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Tom Crosby Oral History Collection
Carl Van Williams Oral History Interview

Interviewee
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Interviewer
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Scope and Background Note
In this oral history interview, Carl Williams discusses his educational experiences at Chalk Hill Elementary, Lakeview High School, and Allen University, graduating Allen University with a major in Mathematics and a minor in Chemistry, his career as a school teacher and basketball coach at several Columbia, South Carolina schools: Booker T. Washington High School, A.C. Flora High School, Richland Northeast High School, and Lower Richland High School, including three he led to State Championships, and some of his players who were recruited to play professional basketball in the National Basketball Association. Carl Van Williams was born in Dixiana, Lexington County, South Carolina on April 27, 1939, one of five children born to Sarah Ann and John Howard Williams. Tom Crosby interviewed Carl Van Williams on July 31, 2009. Interview covers Williams' education at Chalk Hill Elementary (of Lexington, S.C.) and Lakeview High School (of the town of West Columbia, S.C.) from the mid-1940s to the late 1950s and at Allen University in the early 1960s.
Tom Crosby: Today’s date is July 31st [2009] and I’m in Columbia, South Carolina at the home of Mr. Carl Van, V-A-N, Williams. Where were you born, sir?

Carl Van Williams: I was born in Lexington County in a community called Dixiana.

TC: Dixiana, okay, and your date of birth?

CW: Twenty-seven April, 1939.

TC: Okay, what was the name of the elementary school you attended?

CW: I attended [Chalk] Hill Elementary School in Dixiana, South Carolina.

TC: Okay, after elementary you went to a junior high or what?

CW: Well, it was junior high and high school combined, Lakeview in West Columbia, South Carolina.

TC: Okay, I’m sorry I forgot to ask the name of your parents.

CW: My father’s name was John Howard Williams, my mother Sarah Ann Williams.

TC: Okay. How many brothers and sisters?

CW: I had two brothers and two sisters.

TC: Two brothers and two sisters and one of those sisters was my classmate at Allen University and her name was?

CW: Rose Williams.

TC: Rose Williams, okay. Now so you went to Lakeview High School or Lakeview School, which had a high school component to it, right?

CW: Uh-huh.

TC: Junior high and senior high?

CW: Right.

TC: Okay. So did you play sports there?

CW: I played football and basketball at Lakeview High School.
TC: Football and basketball, okay. Do you ever remember playing a high school from Union, South Carolina?

CW: Well, Union played Lakeview when they were the state dynasty. The games were very competitive.

TC: Excuse me, when you say state dynasty you’re talking about?

CW: Winning streak.

TC: Winning streak of?

CW: Sims High School.

TC: Sims High School, I thought you had forgotten the name of that school. What do you mean by state dynasty?

CW: Well, they had a winning streak I think somewhere in the neighborhood of sixty games?

TC: Oh, no, that’s a terrible mistake.

CW: Terrible mistake.

TC: Yeah, it was ninety-three games.

CW: Ninety-three game winning streak.

TC: Right.

CW: We had a very good team at that time. I think Sims won the first game in the latter stages 6-0. And then they played at the state fairgrounds and State won 7-6.

TC: I’m sorry, who won 7-6?

CW: Sims.

TC: Sims won 7-6?

CW: Uh-huh, won both games actually, 6-0 and 7-6.

TC: They won both. Okay now were both of those games at the state fair?

CW: No, the 6-0 game was played at Sims and the 7-6 game was played at that time the black state fair.

TC: Yeah, in Columbia.

CW: Columbia, right.

TC: I see. Were you playing in those games?

CW: No, no. Those were teams that were.

TC: You were probably only like the sixth, seventh, eighth grade.

CW: Probably the eighth grade, eighth, ninth grade, somewhere in there. Our team featured Willie Simon and W.C. Bickley who went on to Allen, you know, and starred.

TC: Both of those guys?
CW: Yeah, starred in football, baseball, and basketball.

TC: I see. You remember any other occasion with reference to Sims High or maybe any championship game or anything like that other than that state fair game?

CW: Well, that’s the only thing that I was aware of at the time was that, you know, a supreme high school power in football. And if you’re going to win ninety-three games then obviously you win some championships along the way.

