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Tom Crosby Oral History Collection
Dill Gamble Oral History Interview

Interviewee
Gamble, Dill, Jr., 1934-

Interviewer
Crosby, Tom, 1940-

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Scope and Background Note
In this oral history interview, Dill Gamble discusses his experiences attending Melina, a Rosenwald school located in Clarendon County, South Carolina, and Drayton Street High School in Newberry County, South Carolina, commenting specifically on the activities, chores, and spelling bees at Melina School. He discusses the evolution of these schools, explaining when and where they were built and what they are called now or what stands in their place. More generally, Gamble discusses Jeanes teachers, Rosenwald schools and the educational opportunities they provided African Americans, and the differences in education between blacks and whites in Clarendon and Newberry Counties in terms of teacher salaries, school terms, facilities, and transportation. Dill Gamble was born in 1934 in Sardinia, Clarendon County, South Carolina. Tom Crosby interviewed Dill Gamble, on January 8, 2007. Interview covers Gamble's education at Melina High School (grades 1-9 in the town of Sardinia, S.C.) from 1941 to 1950 and Drayton Street High School from 1950 to 1953.
Interviewee: Dill Gamble
Interviewer: Tom Crosby

Tom Crosby: Sir.

Dill Gamble: I’m Dill Gamble.

TC: Do you mind giving your date of birth?

DG: I was born April 13, 1934 in Sardinia, South Carolina. That is in Clarendon County, county seat being Manning, South Carolina.

TC: What was the name of your elementary school?

DG: Really I didn’t have an elementary school as such. The school that I attended my early years was Melina. It was Melina High School but it was grades one through tenth for a while, one through eleventh, and eventually grades one through twelve. So to answer your question, I really attended Melina High School and it had an elementary part to.

TC: First through what grades again?

DG: It was first through tenth for a while, first through eleventh, and then as they continued to add grades it was eventually one through twelve.

TC: I see. Now was it a Rosenwald School?

DG: Yes, sir, this was one of those schools in Clarendon County, which was a very poor county, as you may remember. Clarendon County that is the county that had St. Paul and the now as we know it Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, part of the court argument came from Summerton, South Carolina, which is a part of Clarendon County. And that is the county that I was born and bred in and, Melina High School was the school, educational institution in that county.

TC: How do you spell Melina?

DG: M-E-L-I-N-A. The school itself took its name from Melina Church. Now Melina Church is a Presbyterian Church and as you may recall, many of the Rosenwald, Melina was a Rosenwald School, if you recall, many of the Rosenwald Schools were built on grounds that were owned by churches. There is another Rosenwald School, which is not too far from Melina, which is Goodwill.

TC: Goodwill?
DG: Goodwill, that is in Sumter County. Right across the county line about a mile is Melina Church. The school is no longer there but the church is still there and the school took its name from the church, which was Melina High School, on the grounds of Melina Presbyterian Church.

TC: So the property for the school originally belonged to the Melina Church?

DG: Yes, sir, the school itself is no longer there and was torn down after they built what is presently known as Walker-Gamble Elementary School, which originally was Walker-Gamble High School. I think it was built in 1954 or ’55, somewhere in there. It’s one of those [James F.] Jimmy Byrnes buildings that were built in the ‘50s and once Walker-Gamble High School was built, then Melina High School was closed and some of the members of Melina Church or people in the community bought the old school and tore it down and built houses and what have you just for the lumber in the school. And the very site that Melina School was built on now is a graveyard. It sort of extended the graveyard that was right behind the school, but all of it was on the church grounds, which is now comprised of several acres. The spot where the old school was is now part of the graveyard.

TC: When you were at Melina do you recall the names, the name of the principal or maybe one or two of the teachers?

DG: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. The year that I left that school, which is 1950, the principal of that school was a Reverend I think it was one was Reverend Johnson, that’s right, Reverend Johnson was the pastor of the church.

TC: At Melina?

DG: Melina Church. He later became principal of the high school there. The year that I left in 1950 the principal’s name was James. A couple of years before that the name of the principal was McCollum, Reverend McCollum of Sumter, South Carolina. There was also, I think it was the Reverend, I’ve forgot the names now.

TC: So you left Melina when you were in the tenth grade?

DG: I left Melina, yes, sir, in 1950. I was in tenth grade and I went to Newberry and attended the school for blacks, which was Drayton Street High School, which was built in the early 1920s I think it was. That school was closed as a high school in 1955, ’55 or ’56, as a high school and continued to operate but was changed to I think a junior high school. The principal then was Eugene Sheppard, who was the principal of the old Drayton Street High School and I think perhaps was the last principal that school had because they built a new school, which became known as Gallman High School in Newberry, and the Drayton Street High School became the middle school. I graduated in 1953 from Drayton Street High School and left.

TC: There is a teacher that taught me at Sims High School in Union, South Carolina and she was my geometry teacher and she attended Drayton Street.

DG: Is that so?

TC: Yeah, her name at this time is Janie Goree. Her maiden name was Glymph.

DG: I happen to know her.
TC: Janie Glymph.

DG: She became mayor of Carlisle, a little town.

TC: Carlisle, which is located in Union County.

DG: I spoke up there once for her.

TC: Did you?

DG: Yes, at the community center. This was probably in the, about 1980 or ’81.

TC: I see. She was one of those industrious.

DG: Very politically astute person, very active community activist. As a matter of fact, I believe I spoke a number of times.

TC: She was very demanding as a geometry teacher. You had to work, no playing around.

DG: I never knew her as a student. She obviously went to Drayton Street long before I got there. As I said, I finished Drayton Street until 1953 and I assume if we’re talking about the same person she had been there.

