

Willie Massey

Interview 99a

April 22, 1986

Marie Davis & Pate and Vivian Warner, Interviewers

Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

ABSTRACT: Born in Trinity County, Texas, in 1911, longtime Diboll educator Willie Massey describes how he worked his way through college and went on to teach for 39 years. He discusses life before integration of the schools, the “no-pass, no-play” issue, teaching in Diboll, and the effects of integration on schools and the community. Also mentioned are: Butch Davis, Freddie Randolph, Arthur Temple, Jr., Fennie Simmons, Ruby Simmons, Lily Griffin, Mattie Smith, Mr. Foster, Robert Ramsey, Lon Smith, and Walter Pate.

Marie Davis (hereafter MD): We are talking with Professor Willie Massey. He lives at 211 Pine, Diboll, Texas. Today’s date is April 22, 1986. With me are Pate and Vivian Warner. My name is Marie Davis. Professor Massey, tell us a little bit about your personal history, when were you born?

Willie Massey (hereafter WM): I was born in 1911 in Trinity County, small community, Nigton community. From Diboll it is about nineteen or twenty miles, just across the river into Trinity County, where I was born. The family, my father and mother had nine children. I grew up in a family of nine children, four girls and five boys. I attended a small school up there in Trinity County. In fact, I finished high school up there. We had a small high school over there in Trinity County. After completing my high school education I went to college, I went to Prairie. I went down there. Of course, I didn’t have any money to go to school on. I think I’d saved up maybe \$25 or \$30, but I did have enough money to get registered in school. Then I had to get a job and work. I started milking cows for the dairy there in order to earn enough money to go to school. Now my first year there, this school that I graduated from the high school, was non-accredited high school, so I had to take an entrance examination. I had to take a test in physics and chemistry, and I was not taught those subjects in high school. But I took the test in those subjects and made a good grade. At the end of the first year in our chemistry class, I was the only student that had made straight “A”s in chemistry the whole year, and it was in the freshman class that year. I went on to make good grades the rest of my years through college. After I finished college, I got a job teaching school in Panola County, and taught up there for two years. Then I was invited to accept the principalship job over in Nigton community, my native home. So I accepted that job and taught over there for eight years. At the end of eight years we didn’t have enough students to continue high school, so I was invited to accept the job at Dunbar High School in Lufkin. I accepted this job in Lufkin. The school district in Apple Springs wanted me to take the high school students from the Nigton community to the Dunbar High School in Lufkin. I lived in Nigton community and I got a small bus and I carried these students daily from Nigton

community to Lufkin to high school. Now during this time, Mr. Pate, superintendent of the Diboll School District, came over one day and talked with me, and he asked me about coming to Diboll to work in the school system over here. I had just bought a new school bus. See, I was transporting these students myself and since I'd bought this new school bus, I wanted to get it paid for before I changed jobs. So I didn't accept the first year, but the second year I decided to come to Diboll. However, I feel like I was doing a pretty good job at Dunbar High School in Lufkin, for one reason I was working real hard. I had a real full schedule. I was coaching girls high school basketball, I also coached the boys high school basketball team. I also taught all of the math classes in high school as well as drove the school bus daily for the district. I think I was doing a pretty good job because my first year as coach of the boy's team at Dunbar High School in Lufkin, we won the first district trophy that they had ever won at Dunbar and we almost won state. We missed winning the state championship by just one point in the final game. So I enjoyed coaching basketball as well as teaching math and also serving as assistant principal. But when I came to Diboll I accepted the job as principal of the black school here in Diboll. Then as the black principal, I also had a number of other things to do. One thing, we had to sort of be responsible for the whole school program. During this time the superintendent would come over and tell us, tell me, "Massey, we're turning things over to you and we expect you to run everything over here and we don't have any money to give you, but now, you just have to do the best you can. Now, as far as your athletic program and what not, we just can't finance it. You'll just have to raise money the best you can and finance your own program." But, at the same time, practically all the books that we got were, we got used books, and hardly ever got new books. We actually didn't get enough used books to issue one book to all of the students in each class. In several classes we would have to assign two or three students to one book – two or three students would have to use one book. But we went along with the program and did the best we could, and I think we did a very good job because we were able to graduate a lot of the students from high school that went on to college and did very well in college. We had quite a few students to finish high school within the athletic program that went to college and did real well in college. In fact we had one or two students to make it in pro- football as well as pro-basketball.

