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Tom Crosby Oral History Collection
Tom Crosby Oral History Interview 1 of 2

Interviewee
Crosby, Tom, 1940-

Interviewer
L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date
September 8, 2011

Location
Columbia, South Carolina

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Scope and Background Note
In this oral history interview Tom Crosby discusses his educational experiences in Union County, South Carolina, growing up in Santuck on his father's cotton farm, teachers who influenced him at McBeth Elementary, Sims High School, and Allen University, his pursuit of a Master's Degree at Indiana University and his Doctoral work at Pennsylvania State University, including some of the social conditions he encountered while there and during his time teaching at Morgan State University, Jeanes teachers, time spent at Voorhees College, and his tenure as Chair of the Biology Department at Allen University. Dr. Tom Crosby was born on May 10, 1940 in Blair, Fairfield County, South Carolina. He is a retired educator. Tom Crosby interviewed by Andrea L'Hommedieu at the Office of Oral History on September 8, 2011.
Interviewee: Tom Crosby
Interviewer: Andrea L’Hommedieu
CROS# 044

Andrea L’Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Rosenwald Schools oral history project being done by Dr. Crosby, Tom Crosby, and today this is Andrea L’Hommedieu on September 8, 2011. And I’m going to interview Dr. Crosby both about his experiences and growing up in South Carolina and his knowledge of Rosenwald schools. And then we’ll talk about why he wanted to do this project with others about Rosenwald schools and what he learned from it. So, Dr. Crosby, would you start just by giving me your full name.

Tom Crosby: My name is just Tom Crosby, not Thomas, just T-O-M.

AL: And where and when were you born?

TC: I was born in Fairfield County, South Carolina in a community known as Blair, BL-A-I-R. And I was born May 10, ’43.

AL: Nineteen forty-three. And did you grow up in that area or did you move?

TC: No, I think I was around four or five years old and we moved to Union County. We moved to a community known as Santuck, S-A-N, its spelled two ways, sometimes it’s spelled S-A-N-T-U-C-K and other times its spelled S-A-N-T-U-C. Now the sign at this road that goes through there, Highway 215, it’s spelled S-A-N-T-U-C.

AL: Okay.

TC: And that’s in the southern part of Union County. So we moved from Fairfield County up to Union County.

AL: And what were your parents’ names?

TC: My mother’s name was Sally Feaster Crosby and my father Sam Crosby.

AL: And is Feaster spelled F-E-A-S-T-E-R?

TC: Right.

AL: And were they both from South Carolina, or?

TC: They both were from South Carolina. They both were born in Fairfield County in South Carolina.

AL: And what did they do for work when you were growing up?
TC: Well, I guess when I got to be about twelve or fourteen years old my dad had been a farmer and my mom was mostly a housewife and did some work on the farm too, yeah.
AL: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?
TC: Originally there were twelve.
AL: Wow.
TC: There were twelve, eleven guys, eleven males and one female and she passed when I think I was around four or five years old so I don’t remember her. But I have a brother that looks like her quite a bit and some say that I resemble her too. Her name was Drusilla.
AL: Oh.
TC: Yeah, so I never had a sister, just these brothers. And all of them are deceased except four of us and unfortunately within the past three years four brothers have passed. So now there’s one older than I am and then I have two younger than I am.
AL: That’s a lot of boys in the family.
TC: That’s true, yeah.
AL: Do you have recollections of your mother keeping you all in line?
TC: I don’t have too much memory of that. It mostly was our father, you know, and he did most of the discipline, so when Mom said I’m going to tell your dad, we knew to behave. I don’t remember ever getting any spanking or anything like that from my mom. But I do remember once or twice from my dad and it was, felt pretty good. You can imagine it was good. But there wasn’t too much corporal punishment, yeah. He could speak or he could look and that was enough.
AL: Yeah. And so your dad until you were a teenager your dad had a farm?
TC: He had a farm.
AL: This was post World War II?
TC: It was cotton, mostly cotton back in that time, back in the I guess late ‘30s, early ‘40s and then cotton kind of teetered out, you might say. I think that was around in the early ‘50s, late ‘40s or early ‘50s. There was an insect that destroyed a lot of the cotton producing. It was called the boll weevil.
AL: Oh, yes.
TC: Yeah, I think it’s b-o-l-l w-e-v-i-l I think. I’m not sure.
AL: Yeah, that sounds right.
TC: Yeah so, and then after that my dad worked in construction, yeah.
AL: This was post World War II?
TC: Yes, it was, uh-huh, yeah. I know one school, I did not attend this particular school, that he helped to build and it was the last black school in southern Union County and the name of that school was Carlisle Santuck. And the reason it was given that name,
there’s another community I guess about five miles or six miles away from I grew up. It was known as Carlisle, C-A-R-L-I-S-L-E. And I guess they couldn’t decide, are we going to build it in Santuck or are we going to build it in Carlisle. So they did build it in Santuck and so they gave it the name Carlisle Santuc. So now it was not a Rosenwald school.

