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Tom Crosby Oral History Collection
Ernest Jones Oral History Interview

Interviewee
Jones, Ernest, 1934-

Interviewer
Crosby, Tom, 1940-

Date
February 20, 2008

Location
Columbia, South Carolina

ID Number
CROS 019

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Scope and Background Note
In this oral history interview, Ernest Jones discusses his educational experiences growing up in Greenville County, South Carolina, attending Brutown Intermediate and Sterling High schools, playing football as well as Negro League baseball for the Greenville Black Spinners, attending Allen University on a full football scholarship and majoring in physical education with minors in science and history, moving to New York City, and working as a school security officer. Ernest Jones was born on October 8, 1934 in Greenville, South Carolina. Tom Crosby interviewed Ernest Jones on the campus of Allen University in Columbia, S.C., on February 20, 2008. Interview covers Jones' education at Brutown Intermediate School in the early 1940s, Sterling High School from 1950 to 1953 and at Allen University from 1953 onward.
Tom Crosby: Today is February 20, 2008 and I’m on the campus of Allen University and I’m with a graduate of Allen University. And your name, sir, is? Ernest Jones: Ernest Jones.

TC: And do you mind giving your date of birth at this time?

EJ: 10-08-34.

TC: 10-08-34. And you were originally from?

EJ: Greenville, South Carolina.

TC: Okay. Do you, most likely you do, recall the name of your elementary school?

EJ: Brutown High.

TC: Elementary, that was the name?

EJ: Brutown Intermediate.

TC: Okay.

EJ: At that time we didn’t have a junior high school. So we went from first to eighth grade and from there to eighth to the twelfth.

TC: I see. Brutown

EJ: Brutown, it was a section.

TC: Can you spell that?

EJ: B-R-U-T-O-W-N.

TC: And it went from what grade again?

EJ: From first to the eighth.

TC: First to the eighth, okay. Do you recall maybe one or two names of teachers that you had at the elementary level?

EJ: I had Professor Walker and Mr. Brown.

TC: Do you recall their first name or you don’t recall?

EJ: Professor Frank Walker. I don’t recall Mr. Brown’s name.

TC: The other person, okay. Now any games, do you recall any games that were played when you were in elementary school, most likely baseball?
EJ: Yeah, we played touch football and we played flag football and we played baseball. At that time we didn’t play basketball.

TC: Now this is in the city of Greenville?

EJ: No, it’s the suburbs.

TC: Suburbs?

EJ: Yeah.

TC: What’s the name of the community?

EJ: Brutown.

TC: Brutown.

EJ: That’s the name.

TC: Oh, and spell that again. B-R-O-U.

EJ: B-R-U-T-W-O-N.

TC: I see. Now and that went up to the eighth grade?

EJ: Eighth grade.

TC: Then after eighth grade?

EJ: I moved to Greenville and there I entered Sterling High School at the age of thirteen, fourteen. I stayed at Sterling until I graduated and, after leaving Sterling, I came to Allen University in 1953.

TC: Okay. I think you said to me earlier today that Sterling may have been known or was at one point as Sterling Colleague?

EJ: At some time long before I came there, Sterling was a junior college and they played schools like Voorhees, Denmark, and Morris College, schools like that.

TC: Excuse me. Junior college before you went to high school?

EJ: Yes, before I was there it was a junior college, Sterling. Then they made it into a high school. That’s when I was there.

TC: I see. And when you were a student at Carver-

EJ: Sterling.

TC: At Sterling, excuse me, what sports you played?

EJ: Football and basketball.

TC: Football and basketball, I see. Which was your favorite sport would you say?

EJ: Well, it’s hard to say. I was good in both sports. I was quarterback in football and I was a star basketball player and a most valuable player in basketball. It’s difficult to say because I was good in both sports and my scholarships and so forth, based on either one. Now before I finished Sterling I played baseball with the Greenville Black Spinners. At that time there was a black team and I would say sixteen or seventeen I was playing with players like Jesse Jackson’s father, who’s Henry Jackson. He was at centerfield and I was playing first base and
they were all grown adults and me as a teenager playing first base for them. So I always felt that I was good in sports. I kind of acted, I was cocky as a kid.

**TC:** So that was what you might call a one of the Negro leagues?

**EJ:** It was a Negro league. We played teams like Charlotte, Augusta, Gainesville, Florida, North Carolina, Greenville, Greenwood, Florence, Taylor, Columbia. These are teams that we played.