TC: Yeah, you got to be good.

CW: Uh-huh.

TC: You remember any of the players, maybe not necessarily at that time?

CW: The name Jeter and they had set of twins. One threw the ball and the other caught the ball.

TC: The Jeter boys.

CW: They called them something else.

TC: Bo-Bo.

CW: Bo-Bo brothers I think it was, yeah.

TC: I think their last name was Rice.

CW: Uh-huh, because in the 7-6 game we were actually leading and the brothers combined for a long touchdown pass and they made the extra point.

TC: I see and beat you. I see. Now through the years Sims also played some games against Booker T. Washington High School. You remember any of those games?

CW: No, I was not a witness to any of those.

TC: Games?

CW: No.

TC: Alright so what kinds of things did you participate in high school other than was it football and basketball?

CW: Yeah, I was a member of the football and basketball team. We didn’t have a baseball team at that time. They did in previous years. I was a member of the math club, the honors society, and the student council.

TC: I see, so you were pretty involved. Okay so would you like to make any additional comments about Lakeview High School at this time, anything that you might wish to say?

CW: Well, Lakeview was.

TC: All black?

CW: All black school and had some dedicated people on staff who really had concern about the welfare of the students. We did not have, however, the curriculum at the time that would be comparable to some schools.

TC: Today?
CW: At that time.
TC: Even at that time?
CW: At that time.
TC: However, the teachers.
CW: Through their dedication and effort when we left Lakeview and pursued, you know, higher education, you know.
TC: You fared well, right. Do you remember any teaching strategies that some of the teachers may have used as they taught, anything in particular, maybe a particular person or whatever, or in general?
CW: They taught the main thing is the life skills that were so important, being prompt, exhibiting good behavior. They stayed in touch with the home and they had high expectations of the students. As far as strategies, you know, what would be appropriate at the time, what was important.
TC: Right. Now, for example, some of the students who may have needed some help.
CW: That’s the thing. We were not on par with, matter of fact, we didn’t have grouping. If you were a tenth grader you were in one tenth grade section, one or two, so you had to follow the same curriculum; each student had to follow the same curriculum, regardless of ability.
TC: And those students who may not have, may have been “slower” than some of the other students, what would you say about it?
CW: I don’t recall any special provisions for them.
TC: Yeah, teachers taking additional time maybe?
CW: Yeah, unless the teacher.
TC: And encouragement?
CW: Yeah, would take it upon themselves to give them the extra help but as far as them being grouped in situations that would be consistent with their learning level, that didn’t occur.
TC: Okay, now so after finishing Lakeview High School in, sometimes it’s referred to as West Columbia, right?
CW: Excuse me?
TC: Lakeview is located in?
CW: West Columbia, South Carolina.
TC: Okay, so then after finishing Lakeview you went to Allen University?
CW: Right.
TC: Okay and there you majored in?
CW: I majored in math with a minor in chemistry.
TC: Majored in math with a minor in chemistry, okay. Now there with reference to sports.

CW: I did not participate in any sports. I had to work.

TC: I thought I didn’t recall your playing basketball, for example.

CW: No, I was approached about playing, you know.

TC: Now you did play basketball at Lakeview.

CW: In high school, yeah, at the high school level, yeah. The athletic director at the time saw me in P.E. classes.

TC: Who was that?

CW: Mr. T.B. Nelson and he approached me about playing but my parents weren’t hearing that, you know. I needed to come home and work on the farm.

TC: And so you didn’t play any sports at Allen?

CW: Regrettably, I wanted to play in the worst fashion but, you know.

TC: You couldn’t at that time?

CW: No.

TC: Okay. Now I think you did, as a student you did pretty good at Allen, didn’t you academically?

CW: Yeah.

TC: I’m exaggerating. I’m being facetious.

CW: I think that I, I don’t ever recall missing the dean’s list any semester.

TC: Congratulations, that’s good. In fact, I’ve told you before, one of the things that influenced me to pledge Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. was due to you and some other guys who were in the fraternity at that time. And so that had a great impact on me in terms of selecting that particular fraternity. Now so then after, so you finished Allen in ’60?

CW: Nineteen sixty-one.