MD: Do you remember their names?

WM: Yes, we had one boy that went to pro football. His name was Butch Davis. In baseball we had a boy to go to professional baseball. His name was Randolph, Freddie Randolph, I believe was his name. Now in the educational career, we've had several students, that is a large number of students who have completed college. We had quite a few who have their master's degree and we have one or two, I know, that have their doctor's degree.

MD: What year did you come to Diboll?

WM: I came to Diboll in 1955, I believe. We were in the old building here, that was before they built this new school here in 1956, I believe.

MD: Can you describe the building that was here when you came?

WM: Well, now, when I came to Diboll that year, my first year in Diboll, we had an old frame building. I came down that summer and went in the building to see what we had to work with within the school. Everything in the school building that we had to work with was stored in an old barrel. Some of the class rooms were in this old building; boys in the community were using them for gambling rooms. They'd meet up over there at night; have their gambling games and whatnot within this old school building. So the principal that was here the year before I came, all of the teaching equipment and whatnot that we had was put into a big barrel and it was stored in one room there.

Vivian Warner (hereafter VW): It wasn't much, was it?

WM: It couldn't have been very much, it was all in a barrel, we didn't have anything like typewriters, that sort of thing.

MD: Home making department?

WM: No, didn't have anything like that.

MD: Just basic education, just the basics?

WM: Right, right.

MD: Before you went to college and started teaching, I think you went to Diboll and worked, could you tell us that story?

WM: Oh yes, before I went to college I came to Diboll and got a job working here in Diboll. I had to walk over here. I would walk over here and walk back home on the weekends, and then Monday morning I would walk back to Diboll.

MD: How far was it?

WM: About nineteen or twenty miles right across the river from here, wasn't very far. But I would stay over here and I got a room, room and board, and I would stay here. I was making \$16.20. I had to pay \$4.00 for room and board and during that time I was paying \$10.00 on an obligation my father had attached to us to help pay for some land and pay for our going to school. I had to pay \$10.00 a week, so that left me only \$2.20 a week and invest it somehow. Let somebody use it and they would pay me back \$5.00 or \$6.00 on the weekend. I continued this until I got to the place where I had several twenty dollar bills in my pocket at all times. Of course, within the community there was a lot of drinking and gambling going on but I didn't participate in this sort of thing, but I would let these fellows borrow what little money I had if they would pay me back double on the weekend.

MD: Did they always pay you back?

WM: Well no, they wouldn't always pay me back. But if they didn't pay me back, all I had to do was go to the office and report it, that I let them have some money and they didn't pay me back, and then at the main office they'd just give me my money. Then on payday they would deduct from his check, so getting my money wasn't a problem at all. That way I was able to save a little money, and I finally saved enough to buy me a little car, little old used car. I took this car and started hauling and making trips for people, and in doing this I accumulated quite a bit of money.

VW: You were a real businessman, Mr. Massey.

WM: Well, I did this when I was –

VW: Nineteen years old.

WM: Yes, nineteen years old, that's right.

MD: Tell us some of the things that happened in the community that you can remember at that time. I believe you were talking about the meat market?