**AL:** It wasn’t?

**TC:** Yeah.

**AL:** And that had to do with funding, how it was funded, as to whether it as a Rosenwald school or not?

**TC:** Right, yes the Rosenwald schools, those were schools that got money from a person that owned Sears Roebuck years ago and his name was Julius Rosenwald. And Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute became a friend of Rosenwald, prior to 1912. I’m not sure exactly how long prior to that but in 1912 Rosenwald and any school, excuse me, that got funds from the Rosenwald fund, is honorarily referred to as being a Rosenwald school. And so some of the schools that were built, they actually took the name Rosenwald here in South Carolina for example, like we in Colombia now. And there’s a county adjacent to this one known as Lexington so there is a high school that used to exist over there, black high school, and the name of it was Lexington Rosenwald. So the Carlisle Santuck School was not a Rosenwald School. One of the reasons why is because the Rosenwald fund they discontinued in 1932.

**AL:** Oh, that early?

**TC:** That early, yeah, in 1932. So that Carlisle Santuck School, that school was built around in the early ‘50s. I think I’m correct, yeah, so obviously it wouldn’t be a Rosenwald school. Now my elementary school, I did not attend the Carlisle Santuck, was also in that community known as Santuck but the name of it was Poplar Grove. I think I was told by my fifth and sixth grade teacher that it got that name from some poplar trees, which is a kind of tree.

**AL:** Right.

**TC:** And it got that name from that tree, I guess large trees I guess that were near it when it was built. Now I have seen an article where that school originally had, Poplar Grove originally had four rooms. But I have an article, should I say, of the graduating class in 1941 and they added an additional room so it had five rooms ultimately, okay?

**AL:** Yeah.

**TC:** Now with reference to oral history and when that school was built, when I started working on the project I wanted, of course, to include my elementary school. So I started thinking ‘well now, who is the oldest person in this community that might know when it was built?’ So I immediately thought of a lady known as Lugene, I don’t think it’s Lugenia, I think it’s just, it may be Lugenia, but she’s often referred to as being Lugene Gist and I think now she must be around ninety-five or ninety-six. So I asked her if you remember when this school was built and she said, “Yes, I do, my father helped to build it,” and I think she said that he helped to bring some logs, you know, to be cut into
lumber to help build that school. And the Rosenwald fund required that the black persons in the community provide some assistance in the building and whites were also supposed to provide some assistance in building it. So she said that they did various things to raise money to help build it and one of the things that they had is what they called a fish fry, you know, selling sandwiches. I’ve forgotten the other kinds of things that they did. And she also said that some of the white persons did do things to help provide funds too.

Now, when was it built and that kind of thing? Well, there’s another person in the community, he happens to be a guy, he’s living, and he told me that he was born in 1925 and his mom started him to school when he was six years old. So the first year that he went to school, he was six years old but he went to another school down the road somewhere. But he said that Poplar Grove was being built so obviously if he was born in 1925 and started school when he was six, my school was built one year before the Rosenwald funds ended in 1932. So those two persons, in my opinion, have confirmed that it was a Rosenwald school and approximately the year that it was built 1931, you know, somewhere like that.

And it also had some of the features of the Rosenwald schools, such as folding doors between two rooms. You would push the doors apart and you would have two rooms, which would serve like as an auditorium and a stage in one of the rooms, and my school did have that. I remember the school closing programs where the kids would be up there on the stage performing and so forth. So it had that feature, the folding doors and a stage in one of the rooms.

