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Tom Crosby Oral History Collection
Roy Henderson Oral History Interview

Interviewee
Henderson, Roy, 1926-

Interviewer
Crosby, Tom, 1940-

Date
July 17, 2009

Location
Spartanburg, South Carolina

ID Number
CROS 028

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Scope and Background Note
In this oral history interview, Roy Henderson discusses his educational experiences in Pennsylvania, joining the U.S. Navy, attending South Carolina State on a football scholarship, coaching at Lamar High School (Darlington County, South Carolina), St. Stephens Colored High School (Berkeley County, South Carolina), and Carver High School (Spartanburg County, South Carolina). Roy Henderson was born on January 2, 1926 in Washington, Pennsylvania. He is one of five children born to Ethel Henderson. Tom Crosby interviewed Roy Henderson at his residence in Spartanburg, South Carolina, on July 29, 2009. Interview covers Henderson's education at Washington High School (of Pennsylvania) in the early 1940s.
Tom Crosby Oral History Collection

Roy Henderson Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Roy Henderson
Interviewer: Tom Crosby

Tom Crosby: Today is July 17th [2009] and I’m in Spartanburg, South Carolina and I’m at the home of Coach Roy Henderson, and your date of birth, sir?

Roy Henderson: January 2, 1926.

TC: January 2, 1926, okay and you were born where?

RH: Washington, PA.

TC: How do you spell Washington?


TC: Okay, Washington.

RH: Like our father, you know, the president.

TC: Washington, Pennsylvania, okay. You had brothers and sisters?

RH: I had two sisters and two brothers, family of five.

TC: Okay, excuse me.

RH: Family of five.

TC: Family of five, what was the name of your parents?

RH: Ethel Henderson and my father died early before I knew him. My stepfather was Harry Baker.

TC: Harry Baker.

RH: He used to carry me around to the games and got me interested in sports.

TC: Did he?

RH: Uh-huh.

TC: I see.

RH: He’s the one started me off.

TC: Your step father? And his name again please?

RH: Harry Baker.
TC: Harry Baker, okay. Now you grew up in Pennsylvania. Was your school an integrated school?

RH: Yeah, our school was integrated. First we’d go to segregated elementary school.

TC: You did?

RH: And then we went to either, there were segregated classrooms, you know, in elementary school. Then we get to fifth to sixth grade I think we go into all integrated schools.

TC: Okay, excuse me. At the beginning did you say you went to an all black school?

RH: It was black rooms but white schools.

TC: So some of the kids were in rooms that were all black?

RH: That’s right.

TC: And some white kids were in rooms that were all white?

RH: Yeah, that’s right.

TC: In the same building?

RH: In the same building.

TC: Now that’s amazing.

RH: That’s amazing. Then we kind of integrated before we’d go to high school, in a grade or two before we’d go to high school, all go together. And then we go to high school it was integrated.

TC: Yeah, what was the name of the high school?


TC: Washington High School, I see. And by that time your stepfather had really gotten you interested in sports?

RH: Yeah, sports. I’d rather play football than eat. (Laughter) I’d have time, I’d go home and I’d grab a sandwich and run back out and play football. Mama, I’ve got to play football.

TC: Really, I see.

RH: So I always grew up with football.

TC: I see. Now the coaches were they all black or mixed?

RH: All white.

TC: All white?

RH: All white, coaches were all white, and very few blacks at the school when you compare it. It was all really just a sea of white.

TC: Really?

RH: It’s very seldom, you know, you might have two or three blacks on the team. Two or three blacks were on the whole big squad.
TC: I see. So how did you get along with the white kids?
RH: Alright, got along okay.
TC: Was there any name calling at any point?
RH: Not much, had no trouble because I guess departmentally you started going together before you go to high school. But, you know, early elementary all black rooms.
TC: Yeah.
RH: And a sea of white. That’s a funny thing you know.
TC: That’s interesting. That’s a funny thing. I don’t think many people have heard about that.
RH: No and all black rooms, you know, all black teachers in the rooms.
TC: In the same building?
RH: In the same building.
TC: Now the teachers.
RH: And I didn’t think about it as much as you.
TC: Because it was just part of what you were doing?
RH: Yeah, yeah.
TC: The teacher in the all black classroom was a black person or a white person?
RH: Black.
TC: Your teacher was black too?
RH: Yeah, a black teacher.
TC: I see. Okay, and this was about first, second, and third grade I guess?
RH: Yeah, first, second, third, and fourth grade and then when you get up in fifth and sixth grade, seventh grade.
TC: You integrated?
RH: Yeah, with whites, you know. They call it departmental or something, mixing together. I guess getting you ready for integration, you know.
TC: Yeah, that’s true. So I imagine you probably did well in football. You played football?
RH: I played football and I think it was B squad, member of the B squad. And I think I could play better but they’d play the white boys, you know.
TC: Say that again.
RH: They’d always stick the white boys in there.
TC: Say that again about white boys.
RH: I didn’t realize it, you know, until after I got really.
TC: Oh, you mean they favored the white boys?
RH: Yeah, I didn’t realize it more till I got grown and I wondered why the coach wouldn’t put me in, you know. I could play better than that boy and he’d be playing that boy. Sometimes the white boy would ask them to put me in.

