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Tom Crosby Oral History Collection
Harold E. Thompson Oral History Interview

Interviewee
Thompson, Harold, 1951-

Interviewer
Crosby, Tom, 1940-

Date
September 3, 2009

ID Number
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Scope and Background Note
In this oral history interview, Harold Eugene Thompson discusses his educational experiences in the Lukesville community of Union, South Carolina at New Primary elementary school and Sims High School, playing football and basketball in high school, moving to Washington, D.C., pursuing a degree in broadcast engineering from Temple Technical Institute, facing racism and prejudice in his career at WSPA - Channel 7- Spartanburg, South Carolina, and serving on the Union City Council and briefly as Mayor pro tem. Harold Eugene Thompson was born April 2, 1951 in Charlotte, North Carolina to Helen (Stinson) and Dudley Thompson, Jr. Tom Crosby interviewed Harold Thompson on September 3, 2009. Interview covers Thompson's education at New Primary Elementary (of the town of Lukesville, S.C.) and Sims High Schools from the late 1950s to the late 1960s.
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Harold E. Thompson Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Harold E. Thompson  CROS# 031
Interviewer: Tom Crosby  September 3, 2009

Tom Crosby: Today is September 3, 2009 and I’m in Union, South Carolina and I’m in the office of Mayor Harold Thompson. What is your, do you have, excuse me, first do you have a middle name, sir?

Harold Thompson: Harold E., E is for Eugene.

TC: Okay, Harold Eugene Thompson, okay, and your date of birth please?

HT: My date of birth is April 2, 1950.

TC: April 2, 1950, you almost forgot.

HT: Nineteen fifty-one.

TC: You did forget.

HT: I did. Nineteen fifty-one, I was born in Charlotte, North Carolina. My mother’s name was Helen Stinson. My father’s Dudley Thompson, Jr. My sister and I came to Union at a very early age. I was six months and she was a year and four months. My grandmother brought us here and we’ve been here ever since. We settled in the Lukesville community.

TC: Oh, I see, Lukesville. Now with reference to your date of birth, did you say April 1st?

HT: April 2nd.

TC: April 2nd.

HT: Nineteen fifty-one.

TC: So you missed fool’s day.

HT: Yes, I did. (Laughter)

TC: Okay, 1951. Okay so where did you attend elementary school?

HT: Elementary school I was right here in Union. I went to New Primary. I believe it was about the first year that they opened up if I’m not mistaken because we, school in Lukesville shut down so the students went to New Primary school.

TC: I see. So you were part of the first students in that school?

HT: I believe so if I’m not mistaken. Miss Cornelia Henderson was the school principal then.
TC: Now if I may ask about her, I’ve heard her name quite a bit, comments with reference to her. Would you, do you have any, would you like to make any comments with reference to her at this time?

HT: She was strict. She was tough and I was a victim of some of her discipline. *(Laughter)*

TC: Really, what form of discipline?

HT: Little young kid, we come in after recess and it was customary that right after recess you come in and you sit at your desk and you would put your head down on your desk.

TC: To take a little rest?

HT: Take a little rest. So this particular day up under the desk there was an opening with little toys or whatever, airplanes, trucks, and stuff like that. So I had my head under the desk and I reached down there and I was playing with the airplane on top of the table. And lo and behold I was kind of spread out across that desk from her fist in the back. *(Laughter)*

TC: Fist?

HT: Fist.

TC: Really, in the back?

HT: In the back, to be honest.

TC: Oh, wow, that was kind of rough.

HT: Yeah, I mean.

TC: Did you do it anymore?

HT: I never forgot that day. I never forgot that day.

TC: Okay and she was principal?

HT: She was principal.

TC: Now but she was your teacher also that particular day?

HT: That particular time, you know, we did everything in one particular class. This was like first grade.

TC: Okay so she was teaching and principal? I mean she was your teacher you said, right?

HT: Yeah, she was principal and she was first.

TC: And she also taught you?

HT: She taught first grade.

TC: I see. How would you describe her teaching strategies?

HT: Great teaching strategy but not for elementary students, not for elementary. She was too much. She would have made a good eighth or ninth grade teacher but definitely not.