**TC:** Do you remember whether Union, South Carolina had one of the Negro leagues or not?

**EJ:** In baseball?

**TC:** In baseball.

**EJ:** Yes.

**TC:** They did?

**EJ:** Yes. We had some of the greatest ballplayers I guess that come out of Greenville. They never made it because of the situation at the time.

**TC:** Segregation?

**EJ:** Segregation and it was like a way of life. We didn’t know any better. We didn’t complain about it, we just went on about it.

**TC:** I was asking you, what was your age when you were playing in that Negro league?

**EJ:** Seventeen and eighteen.

**TC:** I see. So none of them actually went into the pros because of the segregation period?

**EJ:** No, not that I’m aware of. Some of them might have played semi pro ball on the Negro teams that were around Alabama and Virginia and North Carolina and all over. I lost track of them when I went away to college.

**TC:** Now you didn’t play baseball at Sterling, or did you?

**EJ:** No, Sterling did not have a baseball team at the time but I was playing baseball on the outside with the Greenville Black Spinners, which was a semi-pro team.

**TC:** Greenville Black Spinners?

**EJ:** Greenville Black Spinners.

**TC:** I see. Okay now you played football at Sterling High School. Now do you remember any particular or can you give me any particular achievement that you may have made in the area of football while a student at Sterling?

**EJ:** Well, I was a walk-on. How I came about playing football was I was playing one day in my neighborhood. We were playing on the asphalt, no dirt or no grass, and we played tackle. And my next door neighbor saw me running and he says, son, why don’t you go out for the high school team and I said, I don’t think they want me, they’re too professional. He says the way you’re playing on this asphalt and being hit, he says you could make anybody’s team. So I took his word for it. So I went out and I talked to Coach Matthews and he said, “You sure you want to play?” I said, “Yes, sir.” I went out there and, after doing the little exercises and going through
the preliminaries of getting in shape, he gave me that ball. And I started running the ball and I said, “Wow,” I had pads and protection and shoulder pads and knee pads and it’s just like they’re not even touching me. And that’s how I became a football player. And then they put me in too as a quarterback and at that time at Sterling we used to single (unintelligible). You didn’t have split T and tight T, the unbalanced line so as a quarterback I would spin and get the ball to the fullback or halfback but most of the time I would keep it and run. So the coach says well, since you want to run so much why don’t I just put you in as right halfback and put somebody else in as quarterback and let you run the ball. And that’s how I became a running back and quarterback at Sterling. I was good in both positions and at that time we played both ways. You didn’t play offense and then come out. You played offense and defense. So when I came to Allen-

TC: Before you leave high school, did you set any records at Sterling in football?

EJ: No, I can’t say that I did because there were some great athletes before me.

TC: Do you remember some of the great plays that occurred?

EJ: Yes, I can remember going back and passing the ball sixty and sixty-five yards to my target man, Billy Clemmons, which we called William Clemmons. He used to be end, tight end, and I did some good runs, run especially against Booker Washington and Lincoln and C.A. Johnson.

TC: Booker was in Columbia.

EJ: Booker was in Columbia and C.A. Johnson in Columbia. We played Booker Washington in Atlanta, Georgia at Morris College Stadium.

TC: Was that a bowl game?

EJ: Yeah, it was a bowl game, high school game. We beat them six nothing. We traveled to Florida and we played a team out of Florida called Carver High. We traveled all over, that high school team.

TC: Now there was a school in Union, South Carolina. What was the name of that school? I’m pretty sure you remember the name of that school.

EJ: I think that school is named Sims High.

TC: Sims football.

EJ: Yes, I remember them quite well. I won’t go into that too much because we lost to Sims. At that time ballplayers were really big for their size and age.

TC: Are you referring to Sterling had extremely large students?

EJ: No.

TC: Or Sims had?

EJ: Well, Sims had an extremely large football team and I thought they were like semi-professional.

TC: Really?

EJ: I really did.
TC: Wonder how that happened?

EJ: Well, because some of them played beyond their time, same as Sterling. I gotta go. I gotta go. At that time it was legal because you could go in the Army and come back and finish and get your high school diploma and still play sports during that time.

TC: Really? Actually I’m learning something that I did not know. Is this true?

EJ: This is true because one of the players named Rabbit that played with us and he was supposed to been the greatest athlete at Sterling. He went in service and he came back and finished his senior year and he played football.

TC: So it was actually legal?

EJ: It was legal during that time.

TC: Why you tell so many untruths about Sims if it was legal?