And then another feature of the Rosenwald schools was what they called a battery of windows, which simply means a series of windows. I think it said ranged between four and six or seven windows. So my school did have that in each of the windows, each of the five rooms there were these four or five windows in a series and the purpose was to let light in. Now that was for the early Rosenwald schools and most of them were built prior to 1932, as I said. Now I am not positive whether my school initially had those first four rooms, where it initially had electricity or not, but when I was there it did have electricity in each of the rooms.

So another feature of the Rosenwald schools is that they were built on what’s called pillars, which is often times it was either brick or a stone, a large stone for a foundation. And the purpose of that was since these schools were mostly in the southern states and you have a lot of humidity during the summer, it was to serve for ventilation so the floors wouldn’t get so humid, you know, and cause decay. So those were some of the features that my school had that the Rosenwald schools had in common, yeah. So those two persons, I think, confirmed orally the history of the school in terms of when it was founded.

**AL:** So talk to me about your experiences at that school.

**TC:** They were enjoyable. I remember being in the first grade and I’m a graduate of Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina and my first grade teacher was an Allen graduate. And I remember the Dick and Jane book that they used at that time. And I recently found out that my second grade teacher, well, I knew that she was an Allen
graduate also but I recently found out that she had the four-year degree. Now I’ve forgotten when it started, the colleges, I think the black colleges and the white colleges in South Carolina and maybe all the southern states, you could get a two-year degree, two-year program and go out and teach. I guess that was primarily elementary. But I found out about two months ago that she actually graduated from Allen in 1957. Well, I had her somewhere around 19, around 1949 or ’50, 1949 I guess it would be, something like that, and so obviously she didn’t have that four-year degree at that time but she eventually got it.

AL: Eventually got it. Now I have to ask this because I’m not sure. Allen University, what its mission? Is it an integrated college or is, was it….?

TC: It is integrated. It has never been strictly segregated or built only for black persons. It has never been that. It’s just that the South has had segregation prior to 1970 in the schools, in the colleges and public schools. So it never had objection to white students attending. When I was there, I graduated in 1964, so the only [non-African American] students at that time, they were from China, I remember about four of them were from China. We had white teachers, we had some white teachers; the majority of teachers were black but we did have some white teachers. Now there are some white students there now. I don’t think there’s any more than about seven or eight.

AL: So it’s mostly.

TC: It’s predominantly black, but open to anyone who wishes to attend and has always been that way.

AL: Okay.

TC: So my third grade teacher was an Allen graduate and my fifth grade teacher, fifth and sixth grade teacher. Fifth and sixth grade teacher was the same teacher. She was the one that impressed me the most I guess you might say. For one thing, I wasn’t in the first grade, I had gotten to what, four or five years older or something like that, and she was an excellent teacher, very demanding but very good. And so one of my experiences I remember with her is that she would ask me to help the other kids with some things that they didn’t understand. And also she would have me to go to the board. I remember distinctly around one o’clock I believe it was and this was math, and she would give me a string with a piece of chalk at the end of that string and I would draw a circle. We were learning the multiplication tables and I would draw a circle and then put, you know, the numbers one through twelve on that circle. So if you’re learning the, what is it, the fifth tables, you’d put the five in the center where the hands of the clock meet, and so five times one is five, five times two ten, and so forth.

AL: Okay.

TC: And so that experience really I guess you might say was the impetus for my wanting to become a teacher and that helped, you might say, that experience of helping the other students in class. And so then she would also have us to help do things for the holidays, that is we would help to make things for the window. You know, like Christmas we’d make a Santa Claus. I remember that. And I remember you know you’d have the face of the Santa Claus and then you’d use cotton for his beard, that kind of thing. And
you’d take the, what is it, paper, what do you call that paper you cut into strips? Anyway, excuse me, you would take this paper and you would cut it into small, I guess about a half an inch in width and you’d make a chain, you know, different red and green. **AL:** Yes, construction paper?

**TC:** It’s a garland, isn’t it? We’d make a garland.

**AL:** Oh, okay.

**TC:** Yeah, construction paper.

**AL:** Construction paper, yes.

**TC:** Yeah, we’d have red and green construction paper and make chain with red, then a chain with green and then you’d put them altogether and make the garland, yeah. So those were some of the things I remember in elementary school unless you might want to ask something else about the elementary.

