In this oral history interview, James Floyd discusses his educational experiences, various coaches and players from South Carolina who had notable careers in collegiate and professional track and field, and football, attending Fleming Cain Elementary and Thomas Sanders High School in Laurens, South Carolina, graduating in 1953, attending Allen University (Columbia, South Carolina), graduating with a degree in biology, coaching at Thomas Sanders High school as an assistant coach, serving in the military, and returning to Thomas Sanders High in 1960 as Head Coach and Athletic Director. James T. Floyd, native of Laurens, South Carolina, and one of ten children was a businessman, coach, engineer, and former public school teacher. He was also the owner, president, and chief executive officer of F&M Development, Inc., James T. Floyd Construction, and Unlimited General Construction. He received his bachelor's degree from Allen University in 1957 and his master's degree from Tuskegee University in 1965. Tom Crosby interviewed James Floyd on May 30, 2007. Interview covers Floyd's education at the Fleming Cain School in the 1940s and at Thomas Sanders High School from 1949 to 1953.
Tom Crosby: I’m interviewing a graduate of Allen University and who now is one of the renovators of a historic buildings on campus, and your name sir?

James E. Floyd: My name is James E. Floyd.

TC: Okay and your hometown is?

JF: I’m from Laurens, South Carolina.

TC: Okay, do you know whether you attended a Rosenwald school or not?

JF: No, I didn’t. I attended all of the public schools in Laurens County, not in the Laurens city. I attended the elementary school out in a one-room, six, seven grades school out in the country.

TC: What was the name of that?

JF: That was Fleming King, Fleming King Elementary School.

TC: Was that the name of the community too?

JF: No, it was in the Watts Mill area but it wasn’t really a community. We were coming from, black kids were coming from all over to that school as far as they could walk.

TC: Did you say it was a one-room school?

JF: One-room school.

TC: And one teacher?
JF: One teacher.

TC: And you had the potbellied stove?

JF: Yeah, that’s right. I had the responsibility for putting some coal in it during the wintertime when it was chilly inside. That’s was one of the jobs I had.

TC: I see. How about did you walk to school?

JF: Yeah, we stayed almost two miles from school and there were kids who stayed further than that. I guess my family, there were ten of us and we were somewhat a little bit luckier than many of the kids because my dad did own a car. But he worked at the glass factory so what we had to do, we either had to leave at seven in the morning and get a ride to school or we would walk to school because we had a farm and he’d work on the farm and go to work at the glass factory, spend those eight hours, and then he would come back home and work on the farm again. So we walked to school and we walked back home, rushed back home, so we could get the work done to get to go to school the next day.

TC: I see. Now was lunch available at the school or you had to carry your own?

JF: No, no, no lunch was available. If you wanted lunch you had to carry your own. Most of the kids, like myself, were from farm homes and, you know, we had plenty biscuits and ham and those kinds of things because we raised it. We didn’t have to buy it. We had plenty of that kind of stuff.

TC: So what was the name of your elementary school again?

JF: Fleming King Elementary School.

TC: Now I asked you if you had attended a Rosenwald school and you said to your knowledge you had not. Now how about high school, do you know if it was a Rosenwald or not?

JF: I don’t think so. My high school was Thomas Sanders High School in Laurens and all of us, all ten of us, attended that high school.

TC: Do you know for whom that school was named?

JF: It was named after Mr. Thomas Sanders. He was a black gentleman who was the principal of that school for a while and the school was named after him.
TC: I see. Now I think your high school, Sanders High, actually was a Rosenwald school. I have a listing that you may not be aware of. In fact, I saw an article pertaining to Sanders High and Rosenwald is mentioned and also when the secondary schools were built, I think beginning in the early ‘20s, they often referred to them as training schools. So I think Sanders, no, Laurens County Training School. I think I’m correct but I'll look at that list again. Now at Sanders High, what are your thoughts or your comments about the school in general? You might think about the academics, the athletics, or things of that nature.

JF: Surprisingly you would expect a school like Sanders, which was the only black school in that district, there were two district.

TC: Laurens County?

JF: Well, there were two districts, District 55, which was Laurens city and county surrounding that area; and then District 56, which was Clinton, which had Bell Street High School. So there were two black high schools in the county but Sanders High was a large school, and you know, surprisingly you wouldn’t think it being a rural school, not necessarily rural school from the standpoint but from a small town you’d think the academics, you’d think the quality of the teachers would have been, you know, fairly poor. You would think the athletics there because the kids, like myself, you know, I stayed two miles from the elementary school but I stayed almost five miles from the high school. When they did put buses on for black kids in the early ‘50s, but the bus wouldn’t wait on you if you were a football player. You’d ride the bus to school but if you had to get home in the afternoon it was five miles and you had to walk. So we practiced football. I started to say about the academics.

TC: So you walked from football practice?

JF: Football practice home, yeah. Surprisingly though the academics, you wouldn’t believe the quality of teachers, simply I guess because then there wasn’t a whole lot of things that black people who went to college could get into, so you had some of your top black students from college that were teachers. My science teacher, for example, now the crutch in academics were that the classes were small and there wasn’t that many students, so you had a person teaching science, they probably taught general science, biology, chemistry, and physics if you had it. But again, we were lucky that we had a lady, Miss Rice, who had a B.S. and a Master’s and she was a registered nurse, and she had spent some time in the military. She was really an outstanding academic person. And by the same token, we had, and we’re talking about science there, and it was just unbelievable. We didn’t have supplies. Those of us who lived in the country we would go down to the creek and we’d catch some frogs and bring them to school for Miss Rice to show us how to dissect and whatnot. So a lot of things like supplies, things like that, we were short but we certainly weren’t short on a good quality teachers.
Now the same type situation, maybe not quite as high a level, was true for math. We had better than adequate math teachers. Again, some of the same teachers taught more, because of the number of students the same teacher may have taught Math I, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Trig, and I don’t think we had Calculus. I think those were the only levels of math that we had.