TC: Sixty-one, okay, then you started teaching?

CW: Teaching at Booker T. Washington High School in Columbia.

TC: Okay and I always thought that you graduated from Booker T. but you didn’t.

CW: No, no, Charles Thomas and I, Lakeview.

TC: Oh, Charles from Lakeview too?

CW: Yeah.

TC: I didn’t know that.

CW: Well, initially you know he attended schools in Philadelphia and he moved down here for a portion of his high school years.

TC: Oh, yeah, I see.
CW: And that’s where he graduated.
TC: So the two of you came out the same year?
CW: Charles came out a year after I did. His sister, Christine, was in my class but somehow she left early and went to Allen and made all A’s and then transferred to Temple I believe.
TC: I see, for undergrad at Temple or for grad?
CW: Undergrad.
TC: Undergrad, I see.
CW: She was brilliant.
TC: She was good, uh-huh. I remember one math teacher that was there when you were there, a lady. I can’t remember her name.
CW: She didn’t teach me. I think you are referring to Miss Parsons.
TC: Yeah.
CW: Mr. Moran was my teacher at Allen but.
TC: Math?
CW: Yeah but the majority of my courses in chemistry and mathematics was taken at Benedict under Prof Johnson and Dr. Baron in chemistry and Dr. Gwinn. But that’s where all of my math beyond college algebra, trig and geometry was taken at.
TC: At Benedict?
CW: At Benedict.
TC: I see and a number of the chemistry courses too?
CW: Yeah, outside of general chemistry. Mr. Douglas taught me general chemistry and quantitative and qualitative analysis. But after that, you know.
TC: Some of the higher ones?
CW: Yeah.
TC: Additional should I say. Okay, did Allen not have those courses at that time or that was the way you had it structured because that used to be a cooperative relationship between the two schools?
CW: Yeah, Allen did not offer.
TC: Some of the math courses.
CW: The courses like calculus, differential equations, and also I took physics at Benedict, you know, and most of the advanced business courses, students from Benedict would come to Allen and also for physical education. Those two that I recall, you know, it’s been some time.
TC: Right, yeah, okay. So after finishing Allen you started teaching at Booker T. Washington High?
CW: Right.

TC: And coaching?

CW: No, I taught at Booker for one year and then I got drafted into the military and when I had completed my tour of duty in the Army I came back to Booker Washington. And it was in my fourth year of teaching that I started working with basketball, not the head coach, I was assistant for four years and then I took over the varsity program.

TC: Okay, you were assistant under whom?

CW: William Partlow.

TC: Partlow?

CW: Yeah, he left and took the head coaching job at Benedict basketball.

TC: I see so your previous experience in basketball was at Lakeview High School?

CW: Playing experience.

TC: And I guess a little intramural at Allen maybe.

CW: Yeah.

TC: Yeah. But you didn’t play basketball at Allen?

CW: No.

TC: And you taught, you were assistant coach for four years and then became head coach at Booker?

CW: Uh-huh.

TC: Okay. So of course you learned a lot about coaching as an assistant coach during those four years?

CW: Yeah and after, you know, I coached at Booker for four years. The school closed and then I became an assistant again.

TC: Yeah, it closed as a result of integration.

CW: Yeah, it was phased out.

TC: So then you became a coach where?

CW: At A.C. Flora High.

TC: You left the first school where you won state championship?

CW: No, I won state championship at Booker in my first year.

TC: Your first year?

CW: First year coaching.

TC: So your fifth year of coaching high school?

CW: Uh-huh. I coached junior varsity for four years and then when I took over the varsity we were fortunate enough to win the state championship.
TC: Now a number of those players though at the senior level I guess you might say. You had already coached them in the junior high?

CW: Yeah, well, thirteen of them I had coached in the junior high and they moved up with me. There were only two left from the year before, two returning players. As a matter of fact, those players that you mentioned from the junior high, I had had them two years because our varsity team, you know, was so talented, you know, that none of them could move up. So I had them in the ninth and the tenth grade and then they moved up as juniors.

TC: Now those varsity people you had already coached them too at the junior.

CW: Yeah, both of them.

TC: So you had really coached those guys for about four or five years, some of them?

