

Russ Lowe
4/24/06
Side A

Interviewee: Then I left Virginia State, went into the service for three and half years. And that same semester fee had gone up to a thousand and 36-dollars.

Interviewer: Oh Man.

Interviewee: But at Virginia State, if I remember correctly, we only had one white instructor and he came from Harvard. He wanted to get the experience of dealing with us. So I am convinced, no one told me this, but I am convinced that he got it. He came, we got his teaching free. He wanted a years experience in a black college.

Interviewer: What class was this do you recall?

Interviewee: It was the same as we call now public policy. You could call it politics. At that time blacks didn't know much about politics.

Interviewer: Okay. SO here's the situation that this professor is coming in to study the African American experience as it relates to politics in the community at the college level.

Interviewee: Right

Interviewer: What did you study there, what did you get your degree in at Virginia State College?

Interviewee: I got a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Education. Mechanical drawing, wood working, those kinds of things. Then when I came here 40 years later, I got a Masters in Education Public Administration.

Interviewer: Okay, Tell me why did you pursue industrial tech. What inspired you, what was the basis behind that, for making that decision?

Interviewee: I was convinced that I was not going to be a teacher. So you needed to do something where you make some real money. As you know teacher salary has always been about the lowest paid people that you find. SO I decided that if I go in this area, I know a little something about wood working and little about brick mason, all those kinds of things and surprisingly to know, when I came here to Waterloo 50 years ago. I came to build houses and if you check the records you will find that probably I built over 100 houses here in the Waterloo community. Then I was in Philadelphia back in the 60's and I got a phone call from my wife saying the personnel director at the school system wanted to talk to me, so she gave me the number. I called him.

Interviewer: Hold it you're getting ahead of me. You're going in the right direction. You graduate from Virginia state college, is that in 1940?

Interviewee: In the 40's

Interviewer: Okay the early 40's.

Interviewee: uh Huh.

Interviewer: And then you would come to Waterloo in the 1955, is that correct?

Interviewee: uh Huh

Interviewer: What led to your decision to come the Waterloo.

Interviewee: In Cincinnati Ohio, I was having dinner at hotel there, and I met a fellow from here, by the name of Denmen Philips and he invited me to come out and assist him. After we had a long conversation. We probably had a two and half hour dinner and you know for two men to be sitting talking for two and half hours that just met, is real strange. But he talked the kind of language that I wanted to hear. And that was probably early January of that year, '55. And I came out in March.

Interviewer: Your wife, I know that you would meet your wife when you got to Waterloo. Tell me the story of how you would meet her?

Interviewee: I was a bachelor at that time. And of course her mother ran a store. I thought they spent more time cooking than selling. So naturally being a bachelor you hang around where the cooking is. Several times she came in while I would visit with her mother. We got to know each other quite well as you can see. This is 50 years.

Interviewer: I know she's very important. She supports you in all your endeavors. You guys are kind of a team, in a sense.

Interviewee: Most of what we do, we try to do it together. She is the politician in the family. SO I have to do the leg work. And she is a much better writer than I am, and I don't mind telling this, most people you know hate to admit that. I'm the world's worst writer. So when I write a letter, I hand it to her and say, "now check it out." And when I see the letter again it doesn't look like I had anything to do with it. That's the way we do things.

Interviewer: So you guys compliment each other?

Interviewee: Definitely.

Interviewer: Now you get to Waterloo in '55. Approximately '55. It would be 6 to 7 years later, approximately and you would start teaching.

Interviewee: Yeah, I was in the building business from '55 to 65 and to be exact, after I start teaching I finished up several houses I started at the time. The only reason I agreed to teach at the time the personnel director asked me, was I thought he was asking because he knew I would turn him down. Because at that time there were no black teachers at East High School. There were only two black teachers in the system. And there was one at Grant School and one at Kingsley, I believe it was. And both of those easily could have been anything else but black. So it was a little easier to hire them. SO when they asked me I figured they say, "Well if we ask him, he'll say no and then we can tell the black community we offered it to him but he turned it down."

Interviewer: You felt an obligation to do it ?