Social studies we had a good quality social studies teachers and we had good quality English teachers. Surprisingly, you would think a small school like that, a lot of people might not want to go but because of some of the history surrounding some of the people from Laurens and some of the teachers from Laurens, some of the people from Laurens County that had been academic scholars. For an example, the president of Allen University at that time, during part of that period, was President Higgins, who was from Laurens. So we had some people with some outstanding academic backgrounds from the city, so you had a good many good quality teachers. Even though the pay wasn’t that good, they wanted to be in Laurens.

**TC:** And the main focus of college education back in those days they prepared primarily teachers to teach so when they went out they knew what to do.

**JF:** Right. We just touched a little bit on athletics, in Laurens football was king. We had during my early days, you know, again we were some three miles from town, so to speak, from where the elementary school was. And again I was pretty fortunate in that a teacher that had taught me in my latter years, fifth, sixth, and seventh grade in elementary school, her son turned out to be my sophomore year and the rest of my college was my football coach. Joe Golphin was the coach here at Allen and his mom was my fifth, sixth, and seventh grade teacher. And one of the things because she liked athletics, then he wasn’t the coach at Allen then, but she liked athletics so what she would do she rode the bus. She would go up about seven or eight blocks from the school where the bus would stop and she’d get on the bus and come to they city, come to Laurens. So what she would do she would bring me with her and let me ride the bus and come down and that’s how I got introduced to football. I’d never seen a football game till I was I guess fifth or sixth grade and as a result of Miss Golphin bringing me down there I was able to go to some football games. Games were played during the day, they weren’t played at night.

**TC:** So the school had its own stadium or not?

**JF:** When you say stadium, we had a red hill that Sanders played on, football. You know, it wasn’t very grassy. It was mostly a red hill but the school did have its own field.

**TC:** Did they have lights?

**JF:** No, they didn’t have lights during that period. During those early periods while I was in elementary school coming to games down there, Sanders had a so-so, average
football team. But after I got out of elementary school and got in high school, they hired
a new young coach and they really began to have good football teams.

**TC:** Did Sanders High ever have a football stadium with lights?

**JF:** Yeah, I was fortunate enough to be there in high school. There was a pretty large
area right across the street from Sanders and my, I believe it was my senior year in high
school the county developed that prosperity area, sowed some grass out there and put
some lights out there for the school. Just let me say to that I got an opportunity to play
under those lights but then when I came back there and I know I’m skipping a little space
in here but I came back there as head coach and athletic director some years following
that and my dad was the head of the P.T.A. and we combined and initiated a program
where we got the county to put together a total new stadium, with new lights, lights
where you could see somebody down at the other end of the field. The other lights were
poor, the place was down in a ravine.

**TC:** Those lights were installed like in the early ‘50s or something like that?

**JF:** No, when the lights were installed first at Sanders when I played under the lights that
was in the early ‘50s, had to be ‘52.

**TC:** Did you get a new high school in the early ‘50s?

**JF:** Well, Sanders burned down just before I got there. Sanders burned down and all of
it, you know, they had a little bit of it that they saved but they rebuilt Sanders so I got the
opportunity to be a part of the new part and the old part. We didn’t have a gym when I
was in high school.

**TC:** I see. Did you have, what do they call it, auditorium and cafeteria?

**JF:** When I was in high school we didn’t even have an auditorium and cafeteria. When I
was in high school the biggest building we had was the shop. We played basketball, our
basketball team played outside. So you can tell that during inclement weather and during
the winter when it got cold we didn’t have no basketball games. But what did happen,
we played some, a few home games at Bell Street. Bell Street did have a gym down in
Clinton and that was six miles away and the coach was pretty friendly with the coach
over at Emma Maddox School over here in Ware Shoals and that was about ten miles
away. We played a few of our games there.

**TC:** I see, so your games were played outdoors. What year did you graduate from high
school?

**JF:** I graduated in May of ’53.
TC: May of ’53?

JF: Right.

TC: And then you came to?

JF: I came to Allen in August of ’53.

TC: I see. What was your major?

JF: I majored in health and physical education with a minor in biology and general science.

TC: I see. And after finishing Allen what was your first job?

JF: After I finished Allen I went back to Sanders as an assistant coach and I taught general science and I was assistant coach at Sanders for one year and then I got drafted into the military. And again, I was pretty lucky. I went into the military but I never really had to participate a lot in military type functions because as an athlete I played three sports. I played three sports at Allen. At Allen I played football. I earned a letter in football. I earned a letter in basketball and I earned a letter in baseball. So when I got into the military most of all my military time was in special services. I was on one team or the other and, in fact, I got to go to Japan and play in the Rice Bowl, which was an Army All Star type football game.

TC: We may go back a little to high school. Do you recall playing a school from Union?

JF: That’s correct, yeah. Almost everybody from upstate would remember Sims High School from Union.

TC: Why is that?

JF: And the reason why I remember them so distinctly, we played them my junior year and most of the time if you were a small school like Sanders and you wanted to play Sims, you had to play them at Sims because Sims had so many more people come and they paid you so much more money for coming over there. And so they, you know, the large schools they would go to them but the smaller schools, if you wanted to play them every year, you had to go to Union every year. But we played them my junior year and, of course, they beat us in Union. But we had I think it was a real, real close game. I don’t remember that exact score. But I do remember my senior year we played Sims and
the Lions Club, a predominately white club, well then it was all white, put on that game to benefit buying glasses. They did a lot of stuff with sight people and so that game.

**TC:** So that’s how that game came about?

**JF:** Right, that’s how that game came about and it was played in Fountain Inn. It was not played in Union or in Laurens. It was played in Fountain Inn. And the reason why I remember it so distinctly, when Sims came to that game having won multi games in many, many years, they hadn’t lost in something like six or seven years.

**TC:** Do you recall the year?

**JF:** That had to have been 1952. It was football season of ’52 because I finished in summer of ’53 I finished, so that was my senior year. It had to be football season of ’52.

**TC:** Is that the game in Fountain Inn that in the end you tied Sims?

**JF:** We tied them and I knew this Mr. Moorer well who was the coach and he wouldn’t let them eat after the game. I think the game turned out 7-7.

**TC:** He wouldn’t permit them to eat?

**JF:** He wouldn’t permit them to eat because we were a small school and they were expected, everybody had predicted—

**TC:** To run over you.

**JF:** Yeah, they had predicted them to beat us by, you know, thirty or forty points. But the fact was, what people didn’t understand was that we only had one loss and we had lost I believe something like 7-6 to Carver. We had an outstanding team ourselves.