EJ: Well, you know, Sims and Sterling were rivals and we’d speak of Sims and it was a very touchy spot in conversation as a topic because I don’t know who won most games, Sims or Sterling, but as history-

TC: You know the answer.

EJ: I know the answer, Sims.

TC: Right.

EJ: Sims High, sure, because I read the newspaper.

TC: You may not know the record. They played ninety-six games without a loss and they had four ties. And they started in 1946 and I think, and it ended in 1954. That’s when the streak ended. I think in 1953 Sterling tied us. So they had four ties. It was 1953, one of those ties, and then the very next year another arch rival of yours or of Sims was Carver.

EJ: Carver High, Spartanburg.

TC: From Spartanburg and Carver beat them in 1954 and stopped the streak of ninetysix games without a loss. Now when you came to, or when you were playing rather at the high school level, Jesse Jackson was after you or before you or with you?

EJ: He was-

TC: After you?

EJ: He was after me. He was a freshman when I was a senior.

TC: I see.

EJ: And he always had a mouth. He could speak to teachers on their level and talk to them and sometimes he could pick the teachers. He could say what they were going to say before they could say it. He always said he was just too smart for his own good.

TC: Excuse me. You said he was (unintelligble)?

EJ: What I mean is that usually a high school student will just answer questions the teacher would ask. Jesse could talk to them on any subject and talk about them and he’d be exactly right.

TC: And not necessarily classroom?
EJ: Not classroom work, no. He was advanced and we always said that he was going to be too smart for his own good. And he always said that he was going to be famous one day. And we used to say, oh yeah, famous what?
TC: Really?
EJ: He always said that. He had a chip on his shoulder, if you want to call it that, but he was advanced and he knew what to do and knew what to say. What he’s saying today is nothing unusual to me.
TC: He was saying it way back when?
EJ: He was saying the same thing. He could just speak.
TC: Do you have any idea what accounts for his being so knowledgeable or advanced, you might say?
EJ: No, because we didn’t want to have anything to do with him. He was too smart for us. You know, he could just speak on things that we weren’t ready to talk about.
TC: Now you knew him when he was only in the ninth grade?
EJ: Yeah, eighth grade.
TC: Eighth or ninth grade?
EJ: Yeah.
TC: And you were a senior?
EJ: Senior, so we didn’t have too much to say. We just knew about him from what we heard from other people and see him talking to teachers when we no way in the world would talk to the teachers, you know, unless we were answering a question or telling them something. But he could just talk to them like he was on the same level.
TC: Do you know if he spent a lot of time in the library or not?
EJ: Me?
TC: Jesse.
EJ: I can’t say.
TC: Did he do a lot of reading or you just don’t know?
EJ: I can’t say because the only time I went to the library is when I had some assignments to do or looking for something and I didn’t pay any attention. First of all, if you weren’t a junior or senior, I had nothing to say to you really, you know. A lot of students that I went to school with will see me today and say you don’t know me. Well, I say if you didn’t play sports I didn’t know you because I didn’t have time to socialize. I just spent all my time on the basketball court or on the football field.
TC: Did you also work after school?
EJ: No, I didn’t have time. I didn’t have time. Playing all the sports, baseball, basketball, and football, you didn’t have time to work. And then you did your homework so you didn’t really have time. So that’s why I give credit to sports as an accolade. If you participate in sports you don’t have time to hang out on the corner, soda shop, or whatever to do anything that’s
unbecoming of an athlete. And at that time our coach named Joe Mathis was the reason I am what I am today is because he had a motto; athletes didn’t curse, drink or act out or fight. He says because you are good enough to play sports and that makes you superior over all the other people.

TC: So they had high expectations?
EJ: Of an athlete.
TC: Of the athletes?
EJ: Yes.
TC: And were great demands?
EJ: Oh, yeah, because you see, Sterling being one school and Greenville being such a large place and the county schools would bus in, if you made the football team, you lucky because he had choices of hundreds of other players that were turned away that went on to college and made first string in college and never had a chance to play at Sterling. But the coach didn’t have room for them because the school would only take so many players.

TC: So at that time Sterling was the only black high school in the county?
EJ: The only black high school.
TC: In the county?
EJ: In Greenville County.
TC: Because eventually there were like five or six.
EJ: There are six right now.
TC: Yeah.
EJ: Everything has changed now.
TC: But you were like Sims in Union. There was only one.
EJ: Yeah, only one.
TC: For blacks.
EJ: And see Booker and C.A. Johnson had two, C.A. Johnson and Booker. But at that time, you know, you only had one school and so he could pick and choose who he wanted to play.