Interviewee: Took a cut in salary to do it. I think it was the best thing I've done. Because while I didn't gain that much myself, I have 12 or 13 youngsters that came through here, UNI, that I assisted in getting an education. And they wouldn't have gotten it if I hadn't been in the school system. Because would have taken the time to do it.

Interviewer: This is interesting, let's talk a little about that because here you come into the school system, you are the first African American male teacher at East High, and how

would the students, specifically the white students, how would they react to your presence?

Interviewee: The interesting thing about kids will be kids. You don't have to worry about kids. I had more problems with the faculty. The kids were just great. I love the experience I had with them. And David I have 2 or 3 young ladies that took drafting under me and I knew that they only took it because they wanted to know what I was like. They need drafting about like I needed a bullet between the eyes. They wanted to see what I was like. Interestingly enough one of the ladies graduated from Iowa State in Architectural Engineering and the other was a Commercial Artist out of Drake. And just 2 years ago, the young lady from Drake came back to town and she wouldn't leave town without seeing me. I was the only teacher that she could remember that she wanted to see again.

Interviewer: Impressive. So for the most part the white students embraced you? They welcomed you?

Interviewee: Yeah, I tried my best to be fair. I tell people it is difficult to say you are going to treat everybody the same, you can't do that. But I tried to be fair. And most of the youngsters realized I tried to be fair. Made mistake after I get to be in Administration at East High School, I suspended a kid because I thought he had done something. And after chasing down, I was convinced he had done it. Shortly after I suspended him, I found out that I was wrong. So the last thing I did before I left school that day, was call and tell him "I want you at school tomorrow at 8 o'clock." I didn't tell him why I wanted at school at 8 o'clock, but bring your books. Then I told him you can't rest assured. I don't want you to tell your mom and dad about this until after I've talk with them, it's my responsibility to tell them I made a mistake. So what's I talk to him, I said "ok say anything you want about me, its alright." I wanted him to know when your dealing with kids, we have to realize that we are not always perfect, but the advantage I think I had, was I was 40 years old when I started teaching. See the average 22, 23 year old kid, think when he first get his degree that he's the smartest person in the world. And it takes him about 8-10 years to find out that the only thing he has is the tools to get the job. You have to learn to do the job after you get there.

Interviewer: That comes with experience, obviously.

Interviewee: Right

Interviewer: So the white students were drawn to you because of your fairness? Kids can sense things, they can sense a persons ability to be fair or to be unfair.

Interviewee: Kids are much smarter than we give them credit for. They are able to pick up things that we are not able to see. And I think, to be exact, I know I was fair. If I make a mistake, I was real glad to admit that I made a mistake.

Interviewer: What about the black students? How would they react to your presence?

Interviewee: Never had any trouble with students. But during my educational career, I had more problems out of the adult blacks, then I did anybody. Because they always thought I could do more, than I could do. See I served, after the school career, I served 6 years as a school board member. And people forget the fact that you are only one of seven. So they think that I can turn the whole school system around because I'm there. I can change the tone of the conversation, but that's all you can do as one, is change it.

Well I knew that the conversation was going to be alright, but gathering three more votes to go with mine was just like trying to find hens teeth.

Interviewer: This is good, let's talk about your move from the classroom, because you would be teaching at Bunger, teach at East, you would teach at West, Central, okay you would teach at those schools in the system for about 8 years, 8-10 years, and then you would go on to Administration. Infact there's an article in the Courier that talks about that shift from the classroom to administration, why?

Interviewee: What happened, the district, Dr. Cunningham and I, was the recruiter of black teachers, and administrators. We recruited several young fellows that we thought was great, turn out not to be so well. So when we decided that maybe the best thing to do, is do it ourself if we want it done right. So that's when we went from the classroom to administration. Now let me assure you it was much more fun teaching in the classroom. But you needed the administration done correctly too, so you get in there and do it yourself. And when I went into administration at East High School, there were 4 administrators, and I was the rookie. You can't tell these other 3 anything. So what you do, you show them. Their not listening because they are experienced. Kids started coming looking for me instead of looking for the principal or the other assistant principal. Then they wanted to know what magnet do you have with the kids. I used the same term I've always used. I try to be fair. And I tell the kid that. And he would start to tell me you didn't do so and so, and I would say you are not so and so , you are you. What made it easier for me to get the attention of the kid, once a kid go in trouble I would ask him what he think should happen to him. Explain this, if you were in my place what would you do. And when ever you see him drop his head, you know you hit a nail. And you would never be as hard on him as he chooses for himself.