**TC:** If I may interrupt you. You’ve heard about Sims long streak of winning football games.

**JF:** Right.

**TC:** Well, they started that streak in 1946. They lost the first two games in 1946 but until 1954 they did not lose any games. However, they had four ties. From my reading, Carver High School was one of those. It was 6-6. I forgot the year. And then you would be another one. Do you remember the score?

**JF:** I think it was 7-7. I’m not sure but I think, see for us it was a moral victory to tie.
TC: So there are two other schools that I haven’t found out who those other two schools were. And then leaving coaching at Sanders?

JF: Okay, after leaving coaching at Sanders I spent twenty-two months in the military and normally your tour of duty is twenty-four months. But my high school coach, Coach Isaac, was there, he was my high school coach and he was there coaching and I came back as an assistant coach and during the time I was in the military he was taking a job at Area Trade. So what my superintendent and principal did, they got me out of service early to come back to Sanders as a head coach and athletic director. So when I got out of the military in ’60, I came back to Sanders as the head coach and athletic director.

TC: I see. But then eventually though you coached at Sanders?

JF: Yeah, I came back to Sanders and I had some outstanding teams at Sanders. When I came back in ’60 we went 10-0, we didn’t lose. See what a lot of people don’t seem to understand about that era, the ’50s and ’60s in terms of black football, was that almost every school, and for your information I’m writing a book on that so you’ll get to read that in print, every school had at least one (unintelligible) in terms of an outstanding running back. See now you play a lot of these integrated schools and you may have one school in the Upstate or one school in Midlands that’s got a real outstanding back, but back then everybody, you played West Side, West Side always was going to have, and we didn’t run in any forty yard dash. We ran track and it was a hundred yard dash. And everybody just about had at least one guy who was a great back, was a ninety something, hundred yard dasher.

TC: Before we stop, we were talking about, or you rather, you were talking about high school, the quality of the high school football.

JF: Almost every school football was the predominant sport among the black high schools. And the reason for that, as I’ve indicated, we weren’t the only black high school that didn’t have a gym. There were some of the others that didn’t have gyms so basketball was not as popular as it is today. Football was the game among the black high schools.

TC: And would you say that baseball was second?

JF: Yeah, baseball was not as popular in the high schools and the reason it wasn’t as popular in high schools is because every little community had its own baseball team. You didn’t need to have it in high school because every one of the little communities had baseball teams. And the expense back then, see football made some money for the black high schools, but baseball was expensive. You had to have balls and bats and uniforms and we didn’t have any lights so you couldn’t play at night. If you had a baseball team
you had to play in the afternoon and it was nobody there that was going to pay any money.

TC: Excuse me. You were talking about each of the school’s football teams had a noted what, running back?

JF: An outstanding athlete, now it might have been, you always had one good, fast running back on every team. But also occasionally, more times than not, you would have one or two outstanding linemen or wide receivers. You didn’t have as many wide receivers back then because, outstanding wide receivers, because people didn’t throw the ball much.

TC: Excuse me. With reference to the outstanding running backs, that wasn’t deliberate or something accounting for that or just kind of coincidental?

JF: Well, it was coincidental but.

TC: An objective too.

JF: Yeah, the black schools had speed so coaches were smart enough to utilize the talents and almost every school had a fast back so they ran the ball.

TC: It’s interesting that you made the comment that black schools, what was it, that they were fast teams or something?

JF: Yeah, yeah, by and large and I’ll give you some examples. The reason why I’m giving you examples, I want you to read my book later on. Most of the high school football coaches were the track coach and we were not allowed to practice. Right now the schools can have spring practice and they have seven-on-seven type practices for high school but the high school league wouldn’t allow us to do that. So the only way that you could get your guys together would be to coach track and be sure everybody ran track. In my own personal case, I don’t care if you were a tackle or whatever you were, if you were going to play football for me you had to run track next spring.

TC: I see. Now you mentioned, you made reference to football league. What was the name of that league or was there a name?

JF: Yeah, it was, I’m not sure exactly. High school league and it was administered by a black, the principals hired the person that ran that office and they were pretty diligent in seeing that you complied with the rules in terms of students academically passing and in terms of students going to school and that type of thing. They were equally as diligent as the high school leagues are today in seeing that the students qualified who played.
TC: So do you know where the office was located or was there a particular office?

JF: Yeah, there was an office and it started out I think it was in Orangeburg but I think it ultimately relocated to Columbia and I can see the guy’s face that was in charge of that office. I knew him well but I can’t call his name.

TC: Was that office attached to a high school?

JF: No, he had an independent office and his boss was the High School Principals Association. Those were the people who hired him and those were the people who he basically reported to.

TC: I see. Do you have any idea where any of the records might be or may have been deposited?

JF: I tell you if you can find, I will try to think of any of the high school principals, who were principals then, who are still living and I’m not sure because Mr. Wakefield over in Anderson I was just told last week that he just passed about six weeks ago and I knew him well and he was one of the officers in the Principal’s Association that helped to supervise the high school league. You know, I’m just not sure.

TC: The last person, to your knowledge, who may have been the supervisor of the office or director of the office, whatever term is appropriate, was it in Columbia or you don’t know?

JF: Yeah, I think the office was in Columbia. It was either in Columbia or Orangeburg. I think the office was in Columbia and I’ll tell you one of the persons who was an official. (Telephone rings) One of the persons who was an official that was a highly rated black high school official was Mr. Brooks. He was one of the first persons down in this area to carry mail and he officiated just about all the playoffs and championship type games in football and basketball. He was associated with that office in some way. He’s from Columbia. His last name was Brooks. I’m not sure whether he is still alive or not but I do know that he was one of the popular officials and he was affiliated with the office because he was the top official. I think he also helped to assign officials when it came down to playoffs and whatnot because he was the top official in the area. I tell you, I will see if I can research and find out. See I knew all the principals. I knew the principal at Sterling, Washington, Beck, Bell Street, Newberry, which was (unintelligible), Anderson, I knew all the principals.