TC: First grade?

HT: Not first grade. The two things that really stick out in my mind was the fact that about her, of course, the little lick I took and the other thing that she held me back one year. This is the
year that they started advance first grade and I remember they had to have somebody in that program and I was one of the ones they held back. Now grant you now she used to send us home with these little ole Dick and Jane books. Those books I would read them in one day. When I got off the school bus and go in the house and sit down I would sit down and I would read it from front to back. Our report cards were good, A’s and B’s all the way down the line, but at the end of the year she held me back and my grandmamma was wondering why and she said I had lost my report card.

TC: Nothing but A’s and B’s?

HT: Nothing but A’s and B’s and she said I had lost my report card. So when I got to be a senior in high school Miss Angela Ruff asked me, she had my transcripts, she said how did you manage to be held back in first grade. I said well Miss Henderson said I lost my report card. And she said no way, she said you should have went on. But then again when I look back all the friends that I grew up with, some of them now can’t half read. They went on to the second grade.

TC: But you could read.

HT: Oh, yeah, I was, read, spell, oh man.

TC: So she held you back simply because you had lost a card?

HT: She said I had lost my report card and they had to hold me back. But over the years I learned that only so many people, so many people had to be in that program. It was state funded, to get a certain amount of money and I think too my family wasn’t one of the well-known families around.

TC: May I interrupt you, now that you mention that. I’ve heard some other persons make comments along that line about evidently looks like certain more, certain families were respected you might say or favored.

HT: Favor ed, if you were the child of a school teacher, a minister, or some other category that required you to kind of dress up, you kind of got eased along. You could be the baddest kid in the neighborhood but they put up with it and kind of, you know, shuffled you along. But if you were just a plain old guy like me, you know, if you did good, fine.

TC: Well now I’ve heard this before. I don’t know. See I grew up in the suburb of Union known as Santuck suburb and I don’t know whether that went on in that area of Union County or not. But I’ve heard persons make reference to like you have about certain kinds of behaviors that teachers may have exhibited towards children from certain kinds of backgrounds. To be honest with you, at one point I didn’t believe it but now I’ve heard it continuously.

HT: Yeah, believe me; it was true because even in high school it was certain ones that were favored. I mean, you know, they would do things in schools, the teachers just kind of ignored it and they just kind of made sure that they got in classes that were college preparatory. The rest of us if you didn’t have sense enough or anybody to kind of push you or guide you through the system, you know, you were kind of left behind. When I go back and look at most of the ones in my time that came through, they’re either dead, they didn’t succeed in life. They went to school but they flunked out and they dropped out.
TC: I have observed some of that. Now not to get into, you know, a black white racial kind of thing but I have heard the same with reference to the white environment, that kids who came from let’s say lesser backgrounds, the same thing went on with the white teachers, some of them favored kids who were from the wealthier background or from a different part of town or whatever.

HT: The only engagement in that area dealing with, you know, white, the only one I had and I can remember it very vividly. I played sports in high school and this particular year we got a new coach, Coach Paul Glenn.

TC: Okay and you played football.

HT: I played football and basketball and I wanted to play baseball but he said that he wasn’t going to coach baseball. He was going to let us try out for the Union High baseball team. So I’ll never forget, we went to practice.

TC: Excuse me, Union High baseball team?

HT: Yeah.

TC: And you were still at Sims?

HT: Right.

TC: So I didn’t know that that was going on.

HT: They gave us an opportunity to try out for the team.

TC: At Union High?

HT: At Union High.

TC: Okay, you have any idea why that happened?

HT: Well, simply because, you know, Coach Glenn wasn’t coaching and it was a mutual agreement for players at Sims would try out for the Union High team.

TC: Okay so you’re saying in essence that there was no one to coach baseball at Sims High?

HT: At Sims, no. We had a coach, Coach Marion Nichols, but he left. He left and went to, moved up to Washington, D.C.

TC: I see. Another reason I think that may have been was part of initial desegregation, integration, you see. I think that was part of it too because you know the very next year integration took place.