**AL:** Yeah, was there discipline in the school at that age?

**TC:** There was, yeah.

**AL:** In what form?

**TC:** There was some corporal, yeah, there was some corporal discipline. I think there would be maybe like a strap or a switch, and some of the kids would get a lick or two of that, yeah, so some of that did take place.

**AL:** Did it take place in the building or would they be taken outside?

**TC:** They would take you outside or into what was called the cloak room. That’s where you kept your clothing, your caps and your hat and, you know, coat, that kind of thing. But the kids back then the kids were not too bad because their parents were fairly firm. They were firm, not fairly firm, they were firm and the teachers were too. So the kids just did not misbehave that much, yeah. It was a different time, yeah.

**AL:** Yeah. And then you went on to the next school. Was that also a Rosenwald school?

**TC:** No, it wasn’t. So when I finished the seventh grade I went, now this was out in the country area, so when I finished the seventh grade I went to the city of Union, South Carolina, the big city. In the eighth grade I went to a school that was known as Macbeth and so I was there for one year. And then after that into the ninth grade I went to Sims High School, which was located in Union. And Sims High was a Rosenwald school. And the reason is because the first building, there were two buildings on Sims High School and the first building was built in 1927. It got twenty-one hundred dollars from the Rosenwald Fund to help build it and thirty-seven thousand nine hundred dollars from the county and the state. But I read in an article that the majority of the money came from the county school system, rather than from the state. They had a tax, they called it levy, but it was a tax that the county established, yeah, so that made it be a Rosenwald school.

Also they had a song; I don’t know whether this song was throughout the South or not, in honor of Rosenwald. I don’t recall the words of it now. They weren’t singing it when I
was in high school. Maybe when I was in ninth grade they were singing it but I don’t recall it. But I do have the words of it from someone who finished high school before I did and it was called, I think they just called it Rosenwald Day Song or something like that. I haven’t been able to find it anywhere in the literature. I haven’t been able to find it but a number of the persons, several persons know the words to it. No one seems to know all the words.

AL: Some of the words, but yes.

TC: But some of them do know. Now I saw an article that referred to at the dedication of the school the person that was over the Rosenwald funds for the black schools in South Carolina attended that dedication and his name was, the last name was Felder. Yeah, the last name was Felder. I don’t recall the first name, yeah. So I finished Sims High and then I came to Allen University, which is an African Methodist Episcopal supported school. And so there I majored in biology and minored in chemistry. So I enjoyed my stay there. I had some very good teachers. After that I went to Indiana University in Bloomington and I have a master’s of arts in zoology and botany. I would like to regress a little. AL: Sure, go ahead.

TC: In high school, that contributed to my becoming a teacher, first was that fifth or sixth grade experience of doing that math problem, math situation. In high school my high school had what was called principal for two days and that was where the students actually became a principal and teachers. So I don’t know how, I don’t recall did the students select this person to be the principal or the teachers selected somebody to become principal. And then each teacher had a student to be that teacher for those two days in that particular classroom. One thing that always interests me, I wanted to be the biology teacher but I was a social studies teacher, which is my most disliked subject. But I did okay, yeah, and that teacher is still living. Many of them are gone but she’s still living.

AL: And what was her name?

TC: Her name was Dora Thomas Martin, Dora Thomas Martin. She was the coordinator of the historical marker for the first Sims High building that was built in 1927 and it continued until 1951. And then a new Sims High School was built in 1956 and it existed from 1956 until 1970 when desegregation came, or integration. So this afternoon or this evening at six o’clock I have a meeting that I have to conduct to place a historical marker at that second and last building of Sims High School.

AL: Oh, nice. And she’ll be there?

TC: Well, two years ago another guy and I coordinated an all class’s reunion, Sims High all class’s reunion, so that’s what the meeting is about this afternoon.

AL: Oh, okay.

TC: But she won’t be there because we had a committee for that reunion and she wasn’t on that committee.