TC: Do you remember some important names?
JF: At Sims Mr. Moorer, you know he had stopped coaching football then. He and I were real good friends. In fact, the last time I talked to him he was teaching over in Spartanburg at Spartanburg Methodist.

TC: I see. Now any major interesting things that you can recall with reference to football, playing games and so forth during your time other than tying my Alma Mater?

JF: Yeah, there used to be a game here in Columbia. One of the things that was interesting in the black football arena, if you will, was the high school playoffs. Those were really and it was almost just like a religion. If you won, you got a chance to go to the playoffs, everybody in the county was there and it was just like a revival meeting.

TC: May I tell you something that I read in a paper? You remember the Palmetto Leader?

JF: Yeah.

TC: No, actually this was the Union Daily Times. Sims was playing some school in the state, black state fair, in the Lions Bowl. I’ve forgotten what school it was. And it said that school was going to be dismissed that day, the black school. This was playing Sims in the Lions Bowl in Fountain Inn, they gave us a day out of school. It was a day’s vacation. Well, the rationale that the county superintendent gave is that, I think he said all the bus drivers were football players and band members I believe, so there wouldn’t be any bus drivers to take the kids home because they would be in Columbia.

JF: Well, we had it at Fountain Inn and they said that was educational in that we were trying to help people who had sight problems and it was. So the playoffs were and I didn’t mention when I got back to Sanders in ’60 Mr. Isaac had just left. I had helped with those kids before I left, they were in the ninth grade. When I got back most of them were juniors and seniors and we had an outstanding team. We did go 10-0. We did beat Sims that year. Coach Jeffers was the center. Coach Jeffers was the center on that team in 1960 when we played them.

TC: So that was after the streak?


TC: So we’ll forgive you because that was after the streak.

JF: We played Barr Street [High School]. Barr Street had I don’t know, I’m sure you’ve read about Bennie Blocker that was a running back that was 6’ 5” and 245.

TC: Didn’t he go to the pros?
JF: He went to South Carolina State and think he played a little bit in the pros. He bounced around. Bennie had all the tools for an outstanding athlete but a lot of his problems weren’t, he was a good student academically, but in high school he was so much bigger and so much faster than the rest of the people, he didn’t have to do much you see. And when he came to us, well you know, I pride myself in being able to scout and know what kids’ good points were and bad points were and he didn’t like to be hit. And what we did whether he had the ball or whether he didn’t have it, we hit him, and the second half, shoot, man, he was just like a little kid.

TC: Do you know some football players who went on into the pros and maybe the high school that they attended?

JF: Yeah, I know J. C. Caroline from C. A. Johnson right here in Columbia, he was all, he went to the Big Ten.

TC: I believe he was the first to play in the Big Ten.

JF: And seems like to me it was Ohio State. I’m not sure if it was Ohio State but I think it was Ohio State. Other persons who, he was one of the earlier ones; now the most outstanding running back that I had ever seen anywhere was Rabbit Johnson and I don’t know what Rabbit’s real name was.

TC: What school?

JF: He was from Sterling High School and he went to North Carolina A&T. And I think his record probably, you might want to research that, his record probably still stands. He scored some crazy number of touchdowns for North Carolina A&T. I don’t recall whether because then the pros just really wanted everything to fit (unintelligible) good job of recruiting any blacks. The first group of black players that got some good pro notoriety, of course, Florida A&M got, they didn’t publicize it a lot but Florida A&M got a good many people going to the pros.

TC: You’re talking about high schools here in South Carolina?

JF: Yeah. There are two other persons.

TC: Sterling sent several.

JF: Yeah. The two other persons, one guy George Weston from West Side in Edisto, All American at Michigan State, All Pro for Houston, I believe it was Houston. In fact, he died last month, was only sixty-one years old. He was an outstanding linebacker. I
had a player that’s one of the few, I think he was the last Big Ten player from Greenville County, Ernest Hamilton.

**TC:** What high school?

**JF:** That was Beck High School. I stayed at Sanders and I went back to school, back to Tuskegee and got my Master’s in chemistry. And when I came back I didn’t come back to Sanders, I went to Beck in Greenville and Ernest Hamilton was one of my players and he was a good student in high school, outstanding athlete, and he went to Michigan State and they were publicizing him as the smallest middle guard in the nation. He was something like 6’1”, 6’2” and weighed about 210 and the first game, he sent me the stats on the first game that he played, couldn’t play as a freshman, sophomore, and he made sixteen unassisted tackles his first game against Purdue [University].

**TC:** Any from Sims High, do you know?

**JF:** See the problem Sims had is they didn’t have the one outstanding. All their ball players were good. Sims had a line that looked just like any, big as any college line and they all were good. You know, I was trying to think of any one particular one that when I was playing against them or my teams was playing against them.

**TC:** I’ll ask Jeff.

**JF:** Jeff would probably, he would probably be in a better position. I knew the guy from Barr Street because he was just such a freak of nature to be 6’5” and 245 and running less than (unintelligible) hundred yard dash.

**TC:** How about from Carver?

**JF:** Carver, again I knew a Bud, what was Bud’s, he was coach over there, Bud, we all called him Bud.

**TC:** Bud Campbell?

**JF:** Bud Campbell, I knew him well.

**TC:** Roy Henderson?

**JF:** Roy was an assistant. I knew Roy. Roy was an assistant. Again they were somewhat like Sims in that what they would have would be a conglomeration of good ball players. They may not ever have the one guy, because they were so good. You know, we knew, scout Sims, for example. I know you’re from Union and I don’t want to keep just dwelling on them but when you scout Sims way back in ’60 when I played...
them, when you scout Sims it was not like when I scouted Barr Street and they had the one big back that we were going to key on and blah, blah, blah. When you played Sims they probably had three or four guys that fast. So what you had to do you had to play all together a different type of defense when you played Sims than you played anybody else because they had so many people that could play.

**TC:** I see. I guess my high school was pretty good.

**JF:** Yeah, they were good. But, you know, Sanders with Isaac, followed by me, and followed by Johnson and some other people, we always had some pretty good coaching in terms of persons being able to sit down and analyze a game and say you’re going to beat me but you’re going to beat me doing this; you ain’t going to beat me doing your bread and butter thing. So that was how we were able to do a lot of things. We had some good teams.