HT: Well, what was happening they took the ninth grade from Sims High School and bussed them to Union High for classes all day.

TC: That in 1969 and ’70 year you’re talking about?

HT: Right.

TC: Okay so really that was the very first force.

HT: Forced integration.

TC: A larger group of students going to Union High environment. I didn’t know that.
HT: You had one or two here and there that kind of went on their own but this particular year I think they were preparing Union High.

TC: For full integration?

HT: For full integration.

TC: Which took place in the fall of 1970, yeah, ’71 academic year. Well, integration took place in the fall of ’71 academic year.

HT: Right.

TC: Okay so at Sims High you played football, basketball, those were the two sports?

HT: I played baseball a couple of years earlier but when I became a senior we didn’t have a baseball team.

TC: Now who was the coach of football? Excuse me, now this was the last year of existence of Sims High School?

HT: Right.

TC: The ’69-'70 academic year, so who was the football coach?

HT: Coach Paul Glenn.

TC: Paul Glenn?

HT: Yeah.

TC: And who were the assistant coaches?

HT: Mr. Stewart, John Stewart, we had Coach McClellan. I forget his first name.

TC: Black or white?

HT: Black. And we had Coach Ballou, he was the basketball coach.

TC: Black or white?

HT: Black. And Coach White and he was black.

TC: Yeah, so there weren’t any white coaches?

HT: No.

TC: In that last year?

HT: No.

TC: Okay now there were one or two white persons working at Sims though right?

HT: Ruth Justice, she was the art teacher.

TC: She taught art?

HT: She taught art. Our principal was C.A. Powell. He was white.

TC: Yeah, okay. So your senior year, which was the last year of existence of Sims High School.

HT: Correct.
TC: There were only two whites working at that school?
HT: No, no, we had another white that taught shop. I forget his name but he taught auto body shop.
TC: I see. Now I think maybe before that wasn’t it a Lamb lady working there?
HT: I’m not sure. I don’t know.
TC: But weren’t there one or two other teachers prior to the ’69-’70, white teachers prior to ’69-’70?
HT: I don’t remember. I don’t remember any.
TC: You don’t recall, yeah, but I think I read somewhere that there were and all of that was part of getting ready for full integration I think.
HT: I would assume so, yeah.
TC: Okay. Now as you know Sims High has a great record in football and you played football at Sims and I think I’ve heard that you were a pretty good football player. Is that true?
HT: Pretty good, it was a lot of things that happened.
TC: I’m exaggerating when I say pretty good. I heard that you were very good.
HT: I had the potential to be very good but what happened was that after we changed, after the Coach Shivers left, Coach Paul Glenn became coach. Of course, ninety percent of our football team went to Union High that was trained, all of us, you know, comfortable and which we had a team, we had a good solid team. But when they integrated there were tenth graders, they went to Union High so that left us with five veteran players that ever played football, organized football in their life.
TC: At Sims?
HT: At Sims. The rest of them was guys that had never played but they came out and got on the team but we had five veterans.
TC: So your junior year actually, your senior year?
HT: Uh-huh.
TC: Some football players, even though you stayed at Sims, they went over to Union High?
HT: They played at Union High. They played football at Union High.
TC: But they were students at Sims?
HT: Yeah. They wasn’t students at Sims. That was that tenth grade, all of them that was in the tenth grade, they went to Union High and they played football at Union High.
TC: Your senior year?
HT: My senior year.
TC: I see.
HT: We had five veteran players on the team that were left at Sims.
TC: I didn’t know that. So I didn’t know that the tenth graders, the last year of Sims High School, they played football over at Union High?

HT: At Union High School.

TC: Well, that’s amazing.

HT: The first year that Union High just kind of, they had a pretty good championship team.

TC: So they improved that quickly?

HT: That quickly and we were stuck there. We lost the first homecoming Sims High ever lost. We had a losing season.

TC: Now excuse me. The first homecoming that Sims High ever lost?

HT: I’m thinking that’s right.

TC: Now you know there are a number of lies about Sims High too, you know. (Laughter)

HT: Yeah, there are quite a few.