TC: We may go back to Melina High School, your first high school. Can you describe the curriculum as you recall it?

DG: If you would call it a curriculum, sort of interesting.

TC: Why do you say if you call it a curriculum?

DG: When you think about schools of the ‘30s, ‘40s, and ‘50s, the years I remember Melina, going to Melina in the ‘40s, was born in 1934, and the curriculum then was pretty well the teacher’s knowledge of what he or she was teaching from textbooks through the years. There wasn’t always standardized curriculum that all of the teachers followed. You might have one teacher who was very capable (unintelligible) very energetic teacher. Of course, we were required to learn (unintelligible) and an inexperienced teacher (unintelligible) pretty well (unintelligible) constituted the curriculum. However, one of the things that happened then, which a lot of teachers and persons now look upon as a problem might very well have been a blessing, because Melina School one through tenth, eleventh, or twelfth, and that depended upon whether they added the tenth grade or eleventh grade or the time you’re talking about. My first time remembering that school consisted of six rooms and, of course, by the standards back then that was a very large school because I also remember some other schools in the same community where you only had one or two rooms. But going back to Melina, quite often it was not unusual to have more than one grade in one classroom being taught by the same teacher. What happened was that students sitting in the same room when they were teaching one grade level, say fifth grade, or sixth grade, the same teacher might be teaching math or English while other student were in that class and it sort of served as a reinforcement because students being in that class would hear the teacher going over things over and over and over. And even though the teacher was teaching a different group or a different class, because it was not unusual for a teacher to have three or four grades in one class.
TC: So they could remember or had already been introduced to material in one grade that they used in the next grade?

DG: That’s exactly right.

TC: Do you recall any other let’s say teaching strategies that went on with reference to a teacher as well as what a teacher may have done with the other students?

DG: First of all, as I said, it was not unusual for one teacher to teach two grades and all subjects for those two grades; two grades and all subjects, one teacher to teach all of the English, math, social studies, and what have you, and third grade teach all of the English, math, social studies, or whatever was taught. So quite often when that teacher was teaching one group in the classroom, there was no wall, there was no curtain, there was no division, so a lot of students would hear and would sort of in their minds go over so that the next year or later on that year when it was their time to study the same things, then many of those students knew them already. The unfortunate thing about that was there were limited chalk boards. Sometimes the old chalk boards were worn out. Some of those schools had electricity; some of those schools did not.

TC: How about Melina?

DG: Melina did. Melina did have, we did have electricity at that school. But at one time you really did not have electricity running in all of those areas where those schools were located. The facilities themselves so we had the old pot bellied stoves and the students were responsible for getting the wood to go in those stoves. So part of the curriculum, I want to go back to that. Part of the curriculum was that students were very responsive because in order to stay warm students knew that they also had to go in the woods and cut wood. And that too was one of those chores students would do washing the chalk board, sweeping the classroom, those kinds of things. And, of course, needless to say, there was very little discipline because the students knew the teachers were firm and during those days it was permitted and, of course, expected to have corporal punishment. There were some teachers who were very quick to administer such if needed and I must admit that I got my share of that part of the curriculum.

TC: Now as I recall, I know I was in the fifth or sixth grade at my school and I had asked about teaching strategy, I remember my teacher would sometime use one or two of the students to actually assist other students, things that they didn’t understand, as part of her teaching in the classroom.

DG: And I think that might have been sort of the common practice. One of the things that was done then in addition to using students (unintelligible), we also had a lot of drills or spelling bees. It was not an abnormal thing for students to line up, all of the students regardless of what grade and we had a spelling bee. It was the old common spelling book. I’ve forgotten the name of that book but it was the old brown, sort of bluish back book, and of course, you had a list of words and the students would line up. The important thing or the goal then was to see who was the last person standing.

TC: And what happened, just the objective of seeing who could stand the longest period of time? Did that person get something as a reward?
DG: Well, sometimes yes and sometimes not but it was just the pride of saying that I was the last person standing. In retrospect when you look back and think about that, but now a lot of times people will say well, you embarrass a child because he couldn’t spell his word and had to sit down. The real learning opportunities that were provided through those sessions, students, every one of them heard of them heard those words being spelled correctly, any number of them, and they heard them so many times. Of course, we had to go to the board and we had drills on just adding and subtracting to see who could do this or that. The whole point was it was a lot of drill going on but also there was a lot of repetition and in the process of doing that students who were, in fact, not involved, you had the fifth grade students, the fourth grade students seeing that, when they went to the board, not using necessarily the same examples, but they had already gone through that in their minds and they had reinforcement. And many of those students back then, I’m not saying that students today are different from students back then, but the performance of those students back then was much more educationally focused. They didn’t have the hats on and plaited hair and talking and what have you. It was just expected for students to participate and required to do a lot of work and they did it.

TC: Now at Melina as well as Drayton Street, well first I’ll ask about Melina with reference to sports, were there sports at that school?

DG: Well, yes. Yes, we had basketball, girls and boys. We didn’t have track; we didn’t have football. We had baseball. We played baseball but not.

TC: Organized?

DG: Well, it was organized but not necessarily playing a lot of different schools. The persons who played sort of community teams, maybe a certain community would play another community and what have you and not necessarily one school playing another school because back then you must remember we’re talking about the pre public transportation as a part of the curriculum at many of your black schools. The ‘40s and ‘50s there were a lot of students who didn’t have cars or their families didn’t have cars. Schools didn’t have transportation, so a distance of thirty miles right now is almost nothing, but a distance of thirty miles back then was. So what happened, you had organized baseball but you didn’t play different schools. You perhaps were playing different parts of the school community.