AL: Right.
TC: Yeah. But she may be the person, so we are going to have the installation of the marker on, I think on October 29th, which will be 2011, and she may be the person to read the history of the school, yeah. So we have to decide those kinds of things this afternoon at six. So that’s how I, what I did with reference to teaching in high school. I taught social studies for two days. And then at Allen when I was a student there the teacher had to be absent, I think, for three or four days, biology teacher. I was a big time senior so I was her laboratory assistant. So when she was absent for those two or three days I taught the general biology class and I remember what I taught. I think the first day I did mitosis and then the second day I think I did meiosis, you know, sometimes they say meiosis but, so that contributed to my interest in teaching too.

And since we’re talking about that, I remember when I applied to Allen. On the application I think it asked ‘why do you want to major in this particular subject?’ I believe, and I saw it about two years ago. Somehow I was in the registrar’s office and I saw my application and I wrote on there that ‘I think I can get students to learn’. And if I may be humble enough to say that I think I have been able to do that, achieve that objective, yeah, because at Morgan, I’m retired from Morgan State University, which is located in Baltimore, Maryland, and I taught biology there. So one of the things that I would do that relates to what we’re talking about here in the field of teaching and giving credit to my high school teacher and my father and my uncle, my uncle had gone no more than about the third grade, equivalent you might say to the third grade, but he knew I think every tree, the common name of every tree, weed, and grass in South Carolina I think, so he taught them to me.

AL: Oh, wow.

TC: And I think my grandfather he also knew the names of plants. He probably taught it, of course, taught Uncle John, my uncle, so he passed it on down. So at Morgan State many of those kids were from the larger cities and so forth so we would go outside and we would look at the, there was a section dealing with the ecosystems, for example, where you got one of the components of an ecosystem with that of plants. And so we would go outside and we would learn, they would learn the names, common names of plants. My uncle also knew what certain plants could be used for, medicinal uses. And so I would tell them some of the medicinal uses of certain plants. So when I see them now, that’s one thing that they remember, going outside.

AL: Right.

TC: I was in Seattle, Washington attending the national science teacher’s conference. That was about twelve years ago and there was a guy, I ate in a restaurant and there was a guy working in there and he remembered my name and about those plants and so forth, so all those kinds of things contributed. And then in graduate school at Indiana I taught the parasitology lab and I also taught the entomology lab at Indiana, yeah.

AL: Now your Uncle John learned, you probably think, from your grandfather. What did your grandfather do for work?
TC: He was a farmer. Yes, he was a farmer because, as I said, most of the relatives came from the country and most of them back in the ‘20s and ‘30s they farmed. You know, these are black people so they farmed. I would say of that area back then in the ‘20s, I would say that’s what ninety-five of them did, ninety-five percent I suspect did.

AL: And so they would grow cotton?

TC: They grew cotton.

AL: They probably also had vegetables?

TC: Vegetables, yeah, and many of them were what we call sharecroppers, yeah.

AL: Now you came along into the world during World War II, after the Great Depression had passed. Did you have family members who talked about making it through the Depression and whether their farming helped them?

TC: I don’t remember persons talking too much about that. I remember them saying that they were hard times and something about rationing. I think they had stamps or something like that and you could only get a certain amount of sugar or flour and things like that. Yeah, I do recall some discussion about that, yeah.

AL: Now at Sims High School in Union, sports was a fairly central thing. Can you talk about the sports teams and the coaches and what they meant in terms of your education?

TC: Yeah, well, my school was very noted in athletics, two sports: football, baseball. Basketball was okay but the number one was that of football. And the first principal of Sims High School, his name was Andrew Alexander Sims and, as I said before, he was 1921-27 that is through ’51 and then his son-in-law became principal in 1951 through 1969, okay? And he had a winning streak in football that started in 1947. I think they lost the first two games in 1946 but after that they did not lose another game, conference game until 1954. Unfortunately that streak was stopped by our rival in Spartanburg and that school was called Carver High School, October 1, 1954. So that’s one of the major achievements of the principal, James F. Moorer, M-O-R-E. So that’s one of the major achievements of that school from a sports area.