TC: I’m not calling you a liar.

HT: Well, I could be wrong but they pegged us with that.

TC: In other words, to your knowledge since you were in school.

HT: To my knowledge, yeah.

TC: And as far maybe back as junior high you had not witnessed a homecoming loss.

HT: Right, they pegged us with that and we wear that thing with our heads down. (Laughter)

TC: What was the name of the team that you played that you lost to, homecoming?

HT: We played Finley High School in Chester.

TC: Oh, so that’s why somebody said to me not too long ago, now it may be that game or not, but as you know Sims always beat Finley.

HT: Right.

TC: Of Chester so that could have been one of these persons who said that we beat Sims that year that you’re talking about.

HT: Very well could be because it was a homecoming game and we won one game that year by default.

TC: Really?

HT: The team couldn’t make it up for a game and it was cancelled. We won by default.

TC: Really? Oh, the opposing team couldn’t come?

HT: Couldn’t come.

TC: Who was that?

HT: I’m thinking its Gorman High School because we played Gorman out of Newberry.
TC: We’d been beating them anyway all the time, right?
HT: All the time.
TC: Yeah, I see. Okay now you played basketball too?
HT: I played basketball.
TC: So how did that go?
HT: Basketball was forced for me. I was kind of pushed to play basketball by Coach Paul Glenn because I was pretty tall and I was good size. I was a heck of a passer but I wasn’t that good of a shooter.
TC: I see.
HT: So he told me I was going to play and he started me. I started every game. He put me on the team. I was a good rebounder but I couldn’t shoot that well. I could, you know, I could pass the ball extraordinarily, another Magic Johnson. (Laughter)
TC: Oh, really? I see. Well, that’s good. Okay and you played a little baseball?
HT: I played baseball in the earlier years, you know, like tenth or eleventh grade.
TC: I see, okay. Now can you make some comments about principal C.A. Powell? And that was the last year of existence of Sims High School, which was as we have said before ’69-’70 academic year.
HT: C.A. Powell you hardly ever saw him.
TC: I’ve heard this before.
HT: He was kind of laid back, stayed in his office. If he came out he was going one direction and one direction only and he didn’t mingle in the hall.
TC: Now this person was white?
HT: Right.
TC: And that was the last year of existence of Sims High in 1970.
HT: Right.
TC: Did he ever have any student body meetings?
HT: No, James Ferguson, Chester Ferguson.
TC: Was assistant principal.
HT: Was assistant and Reverend James Sanders, they were kind of like the shakers and movers. You know, they kind of dealt with the student body and all that. C.A. Powell, like I said he was, you hardly ever saw him and he was just kind of, I don’t know if he was scared of mingling in the hall, you know. He was in a different environment.
TC: Yeah, than he had been before, right.
HT: Yeah.
TC: So there were student body meetings occasionally I’m sure, weren’t there?
HT: Every once in a while we had like assembly.
TC: Yeah and who was in charge or who was the master of ceremonies or whatever?
HT: Basically I think I remember him addressing us maybe once but Reverend Sanders and, Reverend Sanders did most of it. Mr. Ferguson he was the disciplinarian. He was the disciplinarian. He was the type that, you know, the enforcer. He would come up there, you know.
TC: Now was there any corporal punishment going on at that time by Ferguson? I understand he did that in elementary school when he was working at that level.
HT: At the high school.
TC: I don’t think so, was it?
HT: There was a little.
TC: Paddling?
HT: Not paddling, he always used his hand. He had a wide hand and he’d jack your pants up in your behind and tighten them up.
TC: And hit you?
HT: You know, some of the younger kids.
TC: That was usually eighth or ninth graders?
HT: Eighth or ninth graders but you know the older guys.
TC: He wouldn’t do that. But he did hit the young, the eighth or ninth grade people?
HT: I’ve never seen him.
TC: But you heard it?
HT: I’ve heard it, you know. He promised us one year but it didn’t follow through. Me and a couple of guys, you know, in the hallway, just getting off the school bus and I was an innocent bystander. I’m walking down the hall and all of a sudden I see this apple come toward me and I caught it. And some kid runs up and, you know, and one of the older guys had taken his apple and about this time Ferguson come out of the office and he called us in. He sat us down and he, you know, wait till he gets back. Reverend Sanders come in, what are you guys doing in here? Mr. Ferguson told us to wait, you know, we were supposed to get a paddling. He said y’all get out of here and go on to class. Don’t let me catch you no more. (Laughter)
TC: I see but back to Principal Powell, so there was very little seeing of him?
HT: Uh-huh.
TC: I guess he, of course, had meetings with the teachers but you wouldn’t know about that.
HT: No.
TC: Yeah. Okay so after Sims High what was next on the agenda for you?
HT: After Sims High the same day I graduated from high school, of course, you know the Sunday they have the service and then on like Tuesday or something like that, you know, you
march across the stage and you get your diploma. But anyway, my father was shot that Saturday night and he died Sunday morning, the day we marched across the stage.