TC: I’ve been reading the Union Daily Times newspaper, in 1924, talking about primarily black institutions. Well, in the paper that I was reading in 1924 Union High School, which was white, the article stated that the football team or the baseball team would travel to Greenville for a game and the article stated that they were asking for the community to provide cars to go to Greenville.

DG: And Greenville is how far?

TC: And Greenville is about seventy miles from Union. So my point is I was surprised to see that. At that point they didn’t have buses either so it seems.

DG: And for those white schools that had buses they really weren’t supported by the state. A lot of them were community supported type.
TC: They were?

DG: Some of them were. Even today a county might have a local supplement that is far greater than another county. Certain sections just had money and certain sections didn’t, and so a lot of times those local communities would support them.

TC: And I also read an article, I think this was about 1930 because I was looking for something else and I came across where with reference to transportation, the board of trustees had provided some funds for a man that had a truck to take students.

DG: Now these were white schools?

TC: These were white schools I’m sure. But I was surprised to see that. But anyway that was way back in the ‘20s and ‘30s and so forth.

DG: If I may, I want to go back because I think it would be well appreciated I believe by some folks if they were to understand, you know, we began talking about Melina and Goodwill and both of these were what we called Rosenwald Schools. I’m talking about specifically my time while I was going to Melina at the time in the late ‘30s and I transferred to a different school in 1950. These funds, Rosenwald funds, really came as a result of the philanthropist, a very rich person, last name of Rosenwald, Julius Rosenwald, who gave monies to help improve the educational institutions for black schools in the Deep South. Because what was happening was.

TC: Excuse me, not only to construct buildings but he also gave for some other uses too I’ve forgot.

DG: But primarily it was designed to improve the educational opportunities for blacks. For a lot of people that might not be familiar with what was happening in the ‘20s, the late ‘20s and ‘30s and ‘40s, the years I was at Melina, there was a big difference in state support of public schools for black children and the state support for public schools for white children, be it South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and so forth. And as a result of that I remember very distinctly that if a person wanted to go to shall we say Melina, which was the school that I went to, it was a good school for blacks, “good” at that time, and this is a relatively good. You must remember there were a lot of students who had to leave home on Sunday and stay or board at the Melina community in order to go to that school during the week, because their local communities did not have a school with a grade that went any higher than third or fourth, fifth or sixth. So as poor as those student were and as ill equipped as they were, even with the funds coming from outside communities, those were very relatively poor schools, and yet you had students coming from all different sections boarding with uncles and aunts or living with relatives just to go to that school. What was happening here was the Rosenwald’s and others were putting money in the Deep South in order to help them to improve the quality of education for those persons because they recognized what the educational opportunities were in those poor areas.

TC: You mentioned other persons that gave money to improve the quality of education back in the ‘20s and ‘30s and so forth. One of those persons really was John Slater. DG: Slater Foundation?
TC: Slater Foundation.

DG: The Jeanes Foundation?

TC: Yes and Slater gave money to start secondary schools and then you had the Jeanes Foundation. That’s J-E-A-N-E-S, Jeanes. She gave money. I’m not sure if the money came from her or some other source but her objective was to improve instruction.

DG: This is why you had those Jeanes teachers.

TC: Jeanes teachers.

DG: Go around to different schools. As a matter of fact, when I left home in 1950 to live with an uncle, Reverend A. A. Redden, who was head minister, I stayed with him for about a month, less than two months, and he was transferred as is customarily done for African Episcopal head ministers. He was transferred from Newberry over to a Latta section. Latta is a small town here in South Carolina.

TC: Is that Dillon County?

DG: It could very well be Dillon County. And so my parents permitted me to stay in Newberry so I got a house and stayed by myself, got a good job there and finished school there.

TC: Do you recall a Jeanes teacher when you were in elementary school?

DG: I do not recall a Jeanes teacher when I was, as a matter of fact, the concept Jeanes teacher was not, I had never heard of it until I went to Newberry and after my uncle left I stayed with Ulysses Gallman, Ulysses Gallman was the Jeanes teacher and that’s the person I stayed with and he was the Jeanes teacher. I think he might have been the only one in Newberry County. I’m not sure. I do know he went around to Union and other places. I believe his job was to go around supervising schools.

TC: If I’m not mistaken, I think I’m correct from my readings that I’ve done, I think he had the longest tenure as a Jeanes teacher in South Carolina. I think it was somewhere between fifteen and twenty years.

DG: Well, I don’t know about that but I do know I stayed with him in 1950, very interesting, very interesting person.

TC: I understand that he was very demanding.

DG: He was very demanding, very, very precise, very well respected.

TC: I see. Now when you were at Drayton Street School in Newberry, there were additional things there that you didn’t have at Melina. One of them was football.

DG: Oh, my God, there’s no comparison.

TC: When you started there was there a stadium at Drayton Street with lights, do you remember?

DG: No, sir. We did not have a stadium. We did have a gymnasium, which would be more adequately called a gymnatorium because it was more than a gymnasium because it was also used as an auditorium. There was a stage in the gymnasium at one end and, of course, we used that facility as the basketball gymnasium. But they also used that for the
auditorium for programs and what have you. There were stationary bleachers on both sides and we would bring chairs.

**TC:** Now you’re talking about Drayton Street?

**DG:** Drayton Street, yes, sir. Of course, we had the gymnasium or gymnatorium. We actually had three different buildings. One was the two-story building, which constituted the high school, nine through twelve. We had another building that housed the middle school, shall we say. And we had (unintelligible), three separate facilities, and each one of those had several rooms and there was a library. There was a shop. It was very comprehensive in terms of things like that. Going back to Melina, we had I remember when we had six rooms at that school and nothing else. Eventually they added a room on for the cafeteria and they brought in one of these old Army barracks, which served as a choir room and the principal’s office. So that was no comparison. We played basketball at Melina outside.