TC: Do you remember, you mentioned one game that you lost to Sims. Was that your senior year or junior year?
EJ: That was my, I think that was my junior year. It might have been my senior year. I’m not sure. It was either my junior or senior because my last year I don’t think we played Sims. You know, we had a contract to play so many years and we played like Stephen. Lee. Did you play Stephen Lee?
TC: We did. Now you mentioned to me about a football league that existed back then.
EJ: Baseball league.
TC: Baseball league?
EJ: Yeah.
TC: The Piedmont?
EJ: No, that’s what I’m telling you. You’re going to look me up. I’m only mentioning that.
TC: But that’s baseball.
EJ: That’s football. The (piedmontaar.org), look it up and then you come in and see Sterling. And you hit on Sterling and then you go down the list and you’ll see me in the Hall of Fame.
TC: Sports, football?
EJ: Football.
TC: I see. Okay. Do you know whether that, of course, it doesn’t exist now; that league does not exist now. We don’t have any black high schools, all black, but the information is there, some information is there about that league?
EJ: Yeah, some information is there but a lot of things burnt when Sterling burnt down. I don’t know if you could get a lot of information now.
TC: So Sterling burned?
EJ: Burnt down.
TC: I don’t know if you know right now when it started but I can get that information.
TC: You mean when it burned?
EJ: Yeah.
TC: Yeah. I think that’s right but I was talking about when the school started.
EJ: Integration?
TC: No, no, when it was established. It was established way back.
EJ: I have no idea.
TC: I have that information. Okay, well now, anything else you want to say about Sterling High, in addition to athletics?
EJ: Well.
TC: I think you had a pretty good band at one time.
EJ: Oh, we had a terrific band.
TC: Even better than pretty good?
EJ: They were terrific.
TC: Blue and white, right?
EJ: Blue and white and the leader was Fred Jenkins. And it was outstanding wherever we went.
TC: Now would you like to say a few things about the majorettes?
EJ: Yes, we had some dynamite majorettes.
TC: Usually were they tall?
EJ: I would say about 5’ 4”.
TC: How about the complexion of them?
EJ: Light and dark skinned.
TC: Oh, you had both?
EJ: We had both. For some reason they wanted to get rid of and have all light skinned but that didn’t work.
TC: There was an attempt to do that?
EJ: Yeah, they attempted to do it, just all light skinned. That’s when my cousin who graduated from there, her name was Margie Jackson, she was still in high school. She had to be light skinned.
TC: Really?
EJ: Yeah.
TC: There was a deliberate attempt to, for them to be light skinned?
EJ: Well, you know, that’s just the way it was. That’s just the way it was back in the day.
TC: But do you think the teachers actually assisted in that effort of getting a light skinned person to be Miss Sterling?
EJ: I would say yes because how else would we know how to discriminate against our own people unless we saw favors towards light and black skinned kids in school?
TC: So how was Miss Sterling High selected or elected?
EJ: By the student body.
TC: They voted or?
EJ: They voted.
TC: I know at one high school, Sims, I heard that they, actually this was homecoming, they sold the most, they raised the most amount of money.
EJ: Yeah, well that too had a lot to do with it. It depends on your popularity. If you were popular and you had those chance books and you sold most, then most likely you would sell the seats. That too gave her an edge because she was well liked by everyone in the school.
TC: Chance books?
EJ: Yeah, chance books, correct.
TC: And so you’d buy, a chance would be for a dollar or something like that?
EJ: You would get five for a dollar. The book had five chances. One is twenty-five cents. You got five for a dollar.
TC: And some prize could be drawn?
EJ: You got fourth, third and second prize. There were runner-ups.

TC: Oh, but they were just chances to become Miss Sterling but you wouldn’t get a TV or a radio?

EJ: No, no, no, no TV.

TC: I understand now. Okay, now about any football players that may have gone on to the pros?

EJ: Well, I know one in particular but from my speaking to past athletes that came to Sterling, there were about six of them that went on to the pros. But I know one named J.D. Smith. He played with the 49ers.

TC: Excuse me. This was during your time?

EJ: Yes.

TC: And you graduated what year?

EJ: I graduated in ’53. He graduated in ’52 but he went on to play pro after leaving college from A&T.

TC: What school?

EJ: He went to A&T and then he went to play with the 49ers as fullback.