WM: Oh, within the Diboll community – oh well, there were so many things that went on here in this community that was so very interesting. Now, we were sort of leading up to this integration and I have experienced some interesting things all along the way up through the integration of our school program. To begin with over in Apple Springs, I'll start over there. Here's how the situation was over there. Now, when I grew up I was a little boy and my father used to carry us to the little town of Apple Springs and we'd pick a bale of cotton and sit up on top of the wagon on top of the cotton. Now when we got to town, the town of Apple Springs, we had to pull our caps off. He'd say – "Boys, pull your hat off, were getting into town now." Then you were not permitted to wear you hat in the store, when you went in the store you had to pull your hat off. In fact I remember one incident where a black man walked into the store over there in Apple Springs with his hat on and he got shot, white fellow shot him because he didn't pull his hat off when he walked in the store. And this sort of thing prevailed over here in Diboll, in fact, I remember very well when I first came to Diboll they had the meat market down where the people go to pick up their checks now, pay office, and at this meat market they had two doors, the door on the right was for white people and the door on the left was for black customers. The white customers would go in on their side and over there you would find pork chops, steaks and sausage, that sort of thing. Over on the side for the blacks you'd find pig's feet, chittlings and all kinds of scraps. The interesting thing about it, I guess, was that it didn't make a lot of difference because the men would get together on the outside of the store and if a white man wanted some chittlings, he'd just give the black man the money to get him some chittlings. If a black man wanted some pork chops, he'd just give the white man some money to buy him some pork chops and then they'd bring it out and swap the meat. So they continued this sort of thing but it didn't last, didn't seem to have lasted very long. At the time it certainly didn't create any problem because they would actually get what they wanted anyhow, see. Now that was one thing I

think of that was very interesting within the community. Now when I first came here to teach school in Diboll, in 1955 as the principal of the school I moved in a building here, a building that was reserved for the principal of the school and I had to pay \$14.00 a month rent on this building. But the average person that lived here in the community, in the black community, was paying \$6.00 a month for rent. On this \$6.00 per month, they didn't have to pay any utility bills or anything, just total rent bills \$6.00 a month. So then I decided to buy this house in which I was living, and I set in and made a deal and bought this house in which I was living. I was called a crazy man for doing it because my rent on the building was \$14.00 a month, see? But still I wanted to buy the building. So then I bought that building and improved it but, I believe at that time that was the only building within the colored community that had inside restrooms and running water and that sort of thing. All the other buildings had outside toilets and whatnot.

MD: And outside hydrants, too.

WM: That's right, they didn't have running water in the buildings or anything.

MD: Maybe that's why you had to pay more, reckon?

WM: Well, \$14.00 a month, I didn't call that really more. It was a little more, but still I wanted to own some property for myself and I decided to buy it.

VW: And the company was willing to sell it to you?

WM: Sure, in fact, after I bought that building, then the company came to me and said "Massey you look like you want to own a little property. We're going to build a street down Pine Street there and if you want to we will sell you all of those lots, up and down Pine Street and you can own the whole Pine Street, the whole street joining the school." So I replied to him, I told them, I said, "That sure is a beautiful offer but I'm just not able to buy all of them. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do I'll take half of it." So I bought half of the Pine Street area, which was about eight or ten lots, which constitute half of Pine Street, and then I sold several of those lots but I still own five of them. So I wanted to own a little of it myself but I made a mistake by not buying all of them because, at the time, I could have bought them all on credit for \$300.00 a lot and now they are worth three or four thousand dollars, or more. But I bought some of them anyway.

MD: Okay, tell us about the first new car that a black person had in Diboll.

WM: Well, now, this integration program of the status of the black man was in the Diboll community was very interesting because I remember very well the first new car bought by any black man within the Diboll community. It was a man by the name of Fennie Simmons that bought a new car. He bought this new car and he would drive around the community in his new car, drive it down to the main office, park it there at the new office. A lot of people advised him that he had better stop doing that because the white people were going to tear that car up and beat him up, too, for driving around in a new car. But Fennie Simmons told them now, "I got this car but Mr. Temple bought this for

me so there is not anybody going to bother it because Mr. Temple bought this car for me and told me to ride around wherever I wanted to in it.”

VW: Advertising.

WM: Right, so Fennie Simmons was riding around in this new car over the community.

VW: That was pretty smart of Fennie.