**TC:** On the ground?

**DG:** On the grounds, yes, sir.

**TC:** Now at Melina you probably had agriculture.

**DG:** No, sir, we did not have an ag teacher. Normally, now right in the county there was Manning Training School where they had vocational courses, but at Melina we didn’t have those things. We only had the academic courses, basic courses. We didn’t even have a library.

**TC:** I see.

**DG:** The principal really didn’t have an office.

**TC:** I see. Now back to Drayton Street High School, relative to football, so you had football and you probably played at a city park.

**DG:** No, sir, we played, an arrangement was made that for our home games we actually played on the football field of Newberry College. There was Newberry College and they had a nice little football field there and, of course, we could play night games but we played on the college campus. Now we practiced football on the site where Gallman High School, or the old Gallman High School, is today. It was just an old rock field out there that had an old rock (unintelligible) clay and dirt.

**TC:** I see. Now you played at night or daytime?

**DG:** It was possible for us at Newberry to play night games because they had lights, because Newberry College had lights and we used their facilities to play football. But baseball we used a community park, which was owned by the community, and we practiced on an old field that eventually was used to build the present facility that is Gallman High School. So we actually had baseball and we had track. We had football. We had girls and boys basketball at Drayton Street, only basketball at Melina.

**TC:** Back to the condition of the schools of the past, I refer to Melina and other schools throughout the state too because they had similar conditions I suspect. What do you contribute to the ability of having produced outstanding graduates of those schools?
What kinds of things would you say contribute, even though they may not have had some of the equipment that maybe some better schools, physically that is, what kind of factors contributed would you say that existed with reference to the principal and teachers and so forth?

DG: My response to that would be, actually my observation, first of all.

TC: Was it (unintelligible)?

DG: First of all, having good facilities will facilitate learning. But not having facilities, will not prevent learning. By having very inadequate and very poor facilities in Clarendon County, which is where I grew up and Melina.

TC: And throughout the state.

DG: Throughout the state, throughout the Deep South and to some extent throughout the North, ghettos, and simply because a person happens to be going to a school and they got them in New York or poor schools of Alabama or South Carolina or wherever, and not being exposed to very adequate facilities, will not within itself deny that person of eventually having a good education. Now if that person has the desire to get educated in spite of problems.

TC: And they will have gotten essentially the basics to do well.

DG: Many of them got the basics not only to do well but to excel. But having those facilities, I’d like to give you a couple of examples. When I went to Melina and left in 1950, to be honest with you, I didn’t know that there was such thing as a library. One of the first assignments that I was given shortly after I got to Newberry was to do a book report. I had never done a book report. To be honest with you, the only book that I’d ever read was the Bible. I didn’t realize it at the time but I was a good learner, not only for religious reasons, but for just learning to read and learning history. But when I got to Newberry I was given an assignment and I really was not being facetious. This is the honest to God truth. I was in the tenth grade and the teacher told me to do a report on a black person, assignment. I said, “Where am I going to get this information from?” And she said, “You will get it from the library.” And I was being as honest as I could be and I said, “What is a library?” So I told her I didn’t realize that you had such things as a library. Of course, the teacher sent someone, got one of the teachers, and as small as that library was on the campus of Drayton Street High School in 1950, as small as it was, when I walked in I thought ‘I have all the books in the world’. So to me there were so many books, I just didn’t realize. I’m trying to show you how deprived we were. I took advantage of that.

TC: You became motivated.

DG: I was already motivated, even at Melina, because I read what I had and that was fine.

TC: You became motivated to continue after that, let’s say.
DG: That’s exactly right, and the difference it made, I got that report and I began to learn what it meant to (unintelligible). Shortly thereafter my uncle was transferred and I had the opportunity of going with him or going back home or staying there and finding a place to stay and getting a job and making my way. I chose to stay in Newberry but the motivation was the teachers there and the students, other students in the classes. Basically I saw how those people were learning and eager to learn and planning to go to college and I chose to stay in there Newberry (unintelligible). That was one of the best moves that I ever made. Had I not gone to Drayton Street, had I graduated from Melina, I would not have learned those things and I’m sure that my mother (unintelligible) but I got seriously hit by (unintelligible) but I think I would have been sort of delayed in learning as I did in Newberry.

TC: Now you mentioned that your motivation from the teachers, will you make a few more comments about that, about the teachers?

DG: Oh, yes. I’m sorry to have to say but you know, sometimes when you talk about (unintelligible) I think it was also true with teachers and individuals. Newberry as compared to Clarendon County, Newberry County (unintelligible) was far above Clarendon County. Now let’s remember that Clarendon County, the suit Brown vs. Board of Education was going on at that time in 1950.

TC: In what way would you say education was much above?

DG: Number one, we got to Newberry, even though we bought our books (unintelligible). Clarendon County I remember very distinctly that we got new books that had a stamp that indicated a white High School, a book that was sometimes too old to be read, and I remember that. Many of the teachers from Newberry had gone on and, you know, had national degrees and those kinds of things. And I remember after I left Melina and went to Newberry and finished high school and went to service, stayed in service for four years, came back to Morris College and finished Morris College, some of the teachers who taught me in high school at Melina, I’m sorry, at Morris College (unintelligible). So my point is, even then many of the counties had higher expectations of teachers and standards than Clarendon. Even today, even today you must have some kind of a master’s degree and all of that.

TC: Financial resources aided by the county and or by the state.

DG: Higher supplement and all of those things. I mean you pay them a higher supplement and give them increases and what have you, a hiring bonus, a county will give you five thousand dollars just to work in this county. So what do you expect (unintelligible).