TC: I see. Okay, I’m aware of one person from that school. I asked you about things other than athletics and one of them was that of music. And we did mention the band. I’m aware of somebody that sang well and she sang with Billy Graham.

EJ: Billy Graham?

TC: Yes, she sang with him I guess in the ’50s, ’60s, she sang with his program.

EJ: No name?

TC: Ethel Waters.

EJ: Ethel Waters is from Greenville.

TC: Yeah.

EJ: Yeah, that’s her. She is from Greenville. She went to Sterling.

TC: Yeah, I think it was Ethel Waters.

EJ: That’s right.

TC: Yeah, she sang with Billy Graham.

EJ: Yeah, that’s right.

TC: Were you aware of that?

EJ: I’m just aware of it in the last six months that’s she’s from Greenville and went to Sterling. So I assume that she sang because she was before my time.

TC: Yeah.

EJ: I assume that she sang with Billy Graham because I know of no other person that’s famous and that was Ethel Waters.
TC: Yeah, I think I’m correct, Ethel Waters.

EJ: Yeah, that’s right.

TC: And there was a guy also who was good in music. He played with some noted band. I can’t remember his name.

EJ: You’re not talking about Harold Freeman? He played with the, they had several bands down here.

TC: I think he played with a national band.

EJ: They were national. Peabody, not Peabody, sang with him.

TC: Okay, but I (unintelligible) Ethel Waters. Okay, any persons that went on let’s say in movies and things like that? I’m not sure of anybody right now.

EJ: Well, Katherine Jones, who was James Brown’s personal nurse and she died in Jersey and he had a huge film for her. She was famous. I think she had a couple of movies but they were small, not (unintelligible) to speak of.

TC: So now we come to your college days. In fact, you were just seeing a lady at Allen University. So would you like to tell us, excuse me, we mention college days. We just come from a meeting and that’s why I mention this person. She was at Allen when you were here. So you came to Allen what year?

EJ: Fifty-three.

TC: Allen University in?

EJ: Fifty-three.

TC: Okay and I assume that you most likely got a scholarship to play football.

EJ: Yes, I got a scholarship.

TC: One fourth or one half or?

EJ: Full scholarship

TC: Full?

EJ: Full scholarship.

TC: You were that good?

EJ: Well, let me put it to you like this and being serious. At the time I was in high school each senior would get a college scholarship to some school, no matter where, maybe not to their choice. But they were offered a scholarship and the court would see to that, each senior. Now I came to Allen as a freshman and I made first string quarterback. That’s unusual.

TC: I would say it is.

EJ: That’s very unusual.

TC: From Sterling High School?
EJ: From Sterling High School to Allen University as a freshman quarterback. I started at Allen as a quarterback. Now my reason being that we were just advanced in high school as the college was. We had the same system so I didn’t have to learn anything, just move from one area to another. So the same split T, after playing under the same way going to the split T and (unintelligible) line, I would have the same thing. So I just moved into South Grady, make my mechanics and (unintelligible) much more sharper so I could see. So it wasn’t a whole lot of learning to make first string.

TC: So do you know some of the coaches as an Allen graduate?
EJ: My Coach Mathis.

TC: He was an Allen grad?
EJ: He was an Allen grad. He graduated in ‘40, I think it was ’46 from Allen and he’s the reason for me coming here.

TC: And he was a Sterling graduate or was he a Sterling graduate?
EJ: No, he wasn’t Sterling. I don’t know what school he came from but I know he graduated from Allen and he came to coach at Sterling and he was instrumental in me coming to Allen.

TC: So would you say there were some seniors around during football and you beat them out as a freshman?

TC: Excuse me?
EJ: Gilliam.

TC: You preceded?
EJ: I came after him and I’ve heard a lot about him.

TC: Was he here?
EJ: No, he graduated prior to me getting here. I heard a lot about him.

TC: Now what high school did he attend?
EJ: I think he went to Sims. He went to Sims.

TC: He went to Sims High?
EJ: So naturally it was a battle. We tried to destroy his image because he was playing the past and I’m the future.

TC: Are you saying that he was very good here?
EJ: He was good. I’ve had people say he was good and say I was good and compare us and this and that. But he, I don’t know but I talked to him and we’ve had a lot of chats. We’ve had a lot of talks about who was better than him and that’s where I would say I was good and he said he was good. But we were very good friends and I wanted to be like him, much more than he was.