CW: Yeah. That was the fortunate part of being in that situation because, you know, they knew me and I knew them and it wasn’t any adjustment to any major degree.

TC: Right. Okay and then after leaving Booker you went to A.C. Flora?

CW: A.C. Flora where I served as an assistant coach for six years before being named the varsity coach.

TC: But you had been head coach?

CW: I’d been head coach before. That’s kind of difficult adjustment but there again, you know, it was a learning experience because sometimes when you become a head coach you begin to think that maybe you’ve reached a pinnacle but there’s a lot more to be learned. I was fortunate to serve under two of the best in William Partlow and Coach Johnson, Szakacsi at A.C. Flora.

TC: Okay and it happened to be, what’s the name of the coach at A.C. Flora?

CW: John Szakacsi, everybody calls him Cy. He’s a hall of fame coach, South Carolina Athletic Hall of Fame.

TC: Yeah and I guess he was a white coach?

CW: White, right.

TC: I see, okay. Then did you become head coach there eventually there at A.C. Flora?

CW: Yeah, after six years I was named the head coach.

TC: Okay and you won state championship there?

CW: In my second year we were fortunate enough to win the state championship and then we played for it a second time I think in three years after that first one and then fourth year after the first one we won our second one.

TC: I see. Now these championship games, state championship games that you won, who were some of the schools that you beat?

CW: Well, the first state championship I won we beat Burke High School in Charleston. And the second we played Bennettsville. We beat Bennettsville for the state championship with Cozelle McQueen and Dwayne Grace and that group.
TC: Okay, Bennettsville was an integrated school at that time?
CW: Yes.
TC: It was an integrated school at that time, like 1970’s, 19 what would you say?
CW: Eighty-one.
TC: Eighty-one, that’s about ten years after integration.
CW: Yeah, now they’re Marlboro County High.
TC: Is that it?
CW: Uh-huh.
TC: I see. Okay, so after A.C. Flora you went to where?
CW: Lower Richland.
TC: Or was it Columbia High?
CW: I’m sorry. You were asking what teams we played.
TC: Yeah.
CW: We beat Riverside of Greenville for the third state championship.
TC: That’s like in the ‘80s?
CW: Huh?
TC: That’s like in the ‘80s?
CW: Eighty-five.
TC: Okay.
CW: And after leaving A.C. Flora I went to Richland Northeast High School. We did not win a state championship there. We had some highly ranked teams but there was some.
TC: Personal problems with the players, several players, or a player?
CW: Yeah, one player in particular got in some difficulty.
TC: Okay.
CW: That really was a tremendous setback because I think we were right on line to doing some great things with that team.
TC: I see. After there you went to?
CW: Lower Richland High School and we were fortunate enough to win a state championship there in 1999 and that year we played Lexington High School.
TC: Okay and your last coaching was?
CW: At Lower Richland.
TC: Didn’t you coach at Columbia High or you did not?
CW: No.
TC: You never coached there?
CW: Never coached there.
TC: Okay. You worked there though?
CW: Never worked at Columbia High.
TC: You never worked there?
CW: No.
TC: Okay.
CW: Schools that I worked at was Booker Washington, A.C. Flora, Richland Northeast High School, and Lower Richland.
TC: Okay. So you retired from Lower Richland?
CW: Lower Richland High.
TC: Okay and since then you have been doing a few different kinds of things?
CW: Yeah, well, the thing that was so rewarding about being in coaching is that it afforded me the opportunity to get involved with Nike and their programs. They were conducting exposure camps with all the top players in the country and they would invite them. My first experience was at Princeton when they invited about a hundred and twenty top high school athletes from across the country and taught them. The academic portion was in the morning and then in the afternoon and evenings they played five on five. And then you had all the head coaches from around the country would be in attendance observing them for recruitment purposes.
TC: At Princeton University?
CW: Princeton, yeah, and since then it has moved to.
TC: Do you recall what year or about how many years ago?
CW: I started in 1985 and I worked up until 2002. And with that for three years we did the same type event in Europe and we had thirty-three countries represented with players there.
TC: How long were you there in Europe?
CW: Three years. We went to Paris the first year, second year we were in Italy, Venice, right outside of Venice in a place called Travesia. And the third year we were in Barcelona at the Olympic site.
TC: Okay, these were during the summer?
CW: Yeah, latter portion of June or early part of July I think it was.
TC: I see. I’m not exactly sure how to say this but you didn’t play college basketball.
CW: No.
TC: So your learning about basketball occurred in high school and being assistant coach to a great extent.
CW: Right and attending clinics.
TC: Attending clinics?