And then academically it was good. It was the first accredited black high school in the upper part of South Carolina, which we call the Upstate. It has that honor along with two other schools, Booker T. Washington High School, which was here in Columbia and that’s where I did my student teaching, at Booker T. Washington High. And another school in 1927 also was accredited by the South Carolina Department of Education, Mayo High School, M-A-Y-O, in Darlington, South Carolina. And then in terms of some of its graduates and in this case there are two with reference to sports, one was in football, Willie Jefferies, the first black coach in Division 1A football. And then another, he attended South Carolina State University, now it’s known as. And another person John Harold Bates, he attended Allen University, my alma mater, and he was the coach of the first black college male basketball team to play in the National Invitational Tournament in New York, known as the NIT. And another person, first black chief of chaplains of the United States Army, attended Benedict College in South Carolina, Matthew Zimmerman.

Okay, the historical marker that we will be placing October 29th, those three areas of achievements are on that marker for those guys; their names are not there but their areas
of achievements are. I know there was one person, with reference to academics, her name was Beverley Vaughan, I believe. She attended South Carolina State and it’s quite an achievement to get all As and she graduated with all As, nothing but As for the entire four years. And then there have been persons who have done well in education and law or medicine and so forth. So those kinds of things have been part of my experiences, yeah, in elementary, high school, and college.

AL: And then you said you went to Indiana?

TC: Yes.

AL: For a graduate degree?

TC: Un-huh.

AL: And what was your experience there because this is the first time you were in a school with a fairly—

TC: Large number of white students, yeah. It was an interesting experience and I was a little apprehensive, I must admit, when I first got there because from an academic perspective I thought I could do the work because I’d had good teachers in high school and good teachers at Allen, but you never know something until you experience it. So I didn’t have any serious problems with the academic work at Indiana, had some teachers that seem to have taken a special interest in me. I was the, as I said before, my major was zoology with a minor in botany, so I usually was the only one, only black person in class except one time there was another black student in the class with me. That class had about a hundred, maybe a hundred and fifty students in it so we never met. So it was an interesting experience.

I remember once one Saturday afternoon, so rather (Indiana was not good in football at that time, it was in the fall), so rather than going to the football game I went to the library to do something and I sat at this table and there were, I guess there were about maybe five, seven females, they were all white, and I don’t know whether they, I don’t know whether it was a racial thing or not, I mustn’t say that, but they eventually all got up and left. I did see a little, you know, kind of moving, looking at me to some extent. I don’t know whether it was strictly that. I don’t think I heard too much snickering. I may have heard a little. I’m not sure.

But anyway, but I do recall my first week there, first two or three days. I would get there early because my wife had to be to work at eight o’clock and I think my class started at eight-thirty so I went along with her. And as I walked in, now like at Allen there were only about thousand I guess, nine hundred or a thousand students there so you kind of knew the face of each person or something. But anyway, so I walked in and I said good morning and I know the volume of my voice and that kind of thing but I think I spoke loud enough for them to hear me and no one said anything. But at a large school like, there were thirty-two thousand there when I was there and those schools, those large schools, they’re impersonal. But anyway, I had good friends at Indiana, two guys that were very helpful to me. We used to study together and we would go down to Nick’s, which was a pizza restaurant, and have Budweiser. But they were very helpful to me
academically and I would leave it there. As I said earlier, I taught lab in parasitology and entomology.

AL: Now you mentioned your wife. Were you married in graduate school?

TC: Yes, we were married, yeah.

AL: And she taught as well?

TC: No, she worked in the lab in the anatomy department, anatomy and physiology department, yeah, so it was an interesting experience, yeah. So after getting the master’s from Indiana I got a job at Morgan State University in biology and I was there for four years I believe it was and Morgan then at that time after four years it got university status. So they wanted to increase the number of persons with the terminal degree, a doctorate, so I got two-thirds salary and I know I was one of the first because that was the first time that they had what was called educational leave and gave you two-thirds salary, so I got the educational leave to go to Penn State. And we were supposed to come back for at least three years. So at Penn State it was a good experience also and I taught biology education methods at Penn State. I did that for two semesters. So that was another good experience too with reference to the teaching profession or teaching career.

AL: Right.

TC: Yeah. So I finished the doctorate at Penn State in 1982 and I stayed at Morgan for another, at least maybe seventeen years I believe, yeah, after getting the doctorate. So after that I came, after retiring I came back and I worked for a year down at Voorhees College where we’re going to do the interview down there.

AL: Right.