TC: So this is January 8, 2007 and I saw an article just yesterday one of the counties is giving.

DG: Yeah, and to some degree that was going on back then. But the thing that was so devastating back then because not only did you not have good facilities in places like Clarendon County, the other thing we had going for us is we had teachers who might not have had master’s degree, or in many instances who might not have had a four-year
college but they had that desire and that in many instances will take you a lot further than a person who might not have a desire.

TC: I think I was probably would agree. I think one of the factors that contributed to some of the teachers who might not have had a four-year degree, they had attended at least two or three years of college at some point, and (unintelligible) black college, primarily those right here in South Carolina, Allen University.

DG: Many of the historically black church related colleges.

TC: Morris College and their focus was on preparing persons to teach.

DG: That is exactly right. Teach and preach.

TC: So they did a great job.

DG: One of the things you mentioned about the historically black institutions that ought to be mentioned at this time is that many of those schools, Morris College I suspect Allen, Voorhees, many of those schools started off not necessarily as a college, per se, but they started off as high schools and elementary schools, and then once those persons finished either elementary and high school, they would move right on into the college curriculum and they were really junior college, many of them, where they had two years of college. Many persons came out and taught very effectively with two years of college. However, there was a time here in South Carolina and in many other places where persons would finish high school and go and teach other high school students, teach high school and elementary school.

TC: I read where my school, Sims High School, had a curriculum for persons to go out and teach.

Track 2

TC: Do you have any additional; this is still Dr. Dill Gamble with whom I am talking, January 8, 2007. Do you have any additional comments with reference to the Rosenwald schools?

DG: Yes, sir, I should have mentioned this earlier when you talked about the curriculum and the length of time and the kinds of schools we were accustomed to at that time. When schools opened up at the beginning of the school year back then, the black schools sometimes didn’t open up until weeks later because it was just understood that the black students would not go to school until the cotton had been picked or the peas had been picked, those kinds of things.

TC: So the white schools would open around, I’ve seen this in my looking at newspaper articles.

DG: Late August.

TC: They would open in late August or first or middle September.

DG: Early September, whereas the black schools in some instances wouldn’t open until October or even had they opened, many students didn’t go because they didn’t have the crops. And back then teachers were allocated based on enrollment. So if you didn’t have
the students then the teacher didn’t have the job. So to make sure teachers had jobs sometimes the schools just didn’t open until those students were able to come to school. So it was not unusual for the black students and the black schools to be closed when the black students were in the field working and the white students were in school. And again, keep in mind now, funds were not based upon the number of students you had. It was based upon the number of students that attended schools.

**TC:** Excuse me, and they had to keep a record each day, not weekly.

**DG:** That’s exactly right.

**TC:** I think I’m correct.

**DG:** And if you were to talk with a lot of senior persons who worked back in the Rosenwald schools you would hear this term padding the record and that what that was doing was actually you would get a student to come to school if he could just come to school for an hour and go back home. And many students actually came to school for one or two hours and then they were counted. You’re looking at one right now.

**TC:** So you saw that?

**DG:** No, I did that where I would actually go to school.

**TC:** And then you’d go back home?

**DG:** And then we would stay in school for a while and to a great extent maybe half a day and then we would go back home and work. Well, that teacher got credit for my being at school that day, okay. So when people start talking about how good things were, the good ole days, you know.

**TC:** So I’m getting information from the Real McCoy, the horse’s mouth, we should say.

**DG:** Well, I think when you start talking about, you know, how great schools were and the good ole days and what have you, I think we need to look at the whole picture. And again, you know, and while we’re talking about the Rosenwald schools, again you need to understand it was not only the great discrepancy in the facilities but also it was a huge discrepancy in the paying of these teachers. And so what the Rosenwald companies and several other foundations was trying to do was to provide some sort of fund so that the local counties and states could use that fund and put what the states were giving, however small what the states were giving was. The unfortunate thing is as more and more of those funds came in from outside philanthropists, mostly from the north, in many instances the states cut back on the amount of money they were giving, meaning the amount of money almost remained constant, a greater flow from the outside, a reduced flow from the inside.

**TC:** Yes. I recall reading in the newspaper that to get the money from the Rosenwald fund, he required that schools go at least five months, which still wasn’t too much, but many stayed open for three months.

**DG:** And you know I’m glad you mentioned that because now we’re talking about schools staying open nine and even more, we’re talking now about schools being open
year round with off and on vacation. But you’re exactly right, see we being accustomed to schools being open for nine months or ninety-five or two hundred days, but you know this has not also been the case. Many of those schools, many students only went to school for maybe fifty days or sixty days or year because they stayed out and many of these schools didn’t open until work was done, four or five months, something like that. **TC:** I was talking to a lady that taught at a Rosenwald school in the county with reference to instruction for the students back when they had to stay out, as you say. I asked her what strategy did you use to meet the need for those students who stayed out of school, you know, when they should have been in school but they had to stay out and work on the farm and so forth. And she told me that she would give them assignments, especially I think she said like if the weather forecast, example, it’s going to be raining the next two or three days and knew that they were going to be out, she would give them assignments. **DG:** Let me mention something else that I had first hand experience with. You don’t find as much of what I’m about to say now as you did whenever I was in elementary school. But in the late ‘30s, 1938, ’39, I remember we lived in a house and this house was across the swamp and if we had a big rain you couldn’t get out. And many students if you had a big rain you just couldn’t get to school because the only way you could get out was with a boat. Even a wagon, the water was too deep for a wagon. **TC:** And those students had to walk long distances sometimes. **DG:** Many of them had to walk long distance and I remember whenever I was walking to school before I or some of my brothers got large enough to drive cars, we would ride our wagon. Our parents would permit us to ride one of the wagons. We had a two-horse wagon and we had another wagon. **TC:** To take you to school? **DG:** We would take my brothers and sisters and we would pick up other families in the community and my father would permit us to drive our mule one week and then another family in the community would drive the wagon. And so we would rotate driving wagons to school and I remember that very well. **TC:** I see. Many persons never heard of this. **DG:** Well, it happened down in Clarendon County. I suspect it happened other places. **TC:** I know but I’m saying persons living today have no idea that those kinds of things happened. **DG:** And you know we didn’t think of ourselves, as a matter of fact, we thought we were sort of living high on the hog because at least we had a wagon to drive to school. But the interesting thing about that how people can improvise and make do with what you have, I remember my father would get an old can and visualize one of these sixty gallon cans or thirty-nine gallon cans or something, and he would put sand in the front of that wagon, a can in front of the wagon, and he would put wood in it and he would punch holes on the side of that can so that it could breathe air. **TC:** Oh, and that was a heater?
DG: That served as a heater, seriously. And then as the wagon would move forward the heat would sort of come back over us and you’d sometimes have fifteen or more students on that wagon.