CW: Yeah and just, you know, when you work camps of the magnitude and also we were involved in a program with the NBA, National Basketball Association. National Basketball Player’s Association had a camp where it invited the likes of Kobe Bryant and Lamar Odom and Luke Walton and Jermaine O’Neal and Tim Thomas. They invited them also to Princeton to give them some kind of notion about what life would be like in the NBA and I was fortunate enough to participate in that.

TC: In what manner?

CW: Well, they would bring them in and they would have members of the NBA, former players and current players to come in and try to enlighten them as to what to expect by playing in the league and how to treat their finances. In the afternoon and evenings they would compete against each other but, you know.

TC: Now, excuse me. You were still coaching during this time or is this after you had stopped coaching?

CW: All of this was done while I was still coaching high school.

TC: Okay, so you’re learning a lot of things yourself.

CW: Yeah.

TC: You picked up some things.

CW: Yeah because they have some of the best speakers in the world to come in and then you’ve got high school coaches from all these great programs from all across the country so you take advantage of that. And each summer, you know, I’d try to select a work situation that’s different from.

TC: What you had before.

CW: Yeah.

TC: And then you would use those things you would learn in coaching the high school people.

CW: Uh-huh.

TC: Was Bobby Knight, you ever been in his?

CW: He’s been in my gym at A.C. Flora.

TC: He has?

CW: Yeah, he was recruiting Rodney Taylor and he mentions that in his book that was published. I forget the name of it. But I’ve heard him speak several times.

TC: Did he participate in some of those camps I guess?

CW: Well, he was the only coach missing at the camp. And he lost out on Sean Kemp and Eric Montross and the next year Bobby Knight was there.

TC: He was definitely there?
CW: From that point on he was there.

TC: I see, yeah. Well, you certainly have had a lot of experience and contacts and so forth. How about some players that went on to the pros to play pro basketball that you coached?

CW: Off of that team at Booker Washington Leon Bimbo played. He went on to Jacksonville and then he played with Chicago Bulls with the current coach of the Utah Jazz, Jerry Sloan and Bob Love and that group. From A.C. Flora Xavier McDaniel was number four pick by the Seattle Supersonics and he made the all star team. And Tyrone Corbin who played I imagine somewhere in the neighborhood of fifteen years and now he’s the assistant coach with the Utah Jazz and he’s just finished working with the Olympic team selection process out in Vegas. So we’re fortunate enough to have had three to actually make the NBA and for that I’m very proud.

TC: And thankful.

CW: Uh-huh.

TC: Now Clifford Ray, he’s from, what high school did he attend?

CW: Some little high school named Sims I believe.

TC: (Laughter)

CW: But he was at Oklahoma with one of our players from Booker. I wasn’t coaching at the time but he was in my homeroom. Landy Watson played at Oklahoma along with Clifford, yeah.

TC: Yeah, my first year out of Allen going back to Sims High he was in my class. Actually he was in my class for two years, his freshman year and sophomore year. I think you told me where is he?

CW: He’s the assistant coach with the Boston Celtics now.

TC: At this time?

CW: Uh-huh, right.

TC: I see, yeah. Hopefully he’s going to attend our Sims High all classes reunion that I was telling you about, which is coming up in October of this year 2009. We’re trying to get in touch with him now. Okay, now you have achieved or received a number of honors through the years. Would you like to mention a few of those that you achieved?

CW: Well, the thing that means most to me is to see the growth and achievements of the young people that I’ve been involved with, you know. We’ve been very, very blessed to have some outstanding athletes involved in every program that I’ve been a part of. And even though, you know, we’ve only had three to make it to the highest level, there have been numerous others to get free education through that process, if you can call it free, you know, with the effort they have to put in it. But that’s the, there’s nothing more satisfying than to see a young man from your program, somebody walks in and says we want him to come into our college program; we’re going to offer him a full scholarship to do so.
TC: Very rewarding and I’m sure some of them most likely you talked to them, counseled them.