WM: Oh yes, that was very interesting, too. Some folks here had cars, quite a few of them did. I remember one fellow that had a car, but he hadn't been used to driving a car, I don't guess. They would go down here and at the railroad track, catch the train, go to Lufkin and do their shopping. So this man had bought him a car and he drove his car to Lufkin and did all of his shopping and then he forgot about that he had bought a car and he went back and caught the train, came back to Diboll and left his car in Lufkin. Then he had to turn around, catch the next train back to Lufkin to get his car. So quite a few interesting things happened then, you know, during that time.

MD: What was your job when you worked at the mill?

WM: At the mill? When I was working at the mill I worked on the pond, they called it. Our job was to clean out the pond. We had to get out in the water and take shovels and forks and dig the bark up from the bottom of the pond, put it on a boat and that's the way they cleaned the pond out then. So we were known as the fellows to keep the pond clean, to clean the bark out of the pond. So we were actually paid a little more than the average worker at the mill because of the fact that we were in the water most of the time.

MD: You decided you would rather have an education, and you went on to school after then?

WM: Oh yes, all along I was determined to get an education regardless of the cost. When I first went to college, this was back in – and it is a very interesting story. When I first went to college, my very first year I went to Texas College in Tyler, Texas, and the principal of the school just let me ride up there with him to this school and I had \$7.50 in my pocket when I went there. So while I was up there the principal of the school told this fellow that if he could, to find some fellows, or boys, that wanted to go to college, and I told him I wanted to go to college but I don't have any money. He said, “If you want to go to college bad enough I'll make arrangements for you to go.” I asked him “When could I go?” He said “You can enroll in the morning.” I said “What time?” He said “Seven o'clock.” I said “I'll see you at seven o'clock Monday morning.” Seven o'clock Monday morning I went to his office, told him I was ready to enroll in college but don't have any -- I had \$7.50. He said, “Well, that's all right, I'm going to enroll you and give you a job.” So I got enrolled in college and I took that \$7.50 and bought books with it. Bought \$7.50 worth of books and I didn't have a change of clothes. So, then I just stayed there and worked and went to school and completed that year in college. Then I had to

stay there and work all summer to pay up the bill for completing that first year in college. So I was very determined to get an education if it could be done.

MD: You went from there to Prairie View?

WM: Right. Then I went to Prairie View a couple of years, then I came back to Texas College and finished there but I went back to Prairie View and got my masters degree from Prairie View. I also majored in several areas while I was going to school but my most important area, I guess, was administration and math and that's what I did when I came to Diboll as a math teacher and an administrator. But I also had majors in, oh, half a dozen other fields such as history, agriculture, athletics and all that sort of things. I had majors in several other areas.

MD: When you came to Diboll, can you remember who were some of the black school teachers?

WM: Well, when I first came to Diboll I remember we had a lady teacher, Fennie Simmon's wife, her name was Ruby Simmons. She lived here in Diboll and her husband was Fennie Simmons. Then we had this Inez Sibley and she was a native person of Diboll.

VW: She was Mattie Smith's daughter, wasn't she?

WM: Yes, Mattie Smith's daughter and she was teaching school here at the time. I think she passed, maybe a year or two ago. We had a lady from over in Nigton community. Her name was Lily Griffin and she married a fellow here in Diboll by the name of Amos Simmons. Miss Lily was teaching school when I came here and I think she taught here until she retired. She retired, I don't know, maybe about '73 or '74.

MD: You had twelve grades?

WM: Yes, we taught the twelfth grade and had a complete athletic program within the school. Considering what we had to work with, I think we did a very good job because the achievement of the students who graduated from the high school here was very good. Some of them turned out to be real good students and did a real good job of their college career. We've had several, a large number, to complete their college work and some to go on and get their master's and doctor's degree in various fields. They have proven to be very successful people.

MD: When it first started about integration, how did you feel about it?