TC: Really?

RH: One quarterback said, would you put Roy in so I can throw to him, you know.

TC: Really?

RH: And they’d put me in and I’d go in there for the play for three or four minutes and I’d turn the game around like we’d like to win it.

TC: This is really interesting.

RH: I couldn’t understand why he would hold me out and wouldn’t put me in, you know.

TC: So racism I guess we can say existed.

RH: Racism was being used and I didn’t know it. I said wonder why the coach don’t put me in. You know, I could play better than that boy. Then the white boy would know too; he’d know I could play better. He’d ask hey, coach, put Henderson in; let me throw to him.

TC: I see.

RH: And then I started playing and I met the guy, the white boy, I mean I talked to him on the phone a couple of years ago.

TC: Did you? Did you mention that?

RH: I said you’re the one that caused me to get in the game. You asked the coach to put me in. He said yeah, said them coaches were kind of funny. They always were kind of funny, you know.

TC: That’s what he said?

RH: Yeah, yeah. He wouldn’t say that they were prejudiced.

TC: He wouldn’t say that?

RH: No, he said they were kind of funny. I did? He had forgotten.

TC: Okay, where does he live? When you were talking to him where was he living?

RH: He’s in Washington, Pa.

TC: Really?

RH: He’s still there. Still there and he’d had a stroke.

TC: Yeah, well, you see, I don’t know exactly how to say this. He may still have some of his upbringing in him. I don’t know. I don’t know whether I should say that or not but you understand what I’m saying?

RH: Yeah.

TC: Yeah, it could be.

RH: Oh, yeah.
TC: Possibly but hopefully not. Okay so after high school, how many sports did you play should I say though first?

RH: I ran track. In high school I ran track and I played football, played junior varsity basketball, I played all sports.

TC: Baseball?

RH: I didn’t play baseball. Then we played that. I remember the coach, I felt like I should have been playing there, in basketball.

TC: Oh really?

RH: I remember one time he called me to go in and I pulled off my shirt, you know, we had shirt, and then he called me and never did put me in.

TC: Really?

RH: He called me and all the people sitting around watching the game, Roy, Roy, hollering my name, and I said well, I’m going in, you know. When he called you forward to take off your shirt, you know, and get ready, but he never called my name and played the whole game and the game was about over and before the game ended I got mad. I was mad because everybody watching and didn’t get in, I got up and walked on down to take my clothes off.

TC: Now wait, I thought that was up North. I thought that happened in the South.

RH: Well, North was (unintelligible).

TC: I was just kidding.

RH: But I walked on past the coach and everybody, walked on down to the dressing room, took off my clothes. Nobody said nothing to me.

TC: Really? Now after high school, oh, any, excuse me. When the schools were integrated you might say, after that above fifth, sixth grade you were talking about, did you see any, would you say that any major differences between the teaching in the integrated situation compared to when you had all black teachers?

RH: No.

TC: Do you think you were treated fairly among the white teachers?

RH: I think so. Well, I have no way of knowing but I think so. I guess I was.

TC: You don’t remember anything?

RH: No. Looking back I remember the girl used to talk to me, white girl, and then when I got in high school.

TC: She was a student like you?