CW: On a regular basis, yeah.

TC: As students I’m talking about when you were coaching them. You helped to guide them.

CW: Yeah, well, we started something at Flora. We had a guidance counselor who took it upon herself to counsel athletes. We’d bring her in at the beginning of the season and she’d tell them whatever they needed to take if they had ambitions of attending college on basketball scholarship. We’d do that every year.

TC: Now what school or schools?

CW: A.C. Flora.

TC: That was the guidance counselor doing that at A.C. Flora?

CW: Yeah, uh-huh, and when we got to Northeast that was the first question I asked. Who works with the athletes? And pretty soon they were doing the same thing.

TC: Did you ask, excuse me. At A.C. Flora did you ask, did you initiate the counseling person to work with the athletes?

CW: She had an interest and I asked her. I would submit all the names that were on the varsity to her and the thing of it was, when a recruiter would come on campus that was the first place they would go to visit her. So she got to meet all the coaches, you know, in the process.

TC: Would you like to mention the name of that person?

CW: Miss Myla Markland.

TC: How do you spell the last name?

CW: M-A-R-K-L-A-N-D and the first name is M-Y-L-A. And I think her husband was a professor at the University of South Carolina.

TC: If I may, this person happened to be a black person or white?

CW: White.

TC: I see. Now if I may, that’s good because often you hear that some of the white persons don’t take an interest in, I know all of your players were not black. I’m sure you had a mixture.

CW: At first, you know, we had a good mixture but as time moved on then it became basically an all black situation. But that’s one thing that I’m delighted in that, you know. At Lower Richland my principal took care of all the academic requirements. He handled that himself.

TC: What’s the nature of what he did?
CW: Well, he made certain that they were taking the right courses. He got them S.A.T. tutoring. I can say at Lower Richland I don’t recall any athlete of any potential that didn’t qualify academically to go on to college.

TC: Okay now what was his name?

CW: Titus Duren.

TC: Duren?

CW: And also Mr. Larry Mills who would tutor young people in taking the S.A.T. He worked with our athletes voluntarily and that was a salaried position for him.

TC: Okay now if I may, this was a black or white person?

CW: White gentleman.

TC: Okay, I don’t know, you may wonder why I keep asking was it a black or white person. I think it’s important to emphasize that. Not everybody is alike and they take an interest in so you can’t put everybody in the same group, that white teachers do care, many of them do care and that’s important.

CW: Anything that we were able to accomplish in terms of winning state championships or five hundred wins or even being selected to some type of hall of fame is the direct result of a lot of people pitching in and helping in what you do because it’s virtually impossible to achieve these things as an individual.

TC: It’s a total package, yeah. Okay now do you have any, would you like to mention some of the awards that you have received while you were coaching, afterwards or whatever?

CW: I was chosen state coach of the year.

TC: Do you recall the year?

CW: Nineteen ninety-nine and these others I don’t remember. Midlands coach of the year several times. Let’s see what else, inducted into the South Carolina Athletic Hall of Fame.

TC: And that was 2008, right?

CW: Last May.

TC: Yeah, 2008.

CW: Yeah, last May, yeah.

TC: May of last year. Not this year, last year?

CW: May of last year, right.

TC: Two thousand eight, okay. So I guess you consider that as one of your cherished. CW: Yeah, you know, you like to, first of all, as I said, in that process I was able to list a number of ballplayers that we’ve had that have gone on and done well. Anytime you receive that kind of honor, you know, there were some good players involved.
TC: Right and I guess some of the criteria or some of the things that were mentioned as being criteria for selecting would be, you know, the players that you coached and so forth, those going on to pro teams.

CW: Yeah, what happened with that is one of the coaches that worked with me at Booker Washington was already in the Hall of Fame. He coached ninth grade when I was varsity coach there.

TC: What was his name?

CW: George Glymph and two of my players had already been inducted, Tyrone Corbin and Xavier McDaniel. So I guess it finally became my turn.

TC: Right and a number of persons have contributed to your success.

CW: Very much so, both coaches, players, teachers, counselors, principals.