TC: So do you think you achieved some of that?
EJ: I had to. See when I came here, like I said, I was advanced and used to being the starting quarterback. I was throwing sixty-five yard passes to a boy named Ben Whitman.
TC: A freshman?
EJ: Yes, sir.
TC: I didn’t know Sterling was that good.
EJ: I’m talking about Allen.
TC: But I didn’t know (unintelligible) preparation.
EJ: I was throwing sixty-five yard passes. They taped it. They took film, as a starter.
TC: Really?
EJ: As a starter and I was two weeks late coming here. But they took measurements and they took pictures showing me throwing these passes. I was great. Like everybody will tell you now, I was a great passer but they’d forget about I was a runner too. And they sort of think about me passing the ball.
TC: But you could also run?
EJ: Oh, I, see I would run the ball again. Again after my sophomore year they took me out of quarterback and put me in (unintelligible) because I was running the ball more than I let the backs run.
TC: Was there another guy here by the name of William Shelton? I think they called him Clinton Shelton.
EJ: That was my father.
TC: Really?
EJ: That was my play father. William Shelton was my play father.
TC: Really?
EJ: Yes, he was. He did so many things for me and I’ll never forget him and I know he’s from here.
TC: So he was here at the same time?
EJ: He graduated my sophomore year.
TC: Didn’t he play quarterback?
EJ: William Shelton was a center.
TC: Center?
EJ: And the kicker. He could kick and he centered. And he was a catcher for the baseball team.
TC: Oh, really?
EJ: Outstanding. William Shelton was an outstanding athlete from Sims.
TC: A Sims High graduate?
EJ: Yes, another Sims High graduate.
TC: Okay, now what was your major here at Allen?
EJ: Physical Ed.
TC: Physical Ed.
EJ: And minored in science.
TC: I see.
EJ: I graduated with a major and two minors. I minored in science and history. So when I left here and went to New York I didn’t have to go to grad school to start teaching because taking an extra minor in history brought me up-to-date with New York school teachers.
TC: Really? So did you ever teach?
EJ: No, I wanted to but I, I wish I had. I’d be sitting pretty with a pension, even though I’m getting a pension but the teachers make (unintelligible) money in New York.
TC: They do?
EJ: Yes, yes, yes. They retire with like sixty thousand dollar pensions.
TC: So what was your career in New York City?
EJ: Like I said, I was a (unintelligible) officer in the police department and I was a school security officer. I initiated school security in the board of ed at that time. The criteria for the school security officers you’d have to have two years of college or a college degree.
TC: Are you saying that you established those criteria? Is that what you’re saying?
EJ: Yeah.
TC: To be in that?
EJ: School security. I set the record for the guidelines in high school security. You need at least two years of college or a college degree because school is not an institution where you lock people up. You need to be on the same level in teaching them and helping them when they see them behave badly, commit a crime, or attempt to do something. You need to be smart enough to talk them out of it instead of just handcuffing them, kicking them out of school or suspending them. They can’t get an education in the streets. So you as a security officer should be able to counsel them and get their attention and make them want to study and get an education, not lock them up like they do now.
TC: So you’re saying that someone who had gone to college at least for two years and they should have learned certain kinds of knowledge?
EJ: Yeah, you should be knowledgeable of how to deal with people when they’re in an educational institution and not just use handcuffs and (unintelligible) to beat them up and kick them out of school or have them suspended. You have a role to play there too, as much as the teachers and the guidance counselors. And they can be much easier if you can head this off before they get into the school. I’ve seen it happen in New York City where the kids were well, well, when they’d see me coming they would hide because they said I was going to start preaching to them. You need to be in class. You don’t need to be out here.
TC: As a police officer, do you remember or can you recall or reveal any dangerous position that you may have encountered?

EJ: Yes, I know where you’re coming from but, you know, I used a different approach. No matter what the situation was, I was able to deal with it and disarm a kid, whether he had a knife or a gun, I would disarm him. And that’s not by physical force. By talking to him one-on-one and showing him what’s the purpose, what are you going to do, is it so bad that you’re going to ruin your life on one moment by shooting someone or cutting someone and the rest of your life you’re going to be sorry for it?

TC: Was there something in your educational growth, experiences that contributed to your being you think being able to what you just said?

EJ: Yes, I’ve had several chances in life. My road to where I am hasn’t always been smooth. There have been some shaky things that happened and I was given a second chance by someone taking time out to speak to me. For example, when I started playing football, my neighbor said you should be playing football instead of out here in the streets. I was like a hoodlum then and he said you should program the hostility into something positive, challenging and something positive.