RH: Yeah, she was a student, she’d talk to me and I saw her downtown one Saturday walking with her mother. I was getting ready to speak to her and she used to worry me to death.
TC: And she looked the other way?
RH: She turned the other way as I spoke. It burnt me up and I thought about it and thought about it.
TC: So you missed her?
RH: And so I got back in school Monday, she went back there, hey Roy. I said don’t say nothing to me.
TC: Really?
RH: Somebody asked me did you tell her why. I said don’t you bother me, don’t talk to me. I never explained. Her face turned red. She turned back around and I never explained why. I said, well, she knows why.
TC: So did you ever get into a conversation about her behavior?
RH: No, never.
TC: So you discontinued?
RH: Somebody said, Roy, you ought to told her why. I said, no.
TC: Did you discontinue talking to her?
RH: Discontinued talking to her.
TC: Completely?
RH: Completely.
TC: Would you speak?
RH: No, I wouldn’t talk to her at all.
TC: You wouldn’t even speak?
RH: Wouldn’t even speak to her. I don’t know what she was thinking. TC: About what grade were you?
RH: I must have been in the seventh, about seventh or eighth, eighth or ninth grade, eighth or ninth grade. And I never explained to her. I seen her I should have told her why.
TC: Have you seen her since high school?
RH: No, I haven’t seen her.
TC: Haven’t seen her since high school?
RH: Little black haired girl, I never seen her no more.
TC: Say what?
RH: A little black haired girl, I never see her no more.
TC: Black curly?
RH: Yeah, curly haired girl, black haired girl and I never said nothing about it.
TC: Now this was a white girl you’re talking about, right?
RH: Yeah, white girl.
TC: But she had black hair?
RH: Yeah, she had black hair.
TC: Curly hair?
RH: Yeah, that’s what I remember.
TC: Picking at you at one point.
RH: Yeah, she used to pat me and hit me and all and she’d play around, whole time I was there and then we got out of school and she wouldn’t speak to me.
TC: I see.
RH: And it just stunned me. It shocked me.
TC: But you see her parents had been talking to her along racial lines. Don’t get involved with, most likely, most likely.
RH: Yeah, probably.
TC: But at school, you know, but at school, you were just another person at school.
RH: That’s right. Now I didn’t know it.
TC: But that’s how it went on.
RH: As I got older I realized why.
TC: What was happening.
RH: Yeah. I said well I be dogged. I had somebody ask me said, Roy, did you ever tell the girl why. I said no. I explained to her why I wouldn’t talk to her no more.
TC: I see. So now after high school.
RH: I quit high school in eleventh grade.
TC: You did?
RH: I quit in the eleventh grade. I got a job cleaning out a hat store.
TC: Really?
RH: And then I got drafted in the Navy and I went in the Navy when I was in the eleventh grade and I went to service school. Every now and then we’d get a chance to go to service school and get credits and I’d go service school. Two years I stayed in the Navy I come out I about had enough credits to graduate from high school. I had to go to high school one class a day.
TC: For how long, a year?
RH: For the semester.
TC: One semester?
RH: Yeah.
TC: And you got your GED or high school diploma?
RH: High school diploma because they gave me credits for service, going to service school and so then I was able to take a scholarship to State College.
TC: Uh-huh, so you must have been pretty good in football.
RH: Well, I never got to play on the B squad because I quit. I made it to the varsity. The coach was waiting on me to come up there. He met me uptown. But I flunked history so I couldn’t play for my last year.
TC: In high school?
RH: Eleventh grade, couldn’t play, and so that’s when I went in service.
TC: I see.
RH: I said well, I never got to play high school varsity football. And then I went in the service and they had a team there, college from Oregon and different places. I went out for that. I made that. We practiced for two weeks.
TC: What position?
RH: Guard. Practiced for two weeks and then the guy cut the team out, the captain, because he saw blacks and whites playing together. He was from the South. And he said it was too many injuries. And that was at Barber’s Point.
TC: What state was this?
RH: This was Hawaii.
TC: Hawaii?
RH: The base was called Barber’s Point and I made the football team there, you know, and I was playing with college boys and everything. And I never played in high school but I’d always played football all my life, you know, coming up so I had it in me, had it in my blood. And the guy said, boy, you can play. I knew it. I didn’t know I could play that good and he said you made this team.
TC: So then you went on to South Carolina State?
RH: Got a football scholarship to South Carolina State.
TC: Really? So how did that happen?
RH: That’s because a guy was going, the guy was coming up here from Orangeburg and he was dating my sister. He was from Washington, Pa. and he played for State College and so he was dating my sister. He said I want you to go to State College, get a scholarship and I said okay. And so me and another guy went to State College, got a scholarship, got the G.I. Bill, had the G.I. Bill too so I didn’t have to use my scholarship and so he give the scholarship to another boy.
TC: But you used the G.I.?
RH: I was getting money for the G.I. Bill but I’d go to school under the G.I. Bill. But my scholarship, I didn’t need no scholarship. They give me money each semester.
TC: So you went out for the team at State?
RH: At State and made the team, made the team the first year, a freshman.
TC: Did you?
RH: Played and lettered my freshman year.
TC: Lettered?
RH: Lettered and then actually became, played there for four years, made the State College
team and went in the Hall of Fame.
TC: Really?
RH: Yeah, with our team.
TC: That’s amazing. I guess I can say it’s amazing that you had those experiences that you
talked about back in high school and in the Army playing football and then went on to college
and got all of those awards.
RH: That’s right.
TC: So you were good, but the man still wouldn’t put you in.
RH: Well, I was on a good team.
TC: I’m talking about high school.
RH: Huh?
TC: I’m talking about high school they wouldn’t put you in.
RH: Yeah, wasn’t good enough to make the B squad in high school but I could play in college,
you know.
TC: Yeah, you succeeded anyway.
RH: Played anyway because I loved football.
TC: Now was Mr. Moorer there at State when you were there?
RH: He wasn’t there then but he played for State.
TC: He was before you or after you?
RH: We went in the Hall of Fame together.
TC: But he was at State before or after you?
RH: He was there before me and what happened when I went in the Hall of Fame I sent his
criteria down there to the Hall of Fame, what all he done, and so they inducted us together.
TC: Really?
RH: Yeah, his wife and all was there to get his award.
TC: So you were, I guess you needed more than one person to recommend you. I guess.
RH: To the Hall of Fame?
TC: Yeah.