WM: Well, now that is very interesting. I would like to explain to you just how I felt about it and this will sort of tell you how I felt about it. Our first year of integration, we had an integration committee that came here from the state and they met with the superintendent and they invited me to this meeting and they told me "Now we are going to integrate these schools and what we are going to do, we are going to make your school

over there, the all black school, into an intermediate school through the ninth grade, then, we are going to have the elementary school, then we are going to have a high school.” They told me, “Massey you are the best qualified principal that we have within the school district and we want to use you somewhere in the school system. We’ll give you any of the schools that you want, we’ll give you principalship at the elementary or junior high or the high school because you are the best qualified principal we have in the district.” “What school do you want?” I told them, “I don’t want any of them.” I wouldn’t accept any of their jobs, none of them. “You mean you won’t accept any of the jobs as principal of any of the schools?” I said “No, sir, I just won’t take them.” “Well what will you do?” I said “Well, I can do most anything at the schools you want a teacher to do and teach almost any subject.” “Well, what subjects would you like to teach?” I said “Well, I can teach math or agriculture or what not.” So we agreed and I took high school math. I taught high school math for a year. Finally the superintendent, Mr. Foster was the superintendent then, called me in his office and told me, “Mr. Massey, we need you up here in the office. Now, will you accept the job as assistant principal?” I told him, “Mr. Foster, I’ll tell you, if you think I can do you a pretty good job, I will accept the job as assistant principal.” So I accepted the job under Mr. Ramsey. So I worked as assistant principal at the high school for two or three years. Well, I had to give full time as assistant principal under Mr. Ramsey so I had to stop teaching math. I accepted this position as assistant principal. I don’t know, I have tried to do my best but as an assistant principal I felt like this: because of the discipline problems and the decisions that we had to make when we had black and white students involved in things, it put you in an awful situation to have to make these decisions. So I asked them and assured them that any decisions that I had to make concerning a race issue, or whatnot, now, I wanted full support and complete backing from the administration and that they did. In fact, a number of times they would come to me for advice on what decisions to make when we would have conflicts between the two races of students. In that way we got along very well, very good.

MD: How did the black parents feel about integration?

WM: Well, they didn’t actually know, didn’t realize what was going on, didn’t realize what effect it would have. Actually some of the high school students from the black community, I don’t know, they seemed to have sort of a grudge or ill-feeling towards the white students because of the history of the relationship. But it seemed that over a short period of time these relationships grew better and the students started to get along better and working together. I think it worked out very well.

MD: Did you start them with freedom of choice?

WM: Yes, when we first integrated, our first year of integration, the students were given a choice – if they wanted to go to the white school or if they chose to attend the black school. I’d say the first year about a third of the students wanted to integrate. They wanted to go and see what it was like. About a third of them went over and integrated the first year. Now the second year of integration it was mandatory that they all integrate and they discontinued the black school, so they had to integrate.

VW: And Mr. Pate was the superintendent then? That initial year?

WM: I think the first year of integration Mr. Foster was the superintendent because I remember very well that he and this integration committee tried to get me to accept the principalship of one of the schools, which I would not accept.

MD: In this freedom of choice, what year did you think it was?

WM: During 1965, I think. I think I was pretty well thought of, all of the students and the teachers, in 1976 –

VW: Was that your last year to teach?

WM: That's right. They dedicated the school annual to me, I completed thirty-nine years.

VW: That's a real record.

WM: Thirty-nine years of school teaching, that's right.

MD: We have heard that some people said that integration could have started earlier in Diboll than it did. Do you think it could have?

WM: Well, that all depends, I think if Mr. Temple wanted it integrated he could have integrated at any time. All he had to do was just say "integrate", integrated it must be one. That's the way Diboll was. But I'm sure he didn't want to constitute a lot of confusion and what not among his workers here. So he just let it go along until the state started requiring the schools to integrate and when they did, why, he went right along with it and we had no problems.

VW: Diboll has that reputation of making the transition easier or smoother or better than the surrounding area, and at that, I think you were a year or two ahead, weren't you, or making it?