**TC:** That’s one of the things that all of the extra teams did.

**JF:** Right. Let me tell you one of the other things that was interesting about that period, the way that the coaches combined themselves together to help our students go to school. You may play Sims and beat them but if you’ve got a good athlete on that team who’s got good decent grades and whatnot, Mr. Moorer or whoever the coach is over there would be the first one to call you and tell you that I’ve talked to somebody at South Carolina State or somebody at A&T so that that cadre of coaches and administrators really helped. You just don’t see anything like that today. The only way for these kids to get the good scholarships today is because a lot of the schools just don’t publicize it. They get their own stuff together and get on the Internet and things like that. But back then, and let me give you one prime example.

**TC:** So what you’re saying here is that they weren’t only interested in the sports aspects, they were also interested in the educational and going on to college?

**JF:** Right. Let me give you a good example. I just talked about the All American from Michigan State from Anderson. His coach was Coach Roberts, *(unintelligible)* Roberts. He’s still living. In fact, his son just got elected mayor of Anderson. Coach Roberts sent Webster to Michigan State, and when I played Coach Roberts’ team, see sometimes the black coaches didn’t have the connections with the Big Ten and those types. You know, I knew the coaches at A&T and Florida A&M and South Carolina State.

**TC:** So the players that went through the black colleges, they could have been admitted to white colleges too, if they’d just had the connections?

**JF:** Right, if they’d just had the connections. The only way I got Ernest to Michigan
State was that I knew Coach Roberts. I called Coach Roberts and said, look, I’ve got a kid, when he was in tenth grade, I said he is, you would not believe the kind of blocker he is and the speed he’s got. So he called Duffy Daugherty and Duffy Daugherty called me. Duffy Daugherty was the coach at Michigan State. Roberts was the coach at West Side. And to show you the kind of relationship, and you know, we played each other and battled each other, but when it come to helping these kids get to college, so he called the coach for me. I didn’t know Duffy Daugherty. Duffy Daugherty wouldn’t have answered my phone call.

TC: But Roberts did?

JF: But Roberts had Webster there as an All American at Michigan State so when he called, they called him back, then he had Duffy Daugherty to call me and he gave me his number, gave me authorization to call him collect at any time. And that’s the way that I was able to communicate with a Big Ten school in order to get Ernest. Had it not been for that, he would not have gotten the opportunity to go there.

TC: This was sometime in the ‘60s, right?

JF: Yeah, that was in the early ‘60s, in the late ‘60s, I’m sorry. That was in ’67 and Ernest went to Michigan State. In the early ‘60s we had some outstanding players and they went to A&T, had a boy went to A&T. D. C. McLaurin went to A&T.

TC: I see, now how about championships, doesn’t have to necessarily pertain to schools that you taught but kind of overall you might say?

JF: Well, let me knock on some wood because I was pretty lucky. We didn’t win the championship when I was playing but the year that I was there as an assistant coach we won the Upstate championship. We didn’t win the state championship.

TC: This is Sanders?

JF: This is Sanders when I was playing. And the next year when, I’m sorry, the first year that I was out there coaching as an assistant coach, we were Upstate champions. Then I got in service and the next year in ’58 they won the state championship in 2A in South Carolina, Sanders did.

TC: 2A?

JF: Yeah, 2A. And, of course, 3A was the largest black school.

TC: At that time?
**JF:** Yeah, at that time and 2A was the second largest. So when I came back there in ’60 we went 10-0 and we wound up having to play Booker Washington here in Columbia for the Upstate championship and they beat us 7-6 down here in Columbia.

**TC:** A much larger school?

**JF:** A much larger school and there’s a lot of politics then in where you played, just like it is now. See Booker Washington here in Columbia, they were going to fill that stadium up with people so we had to play and even though we were 10-0 and they were something like, they had lost one game, when they had the Dixon rating system. You play a first division team; a first division team seems to win more games than they lose and what not, so the Dixon rating system threw us in a tie. Ordinarily we would have been playing for the state championship, but since he Dixon rating system threw us in a tie with Washington, we had to play them.

**TC:** Now that rating system that was used only for blacks?

**JF:** I think it was a national system that the black schools adopted, when I say black schools, the black association adopted for solving, you know, conflicts with it come to the caliber teams. I don’t know whether anybody is still using that now or not. You know, you got so many points for being a First Division team.

**TC:** Now did you say that was a national rating system?

**JF:** I think that was a system that was national and I don’t know whether South Carolina, our association adopted it exclusively or whether they just adopted segments of it that would allow them to resolve, you know, ties and things like that.

**TC:** I see.

**JF:** That threw us in a tie and we had to play Booker Washington here in Columbia for playoffs. But the schools that were from the mid ’50s back, there wasn’t no question, the dominate school in the state of South Carolina was Sims. Then when you got up to about the ’60s forward, you had schools like Booker Washington, C.A. Johnson, and Sterling that were the dominant players. Sterling was the dominant in the Upper State. C.A. Johnson and Booker T. Washington being right here in Columbia were dominant in this area. And throughout the state generally those were the three schools that dominated.

**TC:** How about the Lower State?

*Track 2 begins*

**TC:** And you’re talking about what time period?
JF: We’re still talking about from the early ’60s, through the ‘60s, and early ’70s. Wilkerson I believe it was in Orangeburg, now it’s called Orangeburg-Wilkerson, but then the black school was Wilkerson High and it was, you know, in that area it was probably the most dominant school down there. But in terms of, you know, notoriety, let me tell you the kinds of things that were interesting.

TC: How about Burke?

JF: Burke had good athletes and, you know, they were kind of like Carver. Everybody knew Burke but they’d go to a lot of championships but they didn’t win too many championships. When I was here at Allen we learned a lot about the school.

TC: So you would kind of describe Carver and Burke?

JF: Yeah, Carver did win one but I can’t think which year it was but Carver did win one state championship. But I can’t think exactly which year that was. It had to have been between the ’60 and ’70 time period.

TC: You were talking about Wilkerson and you started to say one interesting thing.