TC: And then after that I became chairman of biology at Allen for two years. And after being at Allen for two years I met Dr. Littlefield. I met her and also Dr. Cleveland Sellers. And I knew that I wanted to find out something about this record of ninety-three games that Sims High had won so I started looking at information in Union’s library but the screen there on their micro reader, I was told that there’s a larger one in Columbia at the South Caroliniana so I came here and started looking and I came across a number of sources. One was that of the Palmetto Leader newspaper. That was a black newspaper that started in 1925 out of Columbia and it had information about the black schools throughout the state, public schools as well as the black colleges.

So one day I was in the South Caroliniana and the former, I guess she was, curator Robin Cox, she saw me and she asked me what was I doing and I told her that I was looking up the information about my school. And she said, well, Dr. Valinda Littlefield is interested in black teachers that were known as Jeanes teachers, J-E-A-N-E-S, okay, and Jeanes teachers were teachers that were serving in the black schools back in, actually started in 1907. These were teachers that, because many of the teachers you could finish back in the late 1900s, early 1900s, you could actually go out and teach elementary after high school. So they wanted to improve the instruction in the black schools, especially beginning in 1907 and actually on up until 1967 the last jeane teacher existed. And so—
**AL:** So what was the definition of a Jeanes teacher?

**TC:** Jeanes teachers, those were teachers that the county selected to serve as supervisors of instruction in the black schools. So they would go around and observe how well the teachers are teaching and, of course, make suggestions and so forth. And so Dr. Littlefield had interviewed some teachers. I don’t know whether they were all Jeanes teachers or not. I don’t think they were. She had interest in black teachers and so one of the interests is that of Jeanes teachers. I haven’t interviewed one yet. My high school teacher in the ninth grade was a Jeanes teacher. In fact, I remember when I was in the first grade she would come around and sit and observe and we didn’t know why she was there. So when I got in the ninth grade though she had moved up to the high school level or she was there, should I say, and she was an excellent teacher. She was an English teacher and she was a great teacher. So then eventually after meeting, what’s her name, Cox, Robin?

**AL:** I don’t remember. I don’t know her last name.

**TC:** Meeting her here in the library, in the South Caroliniana, she introduced me to Meriwether. I’ve forgotten his first name.

**AL:** Nick.

**TC:** Nick, Nicholas Meriwether, so I started going around doing taped interviews of black persons who had attended the black schools in the past. And I knew my experiences that I had gone through, like I walked about four or five miles to elementary school up until about the sixth grade and no buses, so no buses and then we eventually got buses. I think I was around in the seventh grade I believe, sixth or seventh grade.

**AL:** Did the white schools have buses?

**TC:** But the white schools had buses, yeah, and they would throw things out the window and call us names and things like that. So that’s another kind of experience that I have had so I wanted to know what other kinds of experiences other people had had, you know, and also what kinds of teachers they had. I knew my teachers were very dedicated and concerned. You could just tell it because they were like our mothers and our fathers and grandfathers, the way that they interacted with us. So that’s how I really got interested in oral history, yeah, wanting to know what kinds of things other persons that attended other schools and other counties had encountered, yeah, so that’s how I got involved.

**AL:** Yeah. And do you think it was a worthwhile project? What do you feel?

**TC:** Very much so, it was worthwhile for me because my experiences were confirmed, you might say. Some of my experiences were confirmed by other persons and also I learned some of the kinds of things that other persons went through that I did not go through, for example. I’m trying to think of something that—

**AL:** And you realized you do like history after all?

**TC:** I do, yeah. So when you work with something in which you have personal interest, it’s different. And I think history is being taught now differently than it used to
be, you know, so many names and dates and things like that. They are teaching it now I think with reference to the names and dates more in a, what, contextual kind of way.

**AL:** Right, social context.

**TC:** Social context.

**AL:** Political context.

**TC:** Right, yeah.

**AL:** Yeah. Well, good, do you have any other thoughts or should we end for today? We can always do a second interview.

**TC:** I don’t have any additional today. I can say though that I’ve thoroughly enjoyed what I’ve been doing and I have learned a lot from it. And there are other persons that I haven’t interviewed that should be interviewed so possibly we can interview some additional persons maybe sometime.

**AL:** That would be great. Alright.

**TC:** But I’ve enjoyed what I’ve done.

**AL:** Well, thank you very much.

**TC:** Well, thank you.

End of interview