RH: Well, that team I was on played for the national championship, black championship, and the whole team went in. In other words, I went in with the team.

TC: When you were at South Carolina State?

RH: Yeah. It was like they said, that team goes into the Hall of Fame, that team, because they played for the national championship. Yeah, that was the first time we’d ever played for a national championship. In Washington, D.C. we played, at Rivers Stadium.

TC: Oh, really? I never heard of that game.

RH: Yeah, we played there. We played Shaw University for the Negro Mythical National Championship.

TC: Oh, really? You never hear about that.

RH: Shaw beat us 8-0 and that’s the year we played Allen, played Allen there. We said South Carolina State undefeated, unfortunately advertising the game to play in Washington, D.C., and we hadn’t played Allen yet. Said South Carolina State undefeated and going to play for the Mythical National Championship and we had yet to play Allen. And so when we played Allen we had a time. I think we beat Allen 8-6. Allen had us 60 until the game was near over.

TC: They used to be good.

RH: And what happened, we scored. We scored and beat them 8-6. The posters were all about State undefeated.

TC: But you hadn’t played Allen?

RH: Hadn’t played Allen and we had to play that day in that rain and cold.

TC: You’d beaten Benedict?

RH: Beat Benedict.

TC: I see. Now who were some of your coaches at that particular?

RH: Dawson.

TC: Dawson, I’ve heard of him.

RH: Oliver Dawson.

TC: That stadium down there.

RH: Yeah, the stadium was named after him, yeah.

TC: Do you know if he was from Union County or you don’t know?

RH: No, he was from Ohio.

TC: Ohio?

RH: Yeah.

TC: I see. And Dawson was the head coach?
RH: Yeah, he was head coach.
TC: I see, okay. Okay, now so you finished State and then you started coaching at the high school level?
RH: I start coaching at Lamar. I think they had no a football team and we started a football team with about fifteen players.
TC: Okay, Lamar, South Carolina and the name of that school was?
RH: Spaulding.
TC: Spaulding High.
RH: And it went from twelve to high school.
TC: You mean first to high school, first grade?
RH: Yeah, first grade to high school. And so I was coaching the girls basketball, boys basketball, and the football.
TC: No baseball?
RH: No baseball, no.
TC: So how did you get, you needed, what, twelve players, eleven, twelve?
RH: We had eleven players and four on the sidelines, including the trainer.
TC: So that was a relatively small school though to coach. That school only had about three or four hundred students.
RH: Yeah, we had about three or four hundred students.
TC: So somehow you enticed those boys to?
RH: That’s right. I got it together to buy me a football. When the footballs were ordered we wanted two because we was training and we wanted to show them how. (Laughter) And we played about four or five games, you know.
TC: So how did you get the equipment?
RH: We, I think each class would put on a drive, you know, they would raise money and bought the equipment and taught them what the equipment was and how you put it on.
TC: So who was the principal?
RH: Principal was called Elijah Davis.
TC: Elijah Davis.
RH: Elijah Davis was principal.
TC: I see. How many years you stayed there?
RH: One year.
TC: One year?
RH: One year and I went to St. Stephen, called St. Stephen Colored High School.
TC: So did the principal over there entice you to come and start a team?
RH: Oh, yeah, started a team there.

TC: He heard about you?

RH: He heard about me and so I started a team there. They found out in Lamar I was from Pennsylvania and the head of the bank, they found out he was from Pennsylvania too.

TC: White man or black man?

RH: So what they did.

TC: White man or black man?

RH: White man so one of the big trustees was coming and sitting on the (unintelligible) blocks chewing tobacco. Hey, boy, how’s Elijah doing? I said you talking about Mr. Davis?