Interviewer: So you see you have this niche for administration and working with the students on a different level, would this lead to your decision to continue education at the University of Northern Iowa and then get your Masters Degree?

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm convinced that's the reason. See at 42 I needed to be in graduate school about like I needed an Elgin watch you know. But I decided that I would... You don't like doing the work and listening to your peers saying he's doing a good job, but he's not qualified. You say then if you're not a total dummy, you can do this. I tell you though, when you've been out 17 years and then you go back, it's a little rugged. Darn rugged.

Interviewer: It seems you knew you need to validate you presence.

Interviewee: Exactly. You have to be able to stand on your own 2 feet and rather than someone else putting their arms around you and saying you're going to do it anyway. There was a couple people, business people in town, actually pushed Walt Cunningham and I to do this. They knew us pretty well. And they said, "you fellas keep going out and getting these fellas that don't know what the heck is going on, why don't you do it yourself."

So then you proceed to get the tools to do it yourself with.

Interviewer: I know you were an educator, you were in administration, and you do a number of other things working with people, and you continue to do that by working on a number of boards, working within a number of major organizations, also your political activity. You are very involved in the community in the way of politics. Let's talk about your involvement with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP. Why did you join that organization? What was your role within that organization?

Interviewee: I chaired black hawk county branch of NAACP for several years. I always like to do things that's legal and the NAACP was the organization that I saw, even though they were fighting discrimination they always tried their best to do whatever they were doing within the legal system. Once in a while when you're out there you might step over a bound, but as a rule you follow. So that was my reason. I followed the organization every since I came out of the service. Back in '45. That was way before you were born. It has always been a pretty sound organization. Once in a while they get off base. And when I say get off base, in my line of thinking they usually follow the law.

Interviewer: Now you talk about, you said you were chair or president of the Waterloo chapters, is that correct, now by serving that role where do you think you were most effective at or something that you accomplished?

Interviewee: If you go into the history of the Waterloo school system, all of the black students in the system went to two schools. From Grant to McKinstry, to East High School, so we thought desegregation was a thing that need to be done for the benefit of all kids, not just black kids, but all kids. And we say this because when I was in the system I'm aware of the fact that new books went to West High School and the used books from West High School went to East High School. So I'm convinced the best education is where the best teachers and best materials are. So let's try to get the district desegregated. And while I was teaching for the district, as president of NAACP I sued the district for desegregation. And I went to the superintendent and told him, "Now here's what's happening, I'm going to do what I have to do and you do what you have to do."

Interviewer: You went to the administration and told him?

Interviewee: Told him what I was going to do, huh uh.

Interviewer: Do you recall what the superintendent said at that time?

Interviewee: Now I hate to say this, but you know when you get 80 years old say what you want to say, you get away with it. I knew that they couldn't fire me for my teaching. I was probably, out of his 890 teachers at the time, I was probably his top 5. So you can't fire me for that. So why not sue him. And I did. Surprisingly to know, when they had their school board meeting was going to be so big, that they couldn't get it in that administration building, so that had it at West High School auditorium. And my wife read the plan that we had for desegregating the schools and I sat in the back like I didn't know what was going on. And they did pass the plan that night, just as we presented it. And since then, we have had a fairly descent desegregation. Diversity is not exactly where we want it, but it's much better than it was back in the '60s when I started.

Interviewer: Let's talk about your involvement with some of the boards you work with in the community. Specifically let's talk about your role and how you got involved in the community action council here in Waterloo?