TC: Sorry to hear that.

HT: Well, not the day we marched but the day they had the service. He was shot and he died that Sunday morning and that particular week was kind of a, it was kind of.

TC: Very rough.

HT: Yeah, it was kind of a hazy time for me. But after that we had to funeral and stuff like that and I moved to Washington, D.C. and worked up there for a couple of companies and I kind of didn’t have anybody to kind of guide me through some of the advantages I could have had just by his social security, monies and stuff like that. So I avoided going to school because I knew my grandmamma couldn’t afford to send me and we were sending my sister to school at Friendship in Rock Hill. So I just decided to, you know, leave Union and go to Washington, D.C. I got a job just like that with this electrical company. I worked for them for probably about seven or eight years. Then I went to school, went to broadcast school and I settled out for going to technical school rather than a four year college.

TC: Okay so where was that broadcast school?

HT: It was in Washington, D.C., Temple Technical Institute.

TC: I see. That was about a what, a year or something like that or more?

HT: It was eighteen months.

TC: Eighteen months so you got a certificate?

HT: Yeah.

TC: And then after that?

HT: After that I left and went to Sarasota, Florida. In Sarasota, Florida I went there to do broadcast engineering. I completed that and after that I received my FCC first class broadcast license. And I was on my way back to Washington, D.C. but I ran into an attorney, Albert Smith out of Spartanburg and he was telling me that they had some positions open in Spartanburg. So I got in there and out in the job market kind of like during a recession. I experienced my first more or less discriminatory encounter. You know, he got a guy walking in, no experience really, but he got all the qualifications. You know, with my FCC first class license in most areas you got paid top dollar just for having that license. But I come in and you got a bunch of guys that had it and at first I went to interview, the department head he was there, he interviewed me and he basically told me I had the job. But when the general manager came in he looked at my license and my resume and stuff and he shook his head so I didn’t get the job. But I saw him kind of out of the corner of my eye shaking his head. So this was like early December and like two weeks later they called me back because at that particular time the FCC was cracking down on businesses or corporations or whatever that wasn’t hiring any minorities. So I eventually I got that job and I started off as a studio camera operator and they saw that I had a lot of technical knowledge, technical background and they moved me to the engineering staff. There were a couple of older guys, not much older than I was, they were, they didn’t want me to have the job.

TC: These were white?
HT: White guys, so what they did, they brought a guy that was a night watchman, they brought him in at night and they came in and they trained him how to operate all the equipment and stuff like that.

TC: White guy?

HT: White guy. And then they went back and they told the general manager that this guy knew how to do this and do that and if they hired me over them that they were going to walk out. So what happened, they did hire me in that department but it was kind of like in a lesser position. It was more or less a video switcher but they taught him. Everything I learned I had to basically teach myself and I had one older white guy that was very helpful and I owe a lot to him for.

TC: His assistance.

HT: Yeah, showing me a lot of things. And so one day they decided to play a game on me. We had a bay of telephones probably about ten or fifteen feet long. It had about ten or fifteen phones right down the line. So the general manager had a policy that the phone should ring only three times. On the third ring you should be picking the phone up. Now mind you you’re sitting there the brains of the TV station, master control, you’re sitting there pushing buttons, you’re running commercials and what they would do.