TC: That’s amazing.

DG: And this actually happened down in Clarendon County. And we would do it a week and then another family and then we went on like that until one of us got a driver’s license and then we would drive to school. But keep in mind not all families in the community where I’m talking about.

TC: Had access to that.

DG: Had cars.

TC: And didn’t have access to the wagon either.

DG: No, a lot of families didn’t have wagons. So when you’re talking about the number of times you’d go to school and why the kids were absent, all those things, most of them are (unintelligible). I remember when they brought electricity through our community and prior to that no one had electricity. We didn’t have electricity to have a freezer.

TC: Just think, a person was using lamps, back then I’m talking about.

DG: Lamps and lanterns.

TC: So the kids could barely see to read, even if they had books and so forth, you couldn’t see too well.

DG: This is exactly right. It was not just a handicap for one particular child because there was no electricity in the entire community. So it was in the community that I grew up in. Later on in life, the electricity was brought through that community in the early ‘40s, Black River Electric.

TC: Okay now, moving to another area of your life, you taught high school?

DG: Yes, sir, I taught. I began teaching high school history and I coached football and basketball and track. Of course, I went to the military before going to college and I went to college on a scholarship on the GI Bill.

TC: What college was that?

DG: I went to college at Morris College, which was liberal arts, church related Baptist school in Sumter, full scholarship. But I had a full scholarship to UCLA. I had a full scholarship to (unintelligible). I had an opportunity, a recommendation from my commanding officer, to go to UCLA and had a scholarship to (unintelligible). But (unintelligible) and I was just not interested. I got a scholarship and, of course, I played football.

TC: So how did your commander, you said your commander, right?

DG: Yes, sir.

TC: How did he become aware? He saw you in practice?

DG: Well, I played football, and this was important, I played football.
TC: Oh, the guys?
DG: Yes, I played football and, as a matter of fact, I was voted most valuable player. We went to the Liberty Bowl in (unintelligible) and we won the (unintelligible) Bowl. Three of us were chosen to go to the Rice Bowl in (unintelligible).
TC: So you went?
DG: Yes, sir. And I was pretty good at sports and back then it really, the officers, it was almost like Clemson and Carolina and Georgia Tech, because these sports in the military was a big thing back then.
TC: Now can you tell me something about what was it like teaching at, what was the high school?
DG: Lincoln High School.
TC: In Sumter?
DG: In Sumter.
TC: What kind of experiences, if you would like to make some comments with reference to teaching at Lincoln.
DG: Okay, keep in mind, Lincoln is not a Rosenwald. We are now into the modern age. Lincoln was one of the better schools for black children in the lower state in Sumter. Lincoln when I went there Lincoln had probably, let me see, at one time seventh through twelfth, eighth through twelfth, and ninth through twelfth, (unintelligible) the seventh and eighth grade students. But whenever I went there I went there as head of the eighth grade, seventh grade and eighth grade teachers. It was one of the better schools in the state, as I said, and keep in mind I went there in 1971. I got out of college in 1969 and my first teaching job was Kingstree, Williamsburg County at Lincoln.
TC: State supported?
DG: That was a state supported school. It was a brand new school. It was one of the Jimmy Burns schools. The Jimmy Burns schools were really schools that were built mostly for blacks with hidden purposes. Allegedly it was made to improve the quality of education available for black students. Hopefully, it prevented the Brown vs. Board of Education lawsuit that was going on at that time that had gone on earlier, before those schools were built. Of course, the record shows that Brown vs. Board of Education did prove that there was a discrepancy in the educational opportunities for blacks and whites. Lincoln was a very good school. Almost all of the teachers had master’s or were working on master’s. I’m not sure how many of them had master’s plus thirty hours and it was just rings around some of the other schools. It was recognized as you had some big schools in the state. Lincoln was one. Booker T. Washington was one. Sims High was one. (unintelligible) in North Augusta, (unintelligible), these were big high schools for blacks.
TC: Excuse me; you mentioned thirty hours above their master’s. Was that for some particular reason that a person could get thirty above?
DG: Well, you know, back then people were paid based upon their educational progression.

TC: So if you had thirty above a master’s, you got additional funds?

DG: You got additional funds. Now you also remember during this time they came up with the NTE, National Teachers Exam, and that allegedly that came out allegedly to improve the quality of the teachers and teaching for children in the state of South Carolina. Although what it actually did, those teachers took the NTE and they could either make an A or a B or a C or a D. Interesting enough, all of those teachers taught. What it did do, it paid a teacher with an A more than it gave a teacher with a B and teacher with a B got more money than a C and a teacher with a C got more money than a teacher with a D. But all of those teachers taught school. So it really didn’t improve teaching. What it did, it paid those teachers who were able to make A’s more money.