Interviewee: The community as you can hear from all the rest we talked about, we have always had some problems. And the community action agency, as you can research it, was Sergeant Schriver's outfit, back in those days, so that tells you how long. Anyway, the county board of supervisors appointed me to the board of the community action agency. And community action, you know it now as operation threshold, one in the same. I think I worked at these things so much, and I can't remember, but I probably chaired that board for 3 or 4 years. And again this is a group of community people, actually the biggest group of the board members were people needed their services. Which made the assignment a little bit tougher than usual, because everybody's needs were a little bit different but anyway I shared them. That was probably what got me in public life election wise because the chairman of board of supervisor was a fellow name Leo Ruff. He was not listening to what we were saying as a community action board. I made it clear to him that I was going to run against him. I did run against him, I didn't beat him but I did run against him. This agency covered 3 or 4 counties. Grundy, Buchanan, and Bremer. It was large network of people.

Interviewer: Why did you feel it was important to be involved in it, to be on that board, why that board? What did you feel that you could do or what did you do that made you feel like you made a difference?

Interviewee: The people that I thought, needed the services, could not articulate their needs as well as I thought I could. So if I couldn't do it, there was someone else could do. And after working with buck master Mc Coy and that gang, they constantly gave Walt and I a whole lot of heck for always finding somebody else. Why not do it yourself you know. That's about it. Actually at one time, I'm convinced I was spread a little too thin, but I did the best I could at the time. That was the key, you needed someone that could speak for the people. And luck enough some of the national people that we were dealing with, were people I had gone to school with at Virginia State, so you use what you know to get more funds for your area. So that's what I did.

Interviewer: You also served on another board, called the Urban Renewal Board. And my understanding is that you're the first African American to serve on that board.

Interviewee: That is correct. I served there 19 or 20 years. Again the Urban Renewal was strictly to go through a certain section of our city to either bring homes up to code or demolition them, get rid of them. We didn't think the brothers were getting paid properly when their homes were taken over by Urban Renewal, so the community decided the reason we were getting the short end of the stick, is because we didn't have any brothers on the board.

Interviewer: Oh I get it. No representation, that's not good.

Interviewee: Yeah, so what they did they went to the mayor and council and told them that we've been letting you do this now for 8-10 years and your not meeting our needs, so why don't you find a brother or sister to put on that board so that they can put a little input in there so we can get a little bit done. Well the interesting thing about it, so the mayor was real shrewd, he told them " I tell you what, give me a list of 3 people that I

should choose and the next opening that's what we will do." I didn't know this at the time, they put up 3 names, they put up 2 people that even they didn't want. So they know the mayor didn't want them.

Interviewer: This is good strategy.

Interviewee: So the only name that was still clear was mine. And 20 years later I decided to run for mayor, so I resigned from the board when I decided to run for mayor.

Interviewer: That's interesting cause I want to talk about that. Before get there I want to talk about one last board, actually there's 2 more I want to talk about. Your association, your process to getting elected to Waterloo School board is very important. What motivated you?

Interviewee: Its an interesting thing, I had no idea of ever running for public office of any kind. But I spent several years out in bunger, and the only thing black out in bunger was me. So if anybody to ask you to run, you'll know. SO evidentially I did something the people of Evansdale thought was alright, so they asked me to run. I was so convinced that I wasn't going to get elected if I ran. I get the nomination papers and filled out the top part that I was suppose to fill out and hand it to them and said "you folks get it filled out and when you finish filling it out take it down and file it for me, because I'll be out in Virginia. And they did.

Interviewer: They did it.

Interviewee: And I think the year I was elected. It was 3 people elected and 11 candidates. And I was the #3 of the 11 that was running. So I beat the person I was ahead of by 21 votes, so I didn't like that so I decided to run another term to show people we can do better than that. So the next term I was the top vote getter.

Interviewer: Here you are on the board serving 2 terms, what impact do you think you made or how do you think you were influential on that board?

