that was a different experience. So, I mean, my nursing experience has taken me in many facets of nursing. Then I start working. Then I went into the—I joined the United States Public Health Service as a Commissioned Corps officer, where I served 30 years and that took me all over the world.

It was very—I first start off as an investigator for FDA, I started as an investigator. I did all facets of FDA as far as inspecting fish firms, I started food firms, I did—inspected medical device firms and we—I did all of that. I learned all of that through FDA. And then I, at FDA, I moved up the ranks. I first start off as a lieutenant, then I moved up the ranks to a full bird before I retired. I also did inspection of blood banks overseas for the military. We inspected all of the military hospital blood banks. We inspected all blood drive firms. I was in charge of all of the inspections for the International biologic inspections. I did all of those in my career. All of this and I also did—we did clinical trials. I also did clinical trials as an investigator. Investigator for clinical trials. So, my nursing career, even though I started out as an RN, and the floor nurse, and a supervisor—I was a supervisor in nursing—it has taken me all over to a different field, but still in touch with all of my learning as a nurse.

[31:11] Calvin Austin: Now, I know the nurses at Tuskegee are extremely close. I mean, they put all of the sororities and fraternities to shame as far as brotherhood, sisterhood is concerned. Are you close with any of your nursing class members?

[31:38] Joyce Watson: Yes, I am. Gladys Blackwell was one of the persons I started with. Also, Shirley Bob. And Shirley, all, both of us, we—I still continue to keep in touch with Gladys and some of my other classmates as well. But not so much as close as Gladys and also Shirley Bob. And those are the ones that I still come—keep in—

[32:07] Calvin Austin: With people you work with on the TIS/CEP program, are you—have you kept in touch with any of those people?

[32:13] Joyce Watson: Mainly, you. You're about the only one that I really have kept in contact. I've also seen Dr. Phillips, but I have not seen anyone else since then. Pretty much.

[32:25] Calvin Austin: Okay. Let's see. You are—you've never—have you ever run for a government office or been, run for any political offices or anything like that?

[32:42] Joyce Watson: No, I've never run for a political office. I've always been one of the people that like to stay in the background and work in the background. I get—I think sometimes you get more accomplished when you're in the background working than you do when you're up front. Because when your front people tear you down, they poke, you know, they do too much negative stuff. And I have always contended that I do better working in the background because I can do things. I can say things that make an impact rather than having someone strike down what I say, when I'm—as a leader. In that regard, as far as a political leader is concerned.



[33:27] **Calvin Austin:** Okay. And if you would like to, you can tell us who you married, how long you've been married and how lucky he is because I know how lucky he is.

[33:39] **Joyce Watson:** [Laughter] Aww, I'm married to William T. Marish Watson. He is a veterinarian, graduated from Tuskegee School of Veterinary Medicine. I also married him when I was in college. We met and married in college, and we have been married for 61 years. As of November 30, this year.

[34:08] **Calvin Austin:** Congratulations, again.

[34:09] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. And he's a keeper [laughter].

[34:16] **Calvin Austin:** I'll accept that as—

[34:17] **Joyce Watson:** And he's also your fraternity brother.

[34:20] **Calvin Austin:** You don't have to say that. But that's okay. And then you have two wonderful, accomplished children.

34:30] Joyce Watson: Yes. Actually, we have three children. Well, I have two. We have two of our own and then my sister passed away and I raised her son. And so I have Angela is also a member—graduated—graduate of Tuskegee Institute/University in the School of Architecture. Anthony, Tony, is a graduate of the Naval Academy. And he's very successful. Oh, Angela is working in the National Institutes of Health and as an architect and has been for 30 something years. Tony is, he is vice president of a drug firm up in Massachusetts. Adrienne works for National Institutes of Science and Technology. Yes. And I have seven grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

[35:38] **Calvin Austin:** Okay, and I guess one of the points that I guess we sort of touched on, but we really didn't go into a great detail about was the civil rights climate that you felt that the TIS/CEP program had. If you could expand on that just a little bit. You did touch on it, in the fact that you said that our favorite governor, Governor Wallace, did a lot to help us.

[36:11] **Joyce Watson:** Well, the TIS/CEP program, you know, as you know, Tuskegee was the mecca for a lot of the civil rights movement. There were, I know, there were meetings on the Tuskegee campus. We had SNCC on the campus, we had a lot of the civil rights groups at Tuskegee. And I remember that the rally was to, for the TIS/CEP program, to keep the TIS/CEP program going. Because as I said, Alabama wanted to shut it down. And I think it was because of our contacts and our affiliation with a lot of the political scene at that time, that they helped to even get the program on his feet. And to get it moving and going. But I think the political climate was so volatile at that time, that time that we had the TIS/CEP program, that it was, there was no way that it was going to survive, because there were too many facets against it. Although it was a wonderful, wonderful program. And I think that there were, you know, we touched a lot of lives, a lot of people benefit from the, from our, just the time that we had. But the political climate at that time did not allow it to thrive and continue. And I think that even when, you know, this was



the time when the marches were in, a lot of the marches had been in Alabama. I know that when my husband graduated, Martin Luther King spoke at his graduation. So we had a lot of political people go through Tuskegee, and through the TIS/CEP and that was in—that helped the TIS/CEP program. But it was just too much. Because there were too much political goings on in Alabama, at that time, to keep it alive. And I just think that in the people of Alabama, especially Macon County and all of the surrounding counties suffered for its loss.

[38:52] Calvin Austin: Yes. Well, Joyce, I am extremely pleased that you consented to do this interview. I want to thank you. And, you know, it's one of those things where the insight and depth that you brought to your experiences to this project is—will be a tremendous help. Do you have any additional words you'd like to say in closing? Or?

[39:29] Joyce Watson: I often wanted to contact the, especially, the drivers and I had forgotten their name. But um, those—they were wonderful because they kept us safe during the time that we were out in the community. And as you know, the climate being out in the county was not good for us, especially for blacks doing good. It was not a great climate and some of the people that I worked with, I would love to see them again and wonder what happened to some of them. But I do say that the TIS/CEP program was great, and it had great leaders, and it had forward-thinking leaders. And like I said, the community has suffered because of its loss. And thank you for inviting me, Calvin.

[40:35] Calvin Austin: Okay, well, thank you Mrs. Joyce B. Watson. We appreciate you and goodnight or good afternoon.

[40:52] Joyce Watson: Alright, bye-bye.

[End of Session]