TC: So it saved some money for the state.

DG: It not only saved money for the state but when you go back and look at the record, because of the educational opportunities that were provided for the black children and white children at the secondary level, K-12, and also if you look at the colleges that those black students or teachers were going to go to. As a matter of fact, whenever I finished my bachelor’s degree at Morris College I wanted to enroll in a master’s program. There was not a school in the state of South Carolina that had a program, a master’s degree. The only school that offered a degree for blacks in South Carolina was South Carolina State College at that time, it was South Carolina State College. South Carolina State College did not have a master’s degree in history but you could get a master’s degree in education. But there were several schools in the state of South Carolina, state schools, where you could get a master’s degree.

TC: But they were white.

DG: They were white schools. So what the state did for me and my wife, they paid us to leave the state. We were given money, transportation, to go to whatever school we wanted to go to.

TC: Where did you go?

DG: We went to North Carolina Central. The state paid for our transportation up there and our transportation back home and paid the difference for what it would have cost us here, what we had to pay up there, out of state fees. And I got my master’s degree and, of course, the county that I was working for at that time was Sumter County, District 17, and they paid me a stipend to go and get my master’s and I still had money from my GI Bill because I finished college in three years. So in essence I went through my bachelor’s degree at Morris College a breeze, full scholarship and using my GI Bill. I did my master’s without almost having to pay.

TC: I’m aware of the state paying blacks to go out of the state for advanced degrees and you are probably aware of some of the northern schools that many of them attended.

DG: Oh, yes. One of the schools Indiana, a lot of them went to Lehigh University and I think many went to City College.
TC: In New York?
DG: Yes, in New York. What school did you go to?
TC: I went to Indiana University.
DG: Indiana University, many of my teachers at Morris College did their work at Indiana University. There were certain schools that were known for being very friendly to blacks.
TC: Indiana.
DG: Indiana was one.
TC: NYU, Columbia.
DG: Columbia University.
TC: I think those were I would say the big three.
DG: Those were the leading ones at the time. And this was in; I didn’t finish my master’s until 1966. I got out of college in 1960. Of course, I went during the summer to do my master’s. One fact of what we’re talking about, it wasn’t always easy to get a degree. For an example, if you wanted to get a degree in business or a degree in math or what have you, South Carolina State, and you might remember this, was the only state school that was available for black students to get a master’s. And, of course, that degree, I might be wrong but, whatever those degrees were, it was in education. But everyone didn’t want to go into elementary education. In my situation, I’m a history teacher and, of course, I went out of state.
TC: Now you have another area in which your educational career has been involved in that you were a superintendent?
DG: Yes, sir. After I did my master’s in history and I was teaching history at Lincoln, shortly after I got my master’s I was put into administration so then I had to come back to the University. At that time then in 1966, ’67, the University of South Carolina was permitting black students to enroll in the University. I enrolled at the University of South Carolina to get my principalship, administrative certification for principal and I moved on from being assistant to the principal at Lincoln. I got out of coaching football and basketball and track and went fulltime into administration. (Unintelligible) of assistant (unintelligible) assistant principal at Lincoln High School. In 1970 I was transferred from Lincoln High School to Edmonds High School as assistant principal. This was a lateral move for me. Edmonds High School was at that time the previously all white school and Lincoln High School was all black. I was the assistant principal at the old high school. I wasn’t principal at the all white school; I was assistant principal.

During that year I left the district, I’ll be honest with you, I was (unintelligible) and I went to the University (unintelligible) as (unintelligible) desegregation (unintelligible). During that semester the superintendent, his name I don’t remember, got the University to transfer me back to Columbia or Sumter, I’m sorry, and after two years the same job I
was coming in from that job (unintelligible) the assistant principal at what was the previously all white school, Edmonds High School. Then a couple of years later I became principal of Sumter High School (unintelligible) McLaurin campus. Sumter High School was divided up into three campuses. Hanesburg campus, the old white school, was turned into the eleventh and twelfth grades, had eighteen hundred students. I was the assistant principal after a while. Then I moved to what was McLaurin Jr. High School but it was turned into the ninth grade campus of Sumter High School with fortytwo, I’m sorry, nine hundred and forty-two ninth graders. The old Lincoln High School, which was the old black school, was turned into the tenth grade campus. So I became principal there. I served there a couple of years then in 1977 I left Sumter and went to the State Department as a supervisor. I stayed at the State Department for three years as a supervisor. I was promoted then to associate superintendent in ’85. I’m sorry, that was in ’80.

TC: In Sumter?

DG: The State Department.

TC: You were promoted to what?

DG: I was promoted to associate superintendent at the state level.

TC: I see.

DG: I went to the State Department in 1977 and ’77 till 1980 I served as the high school supervisor of schools across the state. In 1980 I was promoted to associate superintendent for the state and I kept that job for five years, meaning I stayed in the State Department for eight years. And then I left in 1985, which was after I got my doctorate in education administration and then I went to Allendale County as superintendent of schools. I served as superintendent of the schools in Allendale County from 1985 till 1995. I stayed there ten years. Built a new school, new office, (unintelligible), good tenure there. By that time I had served at the state for thirty-nine and a half years so I retired from the state and I stayed in Allendale from ’85 to ’95. I retired from the state in ’95 and then I went to Voorhees College as a professor of history and chairman of the (unintelligible) social sciences at Voorhees College. I stayed at Voorhees, retiring in 2003. I retired having served forty-seven years in state education.

TC: You have a tremendous background in terms of educational development, training, great experiences in educational administration through the years. Do you have final, any additional comments you’d like to make at this time?