Interviewee: We came up with a discipline policy for the district that we think is fair. I say we think it's fair, because I've been gone 14 years, think of the changes since then. Another thing is we worked at it hard, to see that minorities were placed at every school building that we could afford to get minorities. Because again I tried to convince to people having your kids run from me here doesn't make sense when he get out in the world, he's going to run into me somewhere. So you just want to get him while he's young. Because they seem to gel so much better together when their young, than they do when they get older. So we got that done. The other thing is that I tried to convince the educators themselves that I was interested in what they were doing. I visited every school in the district at least four times every year. I made it clear that I'm not coming to see what your doing, I'm coming to see if I can be of help. You tell me what your doing, I'm not going to run up in your classroom and ask what are you doing, I'm not going to do that. When I come you tell me what you're doing and what you need to do and I'll see if I can help you. So I did that.

Interviewer: Impressive. I think that's a good idea that you were coming to classrooms. This made you really appealing to people because you're not scaring them, you can be threatening...here come a school board member in my classroom.

Interviewee: Exactly, that's what I wanted people to know, I had been one of them, and so don't worry about me, you and I are on the same page.

Interviewer: So now your getting information first hand, so you are able to delegate at a different level, at a higher level.

Interviewee: Yep. Probably the thing I got the most criticized for, was we had a black principle at East High School that in my opinion, was out of her league. She should have been a college teacher. She had no business in public education, because she was actually academically sharp. But the skill of working with youngsters, I don't think she had. But I didn't do what others could have done, you know try to destroy the lady. What I did was when they come told me they needed to make a change, I said well justify the change. See I already had it justified in my mind, but so I said why don't we try it one more year. And they tried it another year, but then I made the biggest mistake of my life by not letting them do it the first time. When they got ready to move, I sat down with the superintendent and said, "why don't you go over, bring her over here to the administration building, and give her this job that's open. Don't cut her pay.

Interviewer: Good point.

Interviewee: Well if you cut her pay, then your demoting her. Of course, she didn't think that was quite what she wanted. So she disappeared at Christmas time and didn't come back. But it was alright. It just made it easier for us to get both positions filled the way we wanted them done. The gal was sharp too and it really bothered me, because people around the school system thought I should have hung dead with her.

Interviewer: No, but you saw it.

Interviewee: My thing is simple. I'm not going to let them fire you and I'm not going to let them deal with your money. See I'm not going to cut your money. But if your not functioning well for kids, you need to move.

Interviewer: It 's business don't take it personal.

Interviewee: Right, so I told the thugs in the street that got after me about it. If I need what's happening in the street I'm coming to you. When it comes to education why don't you come to me. Depend on what I tell you, because I'm not going to tell you anything wrong.

Interviewer: Good point. To different worlds.

Interviewee: Yeah, I had no problem doing whatever I had to do.

Interviewer: Now here you are, your in the school system dealing with educators and things of that nature. Let's lastly let's talk about your role with the Cattle Congress. Your on that board, cattle congress is a very big deal here in Waterloo. With a long history. And you were there for about 20 years you served on that board.

Interviewee: Again, that was an organization again they had started a dog track here and as you know, anytime you use a public facility you have to deal with the public. It has to be open. Well Cattle Congress had been around 65 years and no one of color's ever served no the board. So Harry Slife, and I don't know you might remember that name because him and his wife got killed in an auto accident up by Decoah some years ago. He decided that if this outfit is going to serve the public, the public should be represented.

SO he said why don't you Russel, find someone black to serve on that board and I'll recommend it to the board. So I decided that I would do that.

Interviewer: Good choice.

Interviewee: Actually I was going to find somebody. But things got to moving faster than thought, so Harry Slife went to the board and said, "you folks are about to deal in the pari-mutuel." The person that know the most about pari-mutuel in town happen to be Russel Lowe, because he has done that down at the Quad Cities, so he has some idea what's going on. Maybe you ought to get him. Well the director of the Cattle Congress wasn't particularly interested in me because he knew that I probably knew more about it than he did and you know how some people, they don't want you to know more about them. So anyway, they finally, after a couple meeting trying to find somebody else, they agreed that maybe old Russel Lowe should be the one. And I served there until just a year ago. And I decided that at 82, at that time, that the rest of my life I owed to me. SO I was going to do absolutely nothing. It was the biggest mistake I ever made, because I'm busier now than I was when I had a job. So I guess I'll be busy until I die.