(Laughter) See I was from the North.

TC: So what did he say?

RH: I said you talking about Mr. Davis? He’s doing fine. And I’d walk around and walk out the door. Look back at him, I could feel my head burning. He was looking at me, you know.

TC: Yeah, so you didn’t get a loan of course?

RH: No, he was the head trustee and the next time he asked me again.

TC: Trustee of the school board?

RH: Yeah, he said, hey, hey, boy, how’s Elijah doing? I said you talking about Mr. Davis? I said it again. I said you talking about Mr. Davis? He’s doing fine, and walk on back out. You know what? That guy got two trustees to go along with him. He fired me.

TC: Really?

RH: He fired me for being anti social.

TC: Isn’t that amazing?

RH: He fired me for being anti, and I kind of cried, you know. I’d helped them write the senior song and I coached girls basketball, boys basketball, everything and I cried, you know. And the superintendent come down to the bus station and he said this is a good place to be away from. He said we need some tenure law in the state and he said it’s a good place to get away from. And I was going to a summer camp. Then I went to summer camp, found out this job was opening in Spartanburg and then the guy said, you want to work in Spartanburg?

TC: Well, now, how about St. Stephen?

RH: That’s the first time I got St. Stephen. I went from Lamar and when I got fired I went to St. Stephens.

TC: And how long you were there, one year?

RH: One year.

TC: If it’s not to personal, why were you there for just one year?

RH: Well, I was there one year, I was getting along fine. The principal called me Coach, (unintelligible) Coach. He loved me. One day he went away, went to the low part of the state,
left his wife in charge at the library. She was the head of the library. And she came out with my
class one day. She used to like me too. And she come to my class one day and I had them
playing physical education. She said hush that fuss! We were playing a game, a relay game
where you shoot the basketball and you had to dribble back and give it to the next person. They
were making noise, you know. They’d be hurry, you know. You know how you’re playing
relay.

TC: Yeah. Now this is a black lady you’re talking about?

RH: Black lady and she come in there, hush that fuss, didn’t say nothing to me. I said go on and
play! (Laughter)

TC: You were a rough little young black.

RH: I said go on and play and she looked at me and stomped her feet and walked back in and
they kept on playing, you know. The kids don’t know what to do. They looked. The kids didn’t
know what to do. Finally they started playing and started the beat and went on playing.

TC: You were only about what, twenty-two, twenty-three years old?

RH: Oh, yeah, I was about let me see.

TC: Oh, yeah, you may have been a little older. You were about twenty-four.

RH: Let me see. I was about twenty-four then, yeah, see. I was twenty-six years old; I mean I
was born in ’26. That was in ’50. That was ’50 so I was about twenty-four, a young buck.

TC: A young rough buck from the North.

RH: Yeah, I had my way. I said she can’t come by my class and not talk to me and tell them to
stop and stomping her feet and telling the class to hush.

TC: In front of the kids.

RH: No, and boy, I got back and her husband called me. Me and him get along fine. What’s
this I hear about you and my wife? She told the class to be quiet. People think it’s recess all day
out there. And I said, yes sir, she told my class to be quiet I said but you know they’re playing a
game of low organization. I said they got to make noise in the relay. I said they weren’t just
hollering and screaming. I said, you know, they were playing a game. I said we had to stop
playing. He said if you have to quit making noise let them stop playing.

TC: Now look, maybe I shouldn’t ask you this question but when you said she liked you too, do
you mean, what do you mean, she liked you professionally or otherwise?

RH: No, I think she just liked me as a person.

TC: Professionally?

TC: Because I talked to her. Sometimes she said the teachers are all mad at her. I said it’s
because you are in charge and your husband is the principal. I said they’re not mad at you. It’s
the way you be on them.

TC: So she could relate to you?
RH: Yeah, she could relate to me. I said they don’t dislike you. You just think that. Oh, Roy. She talked to me. In other words, she got along with me up until that time. I guess she went in and told him what I did and he said if she tells you to stop, you stop. I said well, just quit playing basketball then, quit having. Well, you quit. And so I said I’m going to have to leave here.

TC: So you left?

RH: So what I did, I didn’t tell him I was going. I went out and started looking for a job first. You know, I signed my contract, went out looking for me a job. Got me a job, found it, at St. Stephens. No, Carver, Carver, so I interviewed for the job and had a gym and all. And they didn’t have a gym down there, had gym and all, had offices in the gym. I said oh boy, I would love this. So I went.

TC: Who was principal?

RH: Woodson.

TC: Woodson?

RH: C. C. Woodson, so I became their.

TC: Athletic director and coach.