WM: Right. And to verify the relationship we had with the people in Diboll and the Diboll community and Diboll School District I noticed in most school districts where they had integrated, they took the black schools, in some places they just tore them down or fenced them off and ignored them. They went on with their school program without a black school area school building being involved. But in Diboll, the black school was improved and was dedicated to be used as the intermediate school. Since integration, they have really beautified it and made a nice school building out of it but in most communities the black school was just put out of the system completely. That's right.

VW: With leaving this school and using it, the black people didn't feel exactly cut off from their own school, did they?

WM: Right, that's right.

MD: Did you have any real bad problems during integration when you first started?

WM: Well, personally, I did not have because I think one reason that I didn't have was because I sort of sensed, or foresaw, what was going to happen or what could happen. I had a pretty good idea and sort of predicted these things and I stayed away from them. That way, somehow or another, I got around not being involved in them. One thing I did, first thing, as I said, that I did, I refused to accept the principalship of any of the schools, see. But, I started off as a classroom teacher. There I had a group of students that I worked with directly and I was able to convince them of any attitude and how I could get along with them, and we got along so well until my promotion to assistant principal of the high school, was sort of provoked by this group of students that I worked with. That way, personally I didn't ever have any real problems with either the black or the white students. Seems like the white students, as well as the black students, honored and respected me very much as a leader.

MD: You had already established yourself over here, and I'm sure the black children, when they got to high school, they were glad you were there.

WM: Right. The white children over there, when I got acquainted with them, then I had no problems whatever because they all seemed to be real close friends of mine. I had no problems working with them.

MD: Do you remember any special people that helped you during this time, with the problems that came up?

WM: Well, yes, I do, we had complete help from the people within the community. Actually we had help, I'd say, we had support of Mr. Temple and whatnot but we never had to call on him for any assistance within our school program. We certainly had the assistance of the superintendents, Mr. Foster at this time, within the school program. So we just never had any major problems related to integration whatever.

MD: Well, looking back over these twenty years, so to speak, do you think the black children have benefited from integration?

WM: Yes, I do, but so far as getting a better education I don't really think I could confirm that because of the fact that I experienced this myself in going to college. In smaller schools you have closer relationship with the teachers and the teacher understands your problems better and that enables you to have the right attitude and the right desire to really get a better education in a smaller school. In a large school, now this refers to integration or a non-integrated school. In a larger school you just don't have that personal relationship with your teachers you have in a smaller school. So, in a smaller school you have a better relationship with your teachers and if you have the right attitude and a good teacher, well, you can actually advance as well, or better, than you can in a

larger school where you don't have that close relationship with your teachers. That's right.

VW: In a larger school, students tend to get lost if he is not real aggressive.

WM: That's exactly right. Now I remember when we integrated, one of our best students, she was named a Teal girl. She was a real smart student, straight A student. When they made the choice to integrate, this girl decided to not integrate. She stayed over here in the black school. Well, after she stayed over here a few days, she came in the office one day crying and said, "Mr. Massey, I decided I want to go with the other students because I am over here by myself and I get lonesome, all of my classmates or most of them, have gone to the white school." I told her we had a certain period of time for her to make that decision. "You made the decision to stay over here, now you just have to wait until next year." Well, this girl stayed over here and completed her high school work at Temple School and then she went on to college and she was a straight "A" student in college. Now, I think, with her ability, even in high school at the integrated school, she would have been a straight "A" student. So, actually the inte- or the non-integrated schools doesn't make a whole lot of difference. But the big difference is their relationship with their teachers and the quality of teacher that they are working under. That makes a big difference.

MD: How do you feel about the relationship that has always existed in Diboll, as far as you know, between the blacks and white community?

WM: Well, the relationship between the black and white community has been, in my opinion, sort of a mandatory thing because of the Temple supervision over the community. Now whatever is set up, the general principles set by, by the Temples within this community, that has prevailed within this community for years. So my opinion and my observation of it has been very good. But, you know, way back when I first came over here there was quite a separation between the communities because the black community lived on one side of the railroad track and the white community lived on the other side of the track, principally. The black community had their own baseball teams and that sort of thing and the white community had theirs. So there wasn't really a close relationship because they just didn't live and work together.