TC: What station was that?

HT: Channel 7.

TC: Seven, okay, Channel 7.

HT: WSPA. What they would do right when the commercial break would run and they know that I’m switching, what we called it, we called it switching, what they did they would take the telephone, they would take the receiver from this phone, put it way down there and just mix all of them up.

TC: Deliberately.

HT: Yeah and each one of them would go to different parts of the building and called those extensions. This one is ringing but the receiver is down here.

TC: They’re going to get you.

HT: Oh, yeah, they caught me. They caught me. Oh, they really caught me.

TC: It’s amazing. So after that episode you were?

HT: After that episode this white guy he was like quality control operator, he sat right next to me and he shook his head. He said from now on this is what you’re going to do. Every day when you come in this office before you sit down you make sure you check this and you check everything in here to make sure it’s the way it supposed to be, all the phones.

TC: So this is the guy that’s helping you?

HT: Yeah, white guy.

TC: That you owe a lot of respect to?

HT: I owe a lot of respect to him.
TC: Is he still alive?
HT: Last I heard he was. He’s an older gentleman now.

TC: So now were you ever out front on TV?
HT: No.

TC: Giving news or whatever?
HT: No, I’ve always been in the technical aspect.

TC: Technical area.
HT: Yeah.

TC: I see. Alright so after Spartanburg, WSPA, where did you go after that?
HT: I worked at Spartanburg for thirty-two years.

TC: After that?
HT: Yeah, I stayed there for thirty-two years.

TC: So that let’s you know I am getting younger.
HT: (Laughter) And I.

TC: When you talk about thirty-two years.
HT: And when I left there I had the respect of everybody in that station as far as my technical background.

TC: Okay, what did you do when you worked in Spartanburg for thirty-two years after that, WSBA, did various things?
HT: I did various things. I could walk into a TV station and operate just about any piece of equipment in there.

TC: So you did continue to work there?
HT: Yeah, I switched departments. I switched from what they call the production department to the news department.

TC: But that’s part of that thirty-two years you’re talking about?
HT: Yeah.

TC: Okay. And then after Spartanburg you came to Union?
HT: No, I’ve always lived in Union but I drove back and forth to Spartanburg.

TC: Did you?
HT: Uh-huh.

TC: I see, okay. And so now you at one point became mayor pro tem here in Union?
HT: Right.

TC: Okay. How did that happen if I may ask?
HT: Coming out of Washington D.C. and living up around that area, you know, the home of national politics, I didn’t want anything to do with politics. So Edward Harris he was city council from our district and he decided that he wasn’t going to run. He had some other aspirations. So he decided he wasn’t going to run and the people were trying to find somebody to run. So I talked to Robert Garner and I said well, he asked me to run and I said well, let me think about it, you know, because I really wasn’t interested in politics. So at the last minute I decided to get into the race and I won.

TC: City council position?

HT: Uh-huh.

TC: Okay. How many years? Trying to add them up?

HT: No, ten years.

TC: Ten years?

HT: Ten years.

TC: I see.

HT: Ten years I was on city council.

TC: Okay and then you became mayor pro tem.

HT: Mayor pro tem, I became mayor pro tem about, probably about four years ago.

TC: I see. How does one get into that position of being mayor pro tem?

HT: Well, really in this situation your members of council vote you in that position. Your colleagues vote you into that position and I was the senior person. Paul Glenn you know he was the mayor pro tem but, you know, he just kind of stepped back and I stepped in.

TC: Okay, I see. And then so you eventually ran for mayor after a problem in the mayor’s situation in Union and you ran for mayor? No, well, you became mayor, interim mayor or acting mayor?

HT: Well, you know people use acting and interim but the state law says that.

TC: You become mayor.

HT: I’m actually mayor for that particular period of time.

TC: Period of time until there’s an election.

HT: Yeah.

TC: Okay and then the election came and we’re talking about fall or spring of what year, last year?

HT: Yeah.

TC: Two thousand eight?

HT: Two thousand eight.