RH: And I was at this camp, you know, a guy came out there, principal told me don’t play no more. Coach, we want you to come back, you know, said why don’t you come back? I said well, Mr. Wilson, I’ve signed a contract and I’m going to leave for advancement, you know. He said, well, what are we paying you? I said no, you’re not paying me nothing. I was coaching for nothing. He said I’ll give you a thousand dollars, that was a lot of money then, just for coaching. He said and I’ll let you talk to the superintendent on the phone to acknowledge that we’re giving it to you if you’ll come back. I said no, sir, I got to go. I said, you know, it’s not money. He said it’s not money, is it? I said no, sir. He said what is it? I couldn’t tell him it’s you and it’s the way you treated me. It’s your wife. It’s the way you treated me. I said it’s advancement, you know.

TC: Yeah, you knew what to say. So then you, were you head coach when you came?

RH: Assistant coach.

TC: Okay, who was head?

RH: Campbell, Allen Campbell.

TC: Okay, so how long were you at Carver?

RH: I was at Carver from 1952 to 1970 then we integrated the schools, Spartan High.

TC: Right. Okay, ’52 thru ’70, so you coached playing Sims High in Union for, well, until they closed.

RH: Yeah, until ’70 till they closed.

TC: Do you remember we placed a plaque in the lobby of Sims High School, that’s at least twelve years or fourteen years ago I guess. Anyway, I was the coordinator of that and we unveiled from a marble, granite.
RH: I think I read about that, yeah.
TC: No, you were actually there.
RH: I was there?
TC: Yeah and you spoke.
RH: Okay, okay, because they called me to speak one time when they was going to do that.
TC: I did that.
RH: Okay, okay.
TC: I'm the one.
RH: Okay, you're the one. You called me to speak. Yeah, I remember that, yeah.
TC: Yeah, you spoke there. And all of Prof Sims, you know, Prof Sims had seven daughters and I think about five at that time.
RH: Miss Mary Moorer is one of them, isn't it?
TC: Yeah, about five of those daughters were still living at that time but now only two are living, Mr. Moorer's, Mary, wife and her sister that lives up in Pennsylvania. He name is Lucius. So yeah, you spoke. Now do you remember any particular game? Well, I know you remember one game, unfortunately, unfortunately for us. You know what I mean by that when I say unfortunately for us. You remember one game I know.
RH: Oh, yeah, that was the game. Now what happened, Sims had won ninety-some straight.
TC: Ninety-three.
RH: But what happened, I think one year we tied them 6-6.
TC: That was in '53.
RH: Yeah, tied 6-6, that was my second year there. First year they beat me 19-0. I said well and then I got them plays in, right, like I wanted them and we were 6-6.
TC: You got plays better than Moorer?
RH: Huh?
TC: You got plays better than Moorer?
RH: Oh, yeah, I used State College plays. I changed our system, you know.
TC: So Moorer couldn't handle it.
RH: He couldn't do nothing and then we go up there, we broke that string in '54.
TC: Fifty-four, October 1st.
RH: Yeah. I said well, I was scrimmaging them a lot and lone of my linemen was making tackles. I started hollering and screaming, you know, and getting on them, and we were scrimmaging so hard he broke his leg and we had to carry him to the hospital. I told him, he said his leg was broke at the hip, you know. I said, he started crying, I said why you crying, does it hurt? He stopped crying because I won't get to play against Sims. (Laughter)
TC: You said that’s all you wanted.

RH: That’s all I wanted. I said you know what; we’re going to beat Sims and bring the football back to you. And, boy, I said I want to talk last, let me talk last. So before we go on the field I said Tommy is crying. I ask Tommy, are you crying because your leg hurts? He said no, I’m crying because I can’t play against Sims. I said you know I must have been crazy but I promised him the football. I promised him we would beat Sims and bring the football back to him. Them boys were fired up. I said when you make a tackle want you all to say Tommy Joe. And everything you do when you go in that game you holler Tommy Joe. We’re going to beat Sims. Boy, they were fired up.

TC: That was great motivation.

RH: And boy they went out and beat Sims and I said well.

TC: The game was played here, wasn’t it?

RH: At Sims.

TC: At Sims?

RH: At Sims.

TC: You mean you beat Moorer on his ground?

RH: On his ground and broke that string there. You know, the home team furnishes the football so I couldn’t bring the football back so I sent him a telegram that night.

TC: That we won?