TC: Your neighbor said that?

EJ: Yeah, my neighbor. And I said this is coming from him. He’s like my family so he really mean it. You see sometimes when parents say things it comes in one ear and out because they think you’re trying to put them in check. But when an outsider says this, you kind of say okay, this guy don’t care nothing about me but he’s telling me that I got talent, I can do this and what I should do, and you kind of heed to that and do it. And this kind of relates to-

TC: It kind of relates to it takes a village.

EJ: Yes and this is the same method and it might seem simple and common but it works. You don’t need a psychiatrist or a doctor with two Ph.D.s to calm a kid down, just some good old common sense. And it works if you can get the attention of the kid. But if you try to put him on the spot, try to show him up, I’m an adult and you are this and I’m going to do this to you, it doesn’t work.

TC: Right, now I’ve really enjoyed our conversation and discussion about your life. Do you have anything in particular you would like me to say that we may not have touched on that, maybe a teacher or schooling all the way from elementary thru high school, your parents or anything?

EJ: I could say some things that touched my life and may not be of interest to you or anyone else but it got me to where I am today. My mother didn’t have any education and she always said, before you react, count to ten, think about the situation before you react and think about the consequences. And as a married man and as a father, it’s not just you anymore. You’ve got a wife and kids and if you do something that’s not according to the law, you’re going to pay and they’re going to pay. And why should you make them pay something because you choose not to think about it or walk away? It’s not about who’s the best or who’s stronger or who’s smarter, it’s just who’s wise enough to accept and say, okay, you’re right and you talk about it again, we’ll deal with it later on. Why deal with it then when you’re angry, when you know you’re
going to make a mistake and something is going to happen that’s going to cause you to lose your
home, your wife, your kids and it’s not worth it in reality.

TC: Right. Now I’m sure you agree with me that we owe a lot to our teachers that we’ve had
in the past. How would you describe the teachers in general, all the way from elementary school
thru college or (unintelligible)?

EJ: Well, Coach Mathis at Sterling High School had the greatest influence on me. I can’t
think of anyone who touched my life like he did. And even at Allen, Coach Lawson.

TC: Coached football, right?

EJ: Yeah, football, and then of course, Coach (unintelligible) and Dr. (unintelligible) and Dr.
Swinton. They all touched my life.

TC: You mean Charlie Swinton or his wife Sylvia? The man?

EJ: The man. They all touched my life in things that I carry with me today that makes me feel
that I’m proud to be an Allen-ite. It’s not about prestige in the school and who you are. It’s about
what you can do for yourself and your community and the school. And there’s an old saying that
it’s not about how much I’ve done and the role is, it’s what can I still do for my community and
my fellowman and be of some help to someone somewhere, ever so small. It’s not about big
deeds you do. I’m not judged by that. I’m judged by who I am inside. I have to pay for
everything that I’ve done and I hope that I’ll be rewarded for good deeds and not all the negative
things. I’ve done things that I shouldn’t have done but that’s learning, it’s learning process and
you go from there. But I don’t carry hate. I love everyone, especially athletes. I see so much
good in them and if they’d just listen, if we had someone just to listen instead of talking about,
you know, I’m an all American hall of fame and I did this. It’s not about that. It’s about what
have you accomplished.

TC: Now with reference to teachers I’m sure you would agree that from elementary thru high
school that they, what words would you like to use to describe them?

EJ: Yeah, I would like to hit on that. When I was in school there was Miss Edwards or Mr.
Mims or Miss (unintelligible) or Miss Lawson or Mr. Yeargins, these were was my high school
teacher, they always stressed you are accountable for your actions and everything you do, no one
else.

TC: Or wherever you are.

EJ: Or whoever you are.

TC: Wherever you are.

EJ: Or wherever you are and that you must pay for whatever you do at all times and you are
judged at all times. And be aware of that even though you don’t see anybody looking at you, you
are constantly. And these things stayed with me. A lot of times when I get edgy I’d think about
some old motto and remarks they said and I’d say, oh, it makes sense.

TC: Caring, the teachers?

EJ: Without a doubt. One other thing, when I was in school we didn’t have special ed. That’s
what I don’t like about the system today. So many kids cop out by playing crazy, not smart, and
they get over. When I was in school you could act stupid, crazy but you still had to do your homework and to behave in class and not act out and not do stupid things in school. You had to behave just like the normal kids and you would get tapped. And then when you went home you got another tapping, so you behaved. Now today a kid can go to school and say if I don’t want to study or I don’t want to do my homework I’m going to act crazy today. The teacher will excuse him.