Interviewer: Yeah, you're a very busy man infact. You've let Cattle Congress, your obligations to that go on the board, but still yet, I know you are very active in politics today. Very politically active.

Interviewee: Yeah, I spend quite a bit of time, and I don't mind people knowing that I am a life long democrat. I came from, and they laugh when I say that, because the bird machine in Virginia was probably one of the biggest segregationist that ever came out of Virginia. I still felt as though the democrats offered more of what I am, then the other party. And you notice what I said, what I am. I think it's necessary that blacks be in both parties, absolutely necessary. But I just happen to be a democrat.

Interviewer: Now early, you mentioned a couple times that you ran for Mayor. And tell me how did that develop, running for mayor here?

Interviewee: Well what happened, there were two policemen on the force at the time, that I had worked with when they had problems with kids.

Interviewer: When was this? About when would you run for mayor?

Interviewee: This would be in the nineties, early, '90,'91 something like that,'92. Cause I ran in '93 I think it was. Yeah, anyway they came to me and said, "why don't you run for mayor, you have the disposition, you have the skills, and being a veteran, you have things going for you." And told them I say well, "this community will never elect a black mayor." I said so, "why waste our time?" And that was maybe 6 or 8 months later, they came back and tried me again, see if I had given up. So the amazing thing, my position hadn't change, so they knew that Rev Rideout here that he and I was pretty close. So they said Okay we'll try one more place. So they went up to Rideout and say now we want him to run. And he told you if you ever needed him, call him, so it's time for you to call him. So Rideout asked me to run, and I couldn't turn him down because I told him you know, and I did. Again the same thing, to run a campaign you need money. So I got the nomination papers and everything, ya'll get it filled out, and raise the money. And you got a candidate. So I did.

Interviewer: And you were running against who at this time?

Interviewee: The mayor, the last mayor, John Roof.

Interviewer: Okay, you run against Roof, okay.

Interviewee: I ran against John, and did well. Not as well as I thought I should have.

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Russ Lowe

4/24/04

Side B

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Interviewer: Okay, you run against Roof, okay.

Interviewee: I ran against John, and did well. Not as well as I thought I should have.

Interviewer: Well yeah, you knew the odds. That wasn't the issue with you.

Interviewee: No, and the thing I was worried about was the money that was left over in the campaign. So I agreed before it was over, that what ever was left over that would go to the Jesse Cosby neighborhood center. I could've wasted the money buying campaign ads and everything. But knowing that you're not going to win why waste the money, send it up there where it'd do some good. So that's what we did.

Interviewer: And your wife, I know that we talk about her earlier and how you guys are a team, a unit, how you compliment each other, what is her political role? How does she help you?

Interviewee: She is the vice chair of the Black Hawk County Democrats. And this is her 2nd time at vice chair of the organization. And she does as I told you, the paper work, and I do the leg work. Because as you can see, meeting people is my thing. And writing seems to be her thing. To be exact this week we have to go up into Dubuque, because the first district Democrats are meeting up in Dubuque this week. So we'll be there this weekend.

Interviewer: Who are some big name people that or politicians that you guys have run into or ate with or had at your house?

Interviewee: Okay. John Edwards was in town just two weeks ago and we got a call from Washington, from his office in Washington that he wanted to meet with a small group of people before he met with the large democratic party. So we were with John Edwards. It was, we had 8 people, and he wanted to talk about his poverty program that he has going on at the University of North Carolina. We've had Chip Carter there, we had Maria Shriver there. And to be exact I could have brought along a couple pictures of me and Maria, when she was a youngster and cute.

Interviewer: So she came to your house when, you say when she was a youngster?

Interviewee: When we both were youngster, 20 years ago.

Interviewer: 20 years ago she was at your house. Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah. She and Chip Cater was there. And one other one.

Interviewer: Did you have one of the Kennedy's at your house?

Interviewee: Yeah, Edward when he ran, Ted...Ted Kennedy when he ran.

Interviewer: Ted Kennedy. Okay.