RH: Yeah, sent him a telegram that we beat Sims, 19-12, and we bet them for you, Tommy Joe. We beat Sims and boy, he was so happy. I said I can’t bring the football back because the football belongs to Sims. (Laughter) You’re talking about a sad Gilliam. I remember seeing Gilliam and he said well, if anybody had to beat me I’m glad it’s Carver, said I used to go to Carver. I said to myself that’s the biggest lie you ever told. (Laughter) I said that to him years later. I said Lowell, you remember you told me you said you’re glad Carver beat you because you went to Carver. I said that’s the biggest lie. I said to myself that’s the biggest lie you ever told. He started laughing. He said you’re right, you’re right, said I didn’t want Carver to beat me.

TC: I read what you’re telling me now I read it in the newspaper, the story that you’re telling me. Yeah, I don’t think he’s doing too well now. You know he lives over in Lancaster, Gilliam.

RH: Gilliam, how’s he doing now?

TC: I got a call but I heard about two or three weeks ago, maybe a little longer that he wasn’t doing too well. Now you know William Shelton, he passed?

RH: Yeah, Bill, yeah, I knew Bill.

TC: Yeah. So any other incident or comment you would like to make about, you know, playing Sims through the years and Moorer?

RH: Well, I know that the first, my first year over there to play Sims football that I’d never seen, you know, I’d never seen the team. I’d ask I said how is this team going to be as I’d go
around. They said well, you’re going to play Sims, said they’re tough, rough and said they have some big guys, you know. And so when I went over to Union County to see them I didn’t know what I was going to see and, boy, the band was playing and they came off and those big guys run up that hill you know, I said good Lord, they were big and that gold and purple.

**TC:** Pretty.

**RH:** And they were throwing them capes down there as they come down. Each one would throw a cape down there. I said man, they look like a college team and we played that game there, we played our hearts out, 19-0. I’ll never forget it.

**TC:** They beat you 19-0?

**RH:** Exactly and they had a guy name, Jeter. Was it Bolin Jeter, Bolin Jeter or something.

**TC:** I don’t know, the Jeter boys.

**RH:** And they could run. He could run, boy. You’d hit him he had such balance you couldn’t bring him off his feet. He’d be out of balance dancing on one leg. I said boy, that boy can run.

**TC:** Yeah, well, everybody likes those colors. They said those colors really stood out, purple and gold.

**RH:** Oh, they did. I loved the way they looked, purple and gold.

**TC:** You were maroon and gray I believe.

**RH:** Yeah, and they had purple and gold. I said love the colors.

**TC:** Let me ask you about something else. Now I’ve heard a rumor. You’re talking about those guys were big. Is that rumor about Sims High true or is it true for all of them?

**RH:** *(Laughter)* **TC:** Why do you laugh?

**RH:** Well.

**TC:** Tell the truth now.

**RH:** I never like to down a coach. He’s dead and I’ll just leave his record there. I ain’t going to say.

**TC:** So you won’t get into the rumor?

**RH:** I won’t get into it but there’s a whole lot I know.

**TC:** But they say everybody did it.

**RH:** No, we didn’t do it at Carver. If a guy got too old, he couldn’t play. I know there was a guy that got married and went down and found out, Mr. Woodson found out he was married and he was seventeen years old. He came down, all the games we’d played, he said we forfeit the game to them. We give you the game back and you can take it and most of them took the game, you know, we won the game, and some teams wouldn’t take it. They said you beat me on the field, I won’t take it back. But that hurt me, boy. We lost some games just because the guy was seventeen but he was married.
TC: Now did you play Stephens-Lee [High School]?

RH: Yeah, we played Stephen-Lee. Now you know we won the state championship. We won the state championship in ’58 and ’59. I think we played Stephen Lee. Stephen Lee wouldn’t play us when we had that good team. In ’58 and ’59 we had championship teams. They waited till ’60 and then a guy named, I forget his name.

TC: Let me ask you about and then we’re about finished here. I understand that all schools have noted teachers for various kinds of reasons, you know. You know the book that Brenda Lee wrote?

RH: Yeah.

TC: I read in there about the big four. Do you remember who the big four were?

RH: Miss Carter, Miss Powell, Miss Watson, and I believe Miss Summers. I believe Miss Summers.

TC: I don’t remember right now myself but anyway they were some noted teachers.

RH: Yeah, I taught with them.

TC: I see. Well, Sims had some noted ones too. You know how it goes.

RH: Yeah.

TC: But did you ever hear Powell say to those students, “You may January, you may February?”

RH: I heard students say it. Like the basketball team would be riding somewhere, the girls. In fact, I’d be going with them. Say we’re driving somewhere, driving them to a championship game and they’d say yeah, Miss Powell said you can January, you may so-and-so, but you won’t March. Used to tell stories about her, yeah, I’d hear those stories. TC: I thought that was funny. Yeah, those schools all did a great job. They did some great graduates as you know and they shouldn’t be forgotten.