TC: Now, for example, did you have something else to add?

EJ: No, no.

TC: Most times you found them to, well, I’ll ask how did they, what were some of the strategies you might recall that they used to, the teachers used to meet the needs of the kids?

EJ: Such as?

TC: All of them were on the same level.

EJ: Yeah, they seemed to be on the same wavelength.

TC: The students?

EJ: You could go from one teacher to another and they’re saying the same thing so that meant a lot. I couldn’t get away with something and she would go to another one and you’d be firm with me; they were firm all the way thru. They were very consistent and so there was no leeway and that helped a lot too.

TC: And they were dedicated.

EJ: Most seriously, most definitely they were dedicated.

TC: And caring.

EJ: And caring because they would make home visits. If you went to school with crumbs on your face they weren’t afraid to put their hand and wipe the crumbs off your face, you know, like someone would be dirty or something like that,. They would wipe your face. They were very caring and concerned about how you were because you can’t learn if you’re hungry.

TC: And they had high expectations.

EJ: Expectations, yes, they did. But you see a kid can’t learn if he’s hungry and I’ll say this. If a kid wake up in the morning, now I’m talking about now, and his mom and dad are not getting along, that carries on to class. If a kid wake up in the morning and his clothes are not clean and smelling and he got to go to school and kids in his class are going to make fun of him, he can’t learn in that class because they’re going to make fun of him. If a kid wake up in the morning and he’s hungry, you can’t learn on an empty stomach. So these are the things that one, two, three that’s very important for a kid to get an education. And some of them prefer not to go to school because kids are going to laugh at him about the way they dress. If he’s hungry his stomach is growling or his mama and dad are fighting at each other, this stay with the kid so how can you learn when all this is in your head?

TC: Right.

EJ: So it has a lot to do with the home setting and it don’t have to be two parents, but just try to keep it consistent where the kid can be at peace with himself, you know.
TC: And the teacher is concerned over him.

EJ: Yes, but a teacher can only play so much. It’s the parent’s role to be involved too and they have to get involved and not just send the kid to school and expect the kid to become a genius.

TC: Well, Mr. Jones, I thoroughly enjoyed our discussion here this afternoon and I have learned things that I didn’t know what it was like. Some of the things I have heard about and didn’t know that some of them were actually true.

EJ: Well, let me say this and I say it in sincerity. I don’t people to have sympathy for me for the way I came up because I came from a different era and things were different. It’s just that when I speak on it I don’t lie about it. It actually happened. It was a way of life for me and I accepted it. And I don’t want to want to be compensated for it or given any leniency. I just want people to respect what I say and I don’t tell everybody. A lot of people don’t know what I just told you because I didn’t think they wanted to hear it and they’d say, well, it’s not true so why are you making it up. Why would I make something up at my age now? I’m seventy-three years old and I’m at peace with the world. I’m at peace with everybody and I have no enemies that I know of. And the same thing I tell you now, you can ask me ten years from now and if I’ve still got my memories, then I will tell you the same thing. And that was one of the things from teaching the kids. I said a lot of things to them that they didn’t like but I was consistent. They came back to me ten years later, they were police officers, doctors and lawyers, and they said, Mr. Jones, do you remember this. I say yeah. That’s the same thing you told me ten years ago so you must be telling the truth.

TC: Right.

EJ: So I never made up something just to please them, you know.

TC: Yeah, well, I’ve enjoyed talking with you because my high school and your high school, they were arch rivals.

EJ: Most definitely.

TC: And that rivalry it was good for us.

EJ: It was like medicine. We needed that. And it’s like a challenge in life. Life without a challenge is not worth living.

TC: Right.

EJ: You need to be challenged because you never know what’s in you until you’re challenged. And once you’re challenged you can bring out a lot of things. I didn’t know I had this. I didn’t know I could do this and boom there it is so you say wow. And that’s how I played sports because I didn’t know I could do these things until that man told me, Mr. Taylor.

TC: Right.

EJ: Boy, you’ve got it. My parents had told me that but I didn’t believe them. But when he said it was like a bullet hit me and I said this is for real and he was right. So this was good for me and I don’t know if it’s been helpful to you.
TC: Oh, it’s been most helpful.
EJ: But I enjoyed it.
TC: For me and for persons that, these tapes are going to be in the University of South Carolina archives in their libraries and persons can learn what was it like going to black schools in the past.

End of interview