TC: Eight, okay, you were elected?
HT: Yeah.
TC: Mayor, okay. I think weren’t there about fourteen?
HT: Fourteen people in the race.
TC: Fourteen?
HT: Yeah.
TC: Okay and you came in first obviously.
HT: Yeah.
TC: And there were how many white opponents?
HT: There were like about ten.
TC: Ten whites?
HT: Yeah.
TC: Okay and how many?
HT: Four blacks.
TC: Four blacks?
HT: Four blacks.
TC: Okay and you came in first?
HT: Yes.
TC: Who was second?
HT: Terrence Inman, he’s Chamber director.
TC: Commerce.
HT: I had about three thousand votes. He had five hundred.
TC: I see. Now why do you think that, what were the kinds of things that contributed to your winning over all of those, what eighteen persons?
HT: Yeah, well, I’ve been on council for ten years and I guess having the most experience and really when you throw the covers back and look at it, our last mayor he was making like a hundred and four thousand dollars a year. So when the people really found out how much he was making a lot of people got interested in the seat. They were interested in the money, you know, and the position, the duties in that position came later. But my whole thing was, you know, the duties of a job, you know, I was more qualified I feel than any of the rest of them in the field, you know. The money was there but, you know, that wasn’t the issue.
TC: I see, okay, and obviously I assume that the citizens felt the same.
HT: Yeah, you know during the campaign there was a lot of quiet things being said, you know, about me and certain things and this and that. But I’ve always tried to carry myself in a respectable manner, fair and honest manner, and I think a lot of people saw that and they saw the experience that I had, you know. We had a five year plan already in place. Rather than coming
in swinging a big stick and trying to knock this down and that down we stuck with the plan, which was a good plan.

**TC:** Right. The last thing here, we both are graduates of Sims High School and we know that Prof Sims, as he was called, for whom the school was named and we had a great football team as you know. And before we got in school back in the ’50s especially, at the football games there would be a large number of white persons attending those games. And this relates to an article that I read, several articles that I read and one was actually was the opening of the Sims High School in 1927 in which Prof Sims invited whites to attend the dedication of the school. It said half of the seats in the courthouse were reserved for white persons. So my point is this. I feel that as a result of Prof Sims he kind of may have started way back in 1927 and even prior to that because he came to Union in 1905, he started racial interaction and harmony that has resulted into contributing to things that we see today in Union and Union County.

**HT:** Right and I agree. I didn’t know him personally. The only thing I’ve ever seen of him was pictures and stuff like that. But really in my heart I feel that he was, he was probably one of the greatest men that I ever knew in this area because he left a lot of legacy, a lot of legacy here. When people speak of Prof Sims it’s in all respects, all respects. I never heard anything negative by black or white. You know sometimes you know when you are, by being black, let’s say it like that, by being black you get to talking to people and you really hear the inside story, the untold story. But I’ve never heard anything negative, you know, said about Prof Sims.

**TC:** And since you mentioned that he left a lot of legacy, you know that we have a new school that will be dedicated on October 11th and the theme for that dedication, excuse me, the theme for the Sims High all classes reunion as part of that dedication is Sims: The Legacy Continues. Yeah, and it relates to what you’re saying here about his legacy.

Okay now as mayor of Union do you have any comments you’d like to make about what you’d like to see, some of the things for the future of the city and maybe the county?

**HT:** Yeah, in the city, you know, we continue to.

**TC:** And I know you have been, excuse me, you have been in office since, when did you take office?

**HT:** I took office January.

**TC:** Of 2008, 9?

**HT:** Well, technically.

**TC:** After the election?

**HT:** After the election, yeah, I took office the very first meeting.

**TC:** That was 2008 or 2009?

**HT:** Two thousand and eight.

**TC:** Two thousand and eight?

**HT:** November.

**TC:** Okay so you’ve been in office now for about a year and six months.
HT: Not quite a year, not quite a year.

TC: Okay so you are still in the process of trying to get things?