DG: Well, personally I would say that education has been good to me. I had opportunities that very few people have. I coached football, basketball, track. I worked in public schools. I worked at the state as a supervisor. I was able to get a B.A., Master’s, having to pay very little. I was able to get my doctorate at a University, at a school that I was not able to go to early on. And you know, one of the things I’ve learned in life is that, you know, sometimes one or two doors that closed, if you were to look around there are several other doors that are open and sometimes those other doors that are open provide you with greater opportunity than the one you wanted to go through, in
the first place. And so if one has a positive attitude and not go through life saying what I
didn’t get and look at all of the opportunities I did have, I think life has been blessed far
more than (unintelligible). I just think that’s a (unintelligible).

TC: A thankful way, and thankfully blessed.

DG: Very much so.

TC: Alright and I’m sure that you will agree that an education that you got from your
teachers at the Rosenwald schools that you attended has been tremendous assistance.

DG: I must say that educationally we had nothing to compare it to so we thought we
were as prepared as anyone else. So we could no go away, I could not take the attitude at
that time of (unintelligible) I was in. One of the things I did take away from that, as little
education as most teachers had and as ill prepared as the school was, there was a lot of
pride and responsibility.

TC: And dedication.

DG: And dedication.

TC: And caring.

DG: And caring and those values have stuck with me throughout my life. And I found
that those values stuck with me in places where all the education in the world and all the
money in the world couldn’t have. So regardless of how bad things are. TC: Or seem
to have been.

DG: Seem to have been, there are certain values and certain things you can learn in a bad
situation.

TC: I often heard that I came from this, (unintelligible), and especially by the black
teachers, talking especially that they had to be twice as good.

DG: Oh, yeah, when I left Clarendon County I went to Drayton and this was an all black
school, leaving an all black school and going to an all black school. It was as different
and as much difference as day and night. I remember the situation where the teacher told
me to go to the library.

TC: Yeah, but I said that and my point is that statement being twice as good was a great
motivation. Well, I certainly have enjoyed interviewing you and listening to the
interesting things that you have talked about. It’s been a pleasure.

DG: I appreciate what you’re doing because to talk with a lot of not just students but to
talk with a lot of teachers (unintelligible) the average teacher anywhere, tell me about the
Rosenwald School, I suspect their response would be, what are you talking about. They
have no idea what Rosenwald schools were like or the Jeanes schools or the Sloan
Foundation, those types of things. But these are things that (unintelligible) blacks
(unintelligible). Because not having some of the (unintelligible) it caused us to
(unintelligible). I’m not sure that because of all of the things (unintelligible) if that is
teaching them (unintelligible). I remember the time, as a matter of fact, whenever I
finished high school we had no lunchroom. All the schools now have hot lunches. I
finished in 1953 and there was no (unintelligible).
TC: And you know then another person that we haven’t mentioned here but I’m sure you can appreciate the role that he played, this person was a black person down in Alabama, Booker T.


TC: Yeah, he was a person that motivated Julius Rosenwald to help improve the quality of education. I know there was a controversy about Booker T. Washington’s emphasis, especially on education.

DG: Oh, yes.

TC: And who was the other person?

DG: W. B. Dubois, his nemesis. Booker T. Washington made a very famous speech in Atlanta in 1895 where he talked about, I don’t remember the exact quote but he said that we could be as divided as *(unintelligible)*. And that was perceived by many of the white people and leaders as Booker T. Washington saying *(unintelligible)*. And as a result of that Booker T. Washington was able to get monies that *(unintelligible)*. That’s how he got the money to build Tuskegee. This speech was made in 1895 at the Atlanta Exposition. He recognized the socialization of blacks and whites in this country and he understood what blacks needed. So he was able to get funds and what have you and like you just said, he’s a perfect example of being able to get funds from Rosenwald. Rosenwald was not the only one from whom he was able to get monies. He got a lot of monies across the Deep South to help blacks and many of those funds were *(unintelligible)*. But he also, Booker Washington was a very *(unintelligible)*.

TC: Now many of the schools actually had this industrial education even in the elementary schools, that emphasis on industrial education and training, and especially the high school level and agriculture.

DG: One of the realities Booker Washington recognized in the 1890’s was that we didn’t have *(unintelligible)*. We didn’t have black lawyers. We didn’t have black doctors because they couldn’t even practice.

TC: Veterinary.

DG: Veterinary and what have you. And not that Booker Washington was *(unintelligible)* but he was a realist. You remember the concept he made to let down your *(unintelligible)* where you are. Take advantage of those opportunities. I’m not happy that you can’t get into a hospital or that you can’t become a local doctor. But if the local society and the laws and what have you prevent you from doing those things, take advantage of what *(unintelligible)*.

TC: And I think I have heard through the years, maybe elementary school through college, black colleges I’m talking about, I’ve heard teachers make reference to the kinds of things that you’re talking about, you know. I remember my principal saying oh, there was a statement. What was the saying?

DG: Whatever it is *(unintelligible)*, be the best that you can be.
TC: Right, and they often said those things to us. The last thing here is when I was in elementary school my fifth and sixth grade teacher was very motivational, an inspiration. On the board I remember a house had been drawn and birds were flying over that house. That’s how the picture was but there was a statement on the board, any job that is an honest job is an honorable job. That’s how it went. I don’t know where she got that statement but I’ve never forgotten it. Again, thank you very much.

DG: Thank you, Dr. Crosby, for your time and what you’re doing. Thanks for preserving it so that those persons, those of us that have gone on to great glory or wherever, that there will still be (unintelligible).

TC: And become knowledgeable. I appreciate it. Thanks again.

End of interview