JF: Yeah, well, there’s so much stuff I’m trying to tell you in a short period of time I may glaze over things.

TC: Let’s move to the other sports and various high schools that you may have played. Weren’t you good in basketball at one time?

JF: Yeah, I played basketball.

TC: You school I’m talking about, Sanders.

JF: Sanders later on, Sanders basketball was under my tutelage. The time that I was there we were a football school. We just played basketball to stay busy, plus we didn’t have a gym. But after I got back there, and I take a little bit of credit for putting Sanders on the map in basketball, because in 1960 that was the best basketball team. I coached football, basketball, and track and that was the best basketball team Sanders had ever had, but we had good players too. We had players, Richard Todd went to Elizabeth City I believe it was that year and he was 6’ 8” and we had two or three other players 6’ 4” or 6’ 5”. I’ll tell you another school that we need to mention because they were always good, that was Brewer. Brewer High School in Greenwood, football they were always good.

TC: I read that that was the first black high school to have lights, according to what I read.
JF: I didn’t know that but I do know and I was trying to think of the guy that played for South Carolina State and he was All Pro for the Minnesota Vikings and he played at Brewer. I almost called his name. Here’s the thing that was interesting about him. The fact that he was a wide receiver for State and a wide receiver for the Vikings, but in high school he averaged almost thirty points a game in basketball. He was an outstanding basketball player.

TC: Now another one wasn’t Schofield?

JF: I was just about to say when we started to talk about basketball, when you start to talk about black basketball in South Carolina it wasn’t but one dominant school. Booker Washington was always good but Schofield from Aiken and the reason why they were so good—

TC: Now what time period was this?

JF: You can just take any time period till integration. When I was in high school they were good. When I starting coaching they were good. I guess the biggest part of their fame and their state championship reign would go from the early ‘60s through the, I think the schools integrated in the late ‘60s or early ‘70s, so early ‘60s, all during the ‘60s they just dominated. And the reason why they were so good, they had a coach that was from New York, who ran, he taught during the school year and during the summer he ran some recreational programs in New York. And they gave the students from Aiken that wanted to go up there for the summer in that program, they got a chance to go to New York every summer and participate in that recreational program. So what happened, they played basketball all year. You know, they didn’t have a football team. I don’t think they even had football. If they had they didn’t beat anybody.

TC: So then he was able to recruit from New York City.

JF: Well, he didn’t recruit. This was high school. He took the kids from Aiken and he was from New York originally himself, and during the summer he took the kids from Aiken to New York and they played. So they learned a lot of the New York moves and everything else from kids that, you know, were there. So when they came back when school started in September, see for them it was mid-season, they were ready. And most of my players, for an example, they were playing football and they didn’t get to get in the gym. When I got back there in ’60 we had a gym. We didn’t have a gym when I was there in the early ’50s, but we had a gym in ’60 when I got back. So it took us midseason before we got really going strong but Schofield would always be good.

TC: And they were ready when school started.
JF: And what you’d have to do is try to get them later on in the year later on in the year, after Christmas, January or February. You didn’t want to play Schofield before Christmas because they were in mid-season form then and they always had two or three players that were just outstanding.

TC: How about some of the schools that were good in track?

JF: I would say that Sterling was always good in track. Beck got to be good in track. We had some outstanding students, Bryson, Coach Duffy coached basketball. Let me back up there about the basketball coach. Coach Duffy at Bryson two years in a row he took Bryson and then the black high schools had a national tournament seemed like to me one year it was in Memphis and one year it was in New Orleans or somewhere, and Bryson got a chance to go to that twice and they won state championship. See they had two kids, one 6’ 9” and one 6’ 8” and no other high school in this section had one.

TC: Were they 2A or 1A?

JF: They were 2A, well they were 2A. It didn’t make no difference what A, they beat everybody. They beat everybody and Coach Duffy was the coach at Bryson. During the early ’60s we had some good teams at Sanders. Let me tell you something else. Everybody gives Dean Smith credit for the four corners. But you want to know the first place I saw the four corners, Barnwell High School in Newberry.

TC: Really?

JF: Willie Scott, his son went to Carolina and played years for Kansas City or somebody. He was a tight end for South Carolina and played and he was the head coach at Norfolk. And I went down there with a team that was averaging better than eighty points a game and at the half I think it was 11-12, their favor. I’d never seen anything. He had plays designed to keep from shooting. And later on, that must have been in ’60 and ’61, and Dean Smith didn’t get credit for the four corners till mid ‘70s.

TC: I see. Now what was the name of that coach again?

JF: Willie Scott. In fact, he got drowned and the thing that was really depressing about that, I knew him well. One other thing, I used to officiate all of his Bell Street and Barnwell and Sanders, the three of us, Mr. Little was the head coach at Bell Street; Scott was at Barnwell and I was at Sanders. What we did we officiated each other’s. We’d have our games so I officiated all of Barnwell and Bell Street games when I wasn’t playing and just the reverse, they did the same thing for me. Scott was an outstanding coach.

TC: I’m sure you can mention a number of good coaches.
**JF:** But these just happen to be some that I knew, that I played against, and my team played against and I officiated their games. They had a girl down there named, I never will forget her name, her name was (unintelligible) Brown. The first time I’d ever seen a girl grab the rim in a gym.

**TC:** Really? I’m glad you mentioned that because we haven’t said much about the females.

**JF:** There was a girl at all Barnwell High School and I knew her name and I think everybody in the state new her name. Her name was (unintelligible) Brown and the first time I saw a girl shoot a jump shot.

**TC:** This was in the ‘50s?

**JF:** That was in the early ‘60s. I was at Sanders in Laurens when she was there at Barnwell. She was just outstanding. I think that year she averaged nearly fifty points a game.

**TC:** Really?

**JF:** Yeah.

**TC:** So Barnwell then, I assume that they most likely won some championships.

**JF:** Yeah, they won. But see, when everybody would do when they would play them, they’d put three people on her and it didn’t make any difference if she got the ball. The only way to keep her from scoring was to keep her from getting the ball.