RH: No. I remember we had the state championship in ’58, ’59, and played for it in ’62. We lost to Wilkerson. We played again for it my last year, one of my last years coaching, ’67, ’68. We won it and played Burke in Charleston, 19-12.

TC: You’re talking about the state championship?

RH: Yeah, state championship.

TC: Now the last year you played Sims High, do you remember who won the game? Were you still playing Sims in ’69?

RH: Yeah, we played them up until we.

TC: Integration.

RH: Yeah.

TC: So do you remember who won in ’69 between Carver and Sims or you don’t remember?

RH: We won.
TC: You did?
RH: Yeah, we won. Yeah, we beat them.
TC: By one point? I’m just kidding.
RH: I think, I wasn’t coaching then but we won.
TC: Okay, well, you have told me some things that I read so now I know they’re true, unless you’re like Gilliam now. I don’t think you’re like Gilliam. But I read some things that you have told me today and I really enjoyed the interview. I’ve learned a lot.
RH: Well, I’ve enjoyed the interview with you too. I guess they were some of the happiest days, you know, playing Sims and playing them teams. Them boys really fought hard. Sims was one of our greatest rivals. We’d always fight them like, you know.
TC: Oh, I remember that.
RH: We’d battle them.
TC: Moorer would get us up for that game.
RH: Oh, yeah, you wouldn’t have to say nothing. Them boys would be dressed and ready.
TC: All week long he was talking to those boys, you know, football boys, talking to them about they’re going to tear you up and all that kind of stuff. And I remember Jesse Jackson, I think I was in the ninth, eighth or ninth grade and Moorer walking around the school, Jackson’s going to get you tonight. He’ll shut your mouth up, all that kind of stuff.
RH: Yeah, Jesse played quarterback, was a good quarterback.
TC: Oh, yeah, and both schools had some good bands too.
RH: Oh, they did. I think Gaffney had the best one.
TC: They did.
RH: They were the yardstick; you’d go by Gaffney. And you know that scout, that band director would scout.
TC: Oh, yeah, the band director would?
RH: Yeah, say you saw Gardner at Gaffney, he was watching us, scouting the band. That’s why he was good.
TC: Oh, he was scouting Carver’s band?
RH: Yeah.
TC: Oh, I thought you meant football.
RH: Because his guys were good.
TC: Gardner.
RH: Gardner, yeah, Harry Gardner.
TC: Right. Okay, unless you have something else you’d like to say we’ll end it at this time, something that you may have forgotten.
RH: Well, I would like to mention that we did have a boy that went, at Sims a boy, what’s the boy that played center, played basketball?  TC: Jeffries?

RH: No, he played pro, played for Golden State Warriors.

TC: Oh, oh, I had that boy in my class at Sims when I was working there, Clifford Ray.

RH: Alright, I went and refereed a game his senior year he was playing.

TC: At Sims?

RH: Yeah, and see he was drum major and (unintelligible) talked him into coming out, wasn’t playing basketball. And so I refereed the game and he was a big ole tall awkward looking guy. I said man, he can’t and then later I followed him after he left Sims and he became great, you know.

TC: So was he pretty good at Sims?

RH: Well, he was awkward and tall.

TC: So wonder how he got into the pros?

RH: I don’t know. He really found himself.

TC: Maybe matured in one year.

RH: Yeah, he found himself. He didn’t go out for football the first year, did he, I mean basketball the first year.

TC: I don’t think so.

RH: But he was awkward then, you know, but I guess he learned enough to want to play. Then he left Sims and went somewhere else and played.

TC: Oklahoma?

RH: Yeah, but he left there and he was tall. He had the desire and boy, I used to watch him play pro. I said well, I’ll be dogged, I remember when I used to referee games when that boy played, could hardly walk.

TC: Yeah, well we’re trying to, well, they are building a new school in Union on the road that goes to Whitmire and that school is going to be a middle school and they’re going to name it, have the dedication October 11th and it’s going to be known as Sims Middle School to keep the name Sims going. So another guy and I are coordinating an all classes reunion and it’s the 9th thru the 11th of October so we’re trying to get in touch with Clifford Ray.

RH: Yeah, well you need to because I remember him. I refereed a game and went over there, drove over there and refereed the game and then when I followed thru the pros and all I said that’s that boy from Sims.

TC: You would never think so, he was so clumsy and awkward like.

RH: Yeah, I said I’d never believed he would play no ball but he was so tall and everything he ended up playing and was great.
TC: That’s true. Well, again, I wish to thank you for your time and it’s been quite enjoyable. Thanks again.

End of interview