TC: Okay, do you have any additional comments you’d like to make or maybe something that we have talked about you might want to add or something we haven’t talked about, anything additional you’d like to say in concluding our interview here today?

CW: Just that, you know, it was quite a rewarding experience being involved, both in the academic setting and athletic setting at the high school level. It opened up a lot of doors. Just recently we were able to do in conjunction with the Partners of the Americas a two week clinic down in, just outside of Bogota, Columbia, South America. I’m being repetitious, the main thing is that I was fortunate to have so many good young people that you don’t hear mentioned outside of being NBA players that are doing exceedingly well. That’s about it.

TC: Yeah and all the people that assisted you in high school and the college level and in general.

CW: Uh-huh.

TC: So we’re thankful for having had.

CW: And I want to thank Miss Odessa Nelson for making it possible for me to get involved in the profession because she recommended me.

TC: Who is this?

CW: Miss Odessa Nelson from Allen University.

TC: She did what now?

CW: Recommended me to School District 1 for a position as math teacher.

TC: Oh, at Booker?

CW: Uh-huh.

TC: Yeah. Would you like to elaborate on that, why you are complimenting her?

CW: Yeah because, you know, she was a beautiful person. She arranged for me to participate in National Science Foundation Institute at Tuskegee while I was an undergrad. And she called me at home one night to tell me that there was an opening at Booker
Washington, for me to go down and talk with the principal and she recommended to the superintendent at that time, Mr. John Whiten, because as much as we might have in our files, you know, it takes somebody speaking for you in instances to make it happen.

TC: That’s true.

CW: And she was there for me.

TC: That’s good and she taught at Allen for a number of years.

CW: And she never taught me.

TC: She didn’t? But the word gets around and I guess I can say this. It’s true. They sent the best students to schools for student teaching and so forth here in Columbia.

CW: To Booker and Johnson.

TC: They sent the best students to Booker and Johnson. And so we have to be thankful for that and it meant a lot. And it meant a lot for the school at that time too. And those of us who did well, we have to thank them all. Okay, well I certainly thank you for your time. I’ve gotten a lot of information from you and I’m sure it will be helpful for persons who do research at the University of South Carolina where the tapes will be deposited. In fact, I was told today that someone wants to use the tapes that I’ve done thus far as part of a research project that they are doing. And so a lot of people they don’t know what it was like, especially to attend the black schools in the past and what it was like during integration and the kinds of things that happened to the students as well as the teachers and the principals and so forth. For example, I don’t know and we can’t say that it was a racial thing, you know, like when you went over to A.C. Flora, you didn’t continue to be head coach. There are various factors that impact on why things happen and it’s not always a racial thing that takes place.

CW: You mentioned the University. I do believe that I was the first black high school coach to work with the basketball camp at USC with Coach Frank McGuire.

TC: You were?

CW: I’m almost certain.

TC: That’s good. He seemed to have had a bit of contact with Allen. In fact, there was some, there was a banquet I saw in a yearbook and he was a speaker for that banquet. Mr. Nelson was, you know, A.D. at that time.

CW: Yeah, he was a great man.

TC: That’s good.

CW: We didn’t realize I don’t think what we had here in Coach McGuire when he was here. He was at the top of his profession, you know.

TC: That’s good.
CW: And he was the kind of person that didn’t mind helping a person along the way, you know. Lots of times he did it and it was just between the person and him. You know, he didn’t get any.

TC: Accolades for it, huh?

CW: We recognized Xavier McDaniel and Tyrone Corbin. He was on vacation somewhere and he made it a point to cut his vacation short to come back to speak at those guys’ recognition.

TC: Okay, now who were those two guys?

CW: Xavier McDaniel and Tyrone Corbin.

TC: I mean what’s noted about them?

CW: They were two of the ones that made the NBA.

TC: Oh, those players.

CW: And they were in their college years at that time and they were both doing so well that we decided to honor them at A.C. Flora and.

TC: He was there?

CW: Had the banquet that evening.

TC: McGuire was there?

CW: Coach McGuire was there to speak.

TC: I see. Okay, thanks again. I really appreciate your time. Thank you.

CW: You’re quite welcome, sir.

End of interview