VW: Coming up to the present time, Mr. Massey, if you don't mind expressing your ideas on it, there's been such a stir about the "no-pass no-play" issue, I think it would be interesting to hear your views on that. As a retired teacher, who was so successful back in your time of teaching, you had established such a fine rapport with your black students before integration and then carried over in integration.

WM: Well, my view on that subject, I'd have to say, would be this: I feel like that just the "no-pass no-play" rule is not the real solution to the problems. Because the real solution to this problem would be to initiate some kind of program whereas the school could advance and educate each student in a field which they are best qualified in and prepared to advance in that field and not block them within one area because they fail in

another area. Now, if a student is gifted in music, say, that student cannot learn English very well. That student shouldn't be blocked in music because they can't pass the English course. There should be some sort of solution to this without blocking the path of a student. If a student is a gifted athlete some sort of solution should be worked out whereas he could advance to the full extent of his potentiality in whatever field he is gifted in. Whereas, say this student, is gifted in athletics but now this student doesn't apply himself and he fails in his subject because he doesn't apply, or doesn't show enough interest and whatnot in other areas, well, that is a different point of view. That's why I say I don't feel like we've got the real solution in one area because they fail in another area. So, that's my point of view, that's the way I feel about it.

VW: And did you have children, Mr. Massey? I never knew if you and Mrs. Massey had any children?

WM: Well, yes, I have a girl, our daughter is – she's married, she is a counselor at the high school in Lufkin. Her name is Gloria Torann.

MD: Did Mrs. Massey teach here, too?

WM: Oh yes, she taught. She was the elementary teacher and she was well thought of by all of her students and her co-workers in the elementary school here. She was teaching in the black school before we integrated, then she went over and taught over in the elementary school until she retired in '76.

MD: Then Diboll was lucky to have both of you?

WM: Right, full time, that's right.

MD: When the Spanish people came in and started coming in more and more, did that bring any special problems?

WM: Well, actually, I didn't notice any myself because when I was teaching math I had quite a few Spanish students in my classroom but, actually, I didn't have any problems with them. They were all very cooperative and they would apply themselves the best they could and their relationship with other students was very good. I actually had no problems there.

VW: I would like to say what my father thought of him and get it on the tape. You do remember my father?

WM: Yes, that's right.

VW: If that is all right, Marie? Well, I can remember so well when my father was one of the trustees and I helped him in the pressing shop, off and on a lot of times, as well as Pate did, too. And on your way to school or to the commissary tending to your business as a school man, one way or another, you would very often stop by and you and my

daddy would go out in the boiler room and talk school. He always had a high regard for your ability and you, as a professional man, and he realized what good relations you had with the black people and the sincere interest that you had in all youth. Then many times Mr. Pate would come along and you and him and daddy would meet over there and daddy always felt like you and Mr. Pate were the backbone of laying the foundation for integration – that it was your two heads that swung it in the beginning.

WM: Well, I really appreciate that. I was very determined when I grew up to succeed in the field of school teaching.

VW: And you did.

WM: I did my very best.

VW: You and Mrs. Massey both.

WM: I never had any trouble whatever finding a job teaching school, in fact, nearly every year I had some school district to invite me to come in and apply for a job so I never had any trouble getting a job as a school teacher. I appreciate the success of the credit that has been given to me as a schoolteacher.

MD: Are you enjoying retirement?

WM: Well, I'm completely relaxed and no problems with me whatsoever and school just as long as I lived because I was completely relaxed. So whatever I get into I just go into it relaxed. This is it and I make myself satisfied and content with that and that's the way I enjoy. That's right.

MD: Well, we surely appreciate your talking to us.

WM: Well, thank you, I appreciate it.

MD: Vivian referred to her father and his feelings for Mr. Massey on the tapes. His name was Lon Smith. He was a trustee of the Diboll School.