Interviewee: Then we met him again when he came to Payne Church, he spoke at our church. Not this time, you know he came with Kerry 2 years ago. But he was there first time speaking for himself.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: But we have a minister now that loves politics, but he doesn't want you to get your politics into his church. But see my thing is I learned to be a politician from the church.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know anything more political than church. I mean when you get to the individual church itself, it might not be. But you go to the national conventions and there are more politics there than you'll find at a national democratic or republican convention. And then they get upset if take two minutes of their time on Sunday morning.

Interviewer: True. Definitely I see what you're saying?

Interviewee: My thing is, you save souls in various ways. See most of people might not understand what you're saying when you're trying to interpret the bible. But if you start to talk about hunger, and that's what politicians should be talking about, everybody understand that.

Interviewer: Right. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Interviewee: I tell the pastor when I go to church, I come because he interpret the bible better than...don't read it to me. I can read it myself. You interpret it, you know. And if you can't interpret it I just will stay at home.

Interviewer: Next I'm going to ask you how do you perceive yourself as an African American in the Cedar Valley?

Interviewee: laugh

Interviewer: How do you perceive yourself as an African American in the Cedar Valley, in Waterloo?

Interviewee: What I have done throughout my life, is try to live it as best I know how. Don't try to be anything other than what I am. I will allow you and others to decide what contributions I've made. But I make the contributions that I think is right for the community.

Interviewer: Gotcha. I like that. Interesting.

Interviewee: I've never looked for praise and all that. I do what I do because I think it's right, and if it's not right, boy say aint gonna do it.

Interviewer: Makes sense to me. How has intergenerational communication helped you keep your African American identity?

Interviewee: I think it's important that those of us in the early years of struggle, be available to the youngster. So that they don't have to read about all of it, and they can come to us and if you're interested and get it first hand, you know, the information. Several years ago I went to several of the small communities around to pass on the young white kid what our history has been like, and I think it has been beneficial. Evidently the last time I was over here, I talk to somebody's class, probably Dr. Burg's... Tom Burg's, but I must've been a little rough because they didn't invite me back. No Tom, wouldn't do that. I mean he wanted me to be as rough as I was.

Interviewer: Right, Okay. What communication channels such as radio, television, that are used to connect you and other people to the African American community?

Interviewee: Lucky enough, 20-25 years ago, we were in Des Moines to a state democratic convention and a young lady by the name of Lori Guewit. The brothers and sisters try to throw her out of a meeting, because it was kind of a black caucus. And I went over and patted her on the hand and told her, "come on, stick with me, don't open your mouth, just stick with me nobody gone bother you." And she did. Lucky enough she came back to the station here, the TV station here and told them how I protected her.

Interviewer: The TV station here?

Interviewee: TV station here now, KWWL.

Interviewer: Channel 7, okay, Gotcha

Interviewee: And the person she delivered the message to was Ron Steele, so Ron called me and Thanked me for taking care of her. And since then we have never had any problems getting what we want on the air. Because as a rule most people know when they are dealing with me, I'm not going to just go get on the air just to be on the air, I have something to say.

Interviewer: Important.

Interviewee: Yeah, that's important. So we've never had any communications problems. And I always inform folks what I'm going to do. As I did with the school superintendent, when I got ready to sue the district I told him, I said, "now you and I are on the same side, both of us trying to educate kids. So don't be surprise tomorrow when you'll be listed in the paper cause your being sued. Because you're the superintendent of schools.

Interviewer: What about the radio, was there...

Interviewee: Radio, see, when we first started Radio, the radio station and tv station was together. When we started. It's just in recent years that they have separate. But I still know enough people to get whatever I need to get in the right places.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. What has helped you maintain and reinforce African American culture and community boyous, believes, and identities?

Interviewee: I think as you read and keep up to date with things, you'll see a little progress. Not the progress we all want. But you see some progress. That as long as your feeling good, make you feel good enough to try to constantly be apart of it.

Interviewer: Okay, Alright. Well thank you very much, thank you very much for sharing your story with me. It's been great. It's been wonderful. I appreciate you making the time to talk to me.

Interviewee: Anytime brother.

Interviewer: Alright. Nice meeting you.

Interviewee: We're done now?

Interviewer: Yes.

END OF SOUND ON SIDE B