**TC:** How about maybe one or two other high schools that were good with females?

**JF:** Carver always had a good girl’s team. Sterling had a good girl’s team. See some of these teams would play; when I was at Sanders see we were 2A and we weren’t playing in the same class, when I was at Sanders early on before I went in service. Mr. Isaac was the head coach and when I got back there in 1960 as the head coach then we were in the same class with Barr Street, with Sims, with Sterling, Carver. We were in the same class with them.

**TC:** You were?

**JF:** Yeah, when I got back they had reshuffled the classifications and we were in the class with those schools.
**TC:** What class were they in, 3A?

**JF:** That was 3A. That was the top class among black schools.

**TC:** Did we ever have 4A? I think we did.

**JF:** I don’t think we did. I don’t think we did before the consolidation. See I left, they accused me of having an inside track of learning that the schools were going to consolidate but I didn’t. I just got some money offered to me with a degree in chemistry and I didn’t have any choice to take the kind of money that I was offered to go in industry, but I left before the consolidation.

**TC:** Oh, they thought when you went to industry they thought you knew integration was coming?

**JF:** Yeah.

**TC:** Would you like to make some comments about the desegregation, integration?

**JF:** Yeah, there were I think from county to county it varied how receptive people were. I think our county, when I say our county I’m talking about Greenville County, did some things to minimize potential problems. For example, we had white teachers in my school at Beck.

**TC:** What year?

**JF:** That was in ’67, ’68. There were no white students there but we had three or four white teachers, so students could start to get the feel of integrated environment. The thing that’s worse now about schools and integration process as far as the black students are concerned is the thing like I started to tell you a moment ago about how these coaches cooperated. I’ll give you one other example. There were three high schools there in Greenville: Beck, Sterling, and Washington. And if I went on Thursday night, everybody played on Friday night, if I went into one of these little juke joints and Coach (sounds like: Huttmell) kids were in there, I ran them out of there. You got to get out of here. They respected me because they knew I was a coach. And if Coach (unintelligible) or anyone of the other coaches go in the place and their guys in there, they’d run them out of there and send them home if it was after hours. So you had that kind of cooperation that coaches provided for each other to help to kind of steer the kids in the right direction. Now you don’t have that.

**TC:** After hours like what?
JF: Well, I didn’t want my guys out on Thursday night after eleven o’clock. After eleven o’clock you’re supposed to be home. And Coach Mathis had the same kind of situation with those Sterling guys and Coach (unintelligible) had the same kind of situation for the guys.

TC: So on the weekend they were on their own and you probably suggested certain things to them.

JF: Yeah, even on the weekend if you saw them somewhere doing something that they shouldn’t be doing, they didn’t have to be my players and even sometimes if I figure I need you I’d call Coach Mathis. I’d say look, some of your boys are so-and-so-and-so. But we had very little problem during the schools integrating with drugs. I knew a couple of the coaches at the white schools when I was at Beck and drugs have always been at the white schools and simply because they had more money. The black kids didn’t have no money to buy them. They didn’t have no money to buy wine. That was about the biggest problem you’d have with the black students, the kids could get a little wine here and there but they didn’t have the money to buy drugs.

TC: One last area, we haven’t said much about, we made some reference to the principals but would you like to make any additional comments about the principals and their impact?

JF: Well the principals, by and large, were I’d say ninety percent of them were hand picks by white superintendents. Now they may or may not have good management skills and management backgrounds but they were “good guys” who the superintendent could depend on to keep the schools orderly and those kinds of things. A lot of times the people were not good academics, they were not good planners of curriculums and things like that. They were by and large good school managers. And that’s one area that suffered but you didn’t have the disorder that you had because these guys were generally former football coaches and people like that who the kids respected and who could dish out discipline. They could command respect and dish out discipline and the parents would go along with them. You didn’t have nothing like the kind of discipline problems then that you have now and part of that was because of the type of principals. These principals you could just name them. Almost none of them, a few of them had B.S. and Master’s. It didn’t make any difference if they didn’t have them, if they were good managers of people the superintendent still made them principals. I can’t think of any one of them that had a Ph.D. And again because they were—

TC: It wasn’t required.

JF: No, it wasn’t required and academically, see it didn’t pay you much more money to go through all that for what little bit of money you were going to get.
TC: But many of them had Master’s?

JF: Yeah, many of them had Master’s. In fact, what was surprising, when I was at Beck and that was in the late ‘60s, when most schools, when they were talking about school integration, school consolidation, every department head at my school at Beck had a Master’s, every single one of them. I was the head of the science department and in my group I had five or six teachers, half of them had Master’s. And just the opposite if you go right across the street at J. L. Land and that science department I knew because I was doing some research. I did some research at my school and the National Science Foundation gave me some money to go to the University of Minnesota and further that research. So I talked with all the science heads at all the schools and most of them at the white schools, I knew the lady at Manning, she didn’t have no Master’s.

TC: See this is something that many persons don’t know.

JF: No. They didn’t have Master’s but what has happened since the schools have consolidated, most of the white teachers now have gone to Furman, they’ve gone to Bob Jones, they’ve made a concerted effort because of the big difference when the schools consolidated, many more of the blacks had Master’s than whites. Now it has changed in that the whites have gone back to school and just about all of them have got Master’s now.

TC: And I would say that having Master’s and attending workshops for the black teachers, for example, even if they didn’t have Master’s, often times when they attended certain kinds of workshops, like here at Allen, that made them be the effective teachers that they were.

JF: And you see, the Master’s paid more money and that was why once the schools consolidated, you had a big rush of white teachers going back to school to get Master’s because if they didn’t the people that were going to be making more money out of the school system was going to be the black teachers.

TC: Also, I think I’m correct. I think the black teachers were quite active in the Palmetto Education Association.

JF: Right, they were.

TC: And principals and also I think those principals made a concerted effort to visit the black colleges and to recruit the best graduates that they could.

JF: That’s absolutely correct and the top students went to schools and taught. The top schools in my graduating class here at Allen, you can look at the top twenty students that graduated Allen, all of them had teaching jobs.
TC: Well, I guess to make a personal reference, I was sitting on campus my senior year and I think it was about two weeks, maybe almost three weeks, I saw Mr. Murrah coming on campus. I wondered why is he coming on. I’d never seen him here before. And he knew I was graduating so I had a job about three weeks before I graduated.