HT: Well, basically we’re following through with a lot of plans that were already on the table, a lot of good plans. Like I said earlier, we following through with them and I’m trying to spearhead a group because we want an arts center, multicultural center here, and bringing the people together, putting the pieces together, beginning to visualize, you know. We’re pinpointing where the money is going to come from and stuff like that. But I really feel that the future of Union is bright. I travel all over the country and when I sit down and talk to other people about how their cities are doing, you know, they’ve got some sad stories, stories that I haven’t been able to tell about Union because they don’t exist. You know, when you live around something you can kind of take the little intricate details and make a molehill out of them but Union is not in bad shape. Yes, we’ve got a high unemployment rate and stuff like that but a lot of that is due to some things that were put in place thirty years ago finally beginning to grab a hold on Union. You know,

I’ve heard horror stories of certain business people sending letters to businesses saying we don’t want your kind in Union. You know, they pushed aside the interstate, wouldn’t let the interstate come through here and that stunted the growth of Union. I have to say from the bottom of my heart and I really believe this that I go to a lot of places and I hear people saying how much they love Union but when it comes down to brass tacks if it’s not anything going in their pocket.

TC: They fight for their own pond.

HT: They fight for their own pond. But you got some people that really do love Union and fight for it.

TC: I don’t know whether you wish to make any comments or not with reference to my next topic here and that is you know Sims Junior High, which is the last building on Sims High School, as of last spring, spring of 2009, it’s no longer in use so we don’t know what’s going to happen to that building to my knowledge. You mentioned an arts center and I know we still have that auditorium down there. That’s something that Mr. Moorer fought for because I’ve heard him say so, that he wanted a separate gym, a separate auditorium and separate what? I think it was three things, cafeteria, yeah. So I don’t know exactly how that building might fit in with plans for the future and I understand that you may not wish to say much comment at this time about it.

HT: Well, first of all, that building is just outside of the city, city corporate limits.

TC: It is?

HT: Yeah.

TC: It’s in the county?

HT: Yeah so then the next thing is, you know, I would love to see that particular building preserved. You got a great gym there. You got a great auditorium, a good acoustical building, auditorium and the building itself. I’m just hoping that some group will step up and approach the school board and come up with a plan for that particular building. We got all these groups running around with mentoring programs. That’s good. Let’s get together. Let’s sit down and come up with a plan to use that building. Mentoring is good but if you got everybody mentoring,
who’s teaching skills, who’s teaching how to lay bricks, who’s teaching shop, who’s teaching electrical and stuff like that? Because you know it’s a proven fact that, you know, everybody can’t learn by sitting in a classroom. A lot of people learn by doing. And that building has a thousand uses for it.

TC: Well, I have, I’m knowledgeable of what was done at another no longer used black high school and we can talk about it. I’ll give you the information rather and, you know, go from there to see if it might be helpful. So if you don’t have any additional comments we’ll discontinue at this point. I certainly have enjoyed it. It’s been very informative. But I would like to know do you have any additional comments you’d like to make about anything, maybe something that we haven’t touched upon?

HT: We’ve basically covered a lot of things and, you know, the legacy lives on and I’m just, I’m proud to be a part of that legacy. And what I got out of Sims High was a lot and I carry that through life. And whenever I go anywhere throughout the continental United States I’m not ashamed to tell anybody, you know, I’m from Union, South Carolina. I attended Sims High School.

TC: May I ask you about that and this will be our last. Any comments you’d like to make, additional comments about what we got from Sims High, the teachers, the administrators?

HT: It’s a lot of pride, there’s a lot of pride that came out of Sims High School you know. You learned to have that pride. When you went to Sims High School and walked through those doors, even now when they have functions down there and I walk through those doors it’s just something that kind of comes over you. You know your mind goes back and you start remembering. I remember when they were building what we called the new wing to the school down there and it’s a lot of pride come out of that. And the teachers, you know, they were very dedicated.

TC: Very caring.

HT: They worked with what they had and they really taught. We had a lot of successful people that came out of Sims High School.

TC: Right and it has meant a lot and we’re very proud of it.

HT: Yeah.

TC: Well, again, I certainly think you for your time and your interest. I’d like for you to know I think this has been the longest interview that I have done and I really appreciate it.

HT: No problem.

TC: Thanks again.

End of interview