JF: Well, I guess I was pretty lucky in that having participated in three sports I was pretty marketable and plus I made the honor roll all the time. Didn’t find many football players coming out of Allen or any other school that, you know, were honor roll students. So I had the best of both worlds in that I had offers as a football coach when I got out of here. I had offers to go and work as football coach and teach, but I also had because I had done well academically, I had offers all over to go teach. And, of course, I elected to go back home. That’s where I wanted to go, back to Laurens.

TC: And now just think you graduated from this institution and you are what about ninety-eight, ninety-nine percent doing work on this historic building?

JF: I’m now an unlimited general contractor. Let me tell you there’s not but a very few black general contractors, unlimited general contractors. You’ve got general contractors.

TC: What does that mean?

JF: That means that there is no limit to the size job that I can take. I could do the Eifel Tower at five hundred million dollars if I had the financial backing or I could do a building over there that’s fifty thousand dollars. I don’t have a limit. Now the way the contracting business works, you have different classes and each one of your classes has limits to it. Class Five, which I am, is an unlimited general contractor. You’ve got class fours and class threes and class twos, and class ones that have limits, some of them two hundred and fifty thousand, some of them can bid a project of five hundred thousand and some can bid projects of seven hundred and fifty thousand. And then if you get over that you’ve got to have an unlimited general contractor. So I’d say ninety percent of the black contractors in South Carolina could not have bid (unintelligible) Hall because of it’s association with the Historic Society, which stated that all these things got to be kept basically like they were in 1922 and that’s what’s made this process so expensive.

TC: So to make it clear, you are referring to where we are sitting right now?

JF: That’s correct.

TC: And this building and you know the historical aspects of this building as far as the architecture?
**JF:** That was the funny thing about it. The architect came in and called himself drawing up the building.

**TC:** Excuse me. This building was designed and was built by the father of black architecture, name was Lankford, L-A-N-K-F-O-R-D.

**JF:** I didn’t know that.

**TC:** Yeah, I’ll show that to you.

**JF:** Okay. But what I was starting to say, the architect was talking about different aspects of this building but having been here for four years and I was the vice president of student council when I was here and had some responsibility for helping with security, making sure the building was locked and that kind of thing, so I knew every building and every knick and corner. So I knew a lot more about his building and he was trying to tell me about this. No, that’s not correct. Sure enough we’d go down there and I’d show him where areas. They found an area down in the basement that nobody knew was there under the steps. They had a block wall over it and they didn’t know. No, there’s some space over behind there. He said, no, no, that’s a dummy wall. I said no, that’s not a dummy wall. So we took a block out and looked over behind there and we had a space as wide as from here to that wall over there.

**TC:** That would be about how many feet?

**JF:** I’d say it would say it would be about ten or twelve foot wide by fifteen, twenty foot long.

**TC:** That much space that could have been used for something?

**JF:** Yeah, and it wasn’t. I think what it was, when the building was first designed they had the old coal bins so they’d build a wall up to it to keep it separated from the outside shoot where this stuff was put in that storage. And nobody ever over all these years once they stopped using coal and whatnot.

**TC:** And so there was an opening there once and that opening had been closed up?

**JF:** Yeah, that opening had been closed up I guess. When they stopped using coal they closed it up so critters and whatnot wouldn’t go in there. But I knew it was there because I was here and I knew if you go under the steps and look in that hole back in there and so I knew where it was. So we were able to add that space to that building over there. That was space that they hadn’t included. And those kinds of things, they happened all over the building.
TC: So you knew about that space when you were a student?

JF: Yeah, I knew about that space. Every building that I was in I could tell you about all the spaces and everything.

TC: So now one thing that stuck me is I attended here as well as you did, as you know, and I remember those steps, but I didn’t really remember the, what is it steel?

JF: Yeah.

TC: The basement up to the.

JF: And we had the architect, the Historical Society and the local code people came up with an agreement. We were supposed to remove all those steps to the tune of something like a hundred and thirty thousand dollars. And the agreement was that they would allow me to “redesign” the steps to bring them as close to what the code said each riser is supposed to be seven feet high, I’m sorry, seven inches high, and some of them did and some of them were nine inches high. That’s from one step up to the next. And so they allowed me the opportunity to redesign.

TC: I believe that’s on the first floor or the second floor.

JF: So what I did, I fixed all of them and what we did, we had new tread made and welded those treads onto existing and adjusted the space all the way up till we got I think in the whole building I only have one step that’s it’s about, it’s not quite eight inches. But all the rest meet the code. Got one that’s going from, I believe it’s going from the first floor up to the second floor there’s one step down there that we couldn’t do anything else with. All the rest we adjusted.

TC: I remember one had been worn so. It must be on the first floor. It had gotten slippery.

JF: Yeah, but the main point was that they saved that money and allowed, but we were required to put slate roof. We were going to put architectural shingles on it but they didn’t have architectural shingles back in 1922.

TC: So you used slate?

JF: That’s slate on that part of the building.

TC: The original roof?
JF: The original roof was slate they said back in 1922. That’s what they were putting on buildings.

TC: I see. Well, I have certainly enjoyed your time and the information you have given here, some I had heard but much I had not heard, especially with reference to the athletics, the high school throughout the state. If you don’t have any additional comments.

JF: The only additional comment I’d like to make is that our family was kind of a unique family but it was not totally unique. There were other families like ours. There were ten of us but we were sharecroppers up in the Laurens area. All ten of us are college graduates. I have one brother that has a Ph.D., one brother that has an M.D., one brother that is a doctorate in school administration, and all the rest have B.S. and Master’s. And my father finished the fifth grade. My mom finished the sixth grade. And there were other families like that where the families just dedicated their lives making sure that those kids went to school. I think that’s something that youngsters ought to know about that if you got the desire to succeed in education and when you succeed in education, most of the time your successful in other areas.

TC: That’s true. Now out of those ten, how many attended Allen?

JF: Nine, nine of us have got degrees from Allen.

TC: Okay, and one brother was my classmate.

JF: Had nine were Allen graduates.

TC: Well again I wish to thank you and good luck.

JF: Okay, thank you, enjoyed it.

End of interview