

## ANGELINA COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Dunbar High School Students

Interview 250a

October 9, 2006 at Lufkin, Texas

Bettie Kennedy, Interviewer

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**ABSTRACT:** In this panel interview at a meeting of the Angelina County Historical Commission, Reverend Bettie Kennedy interviews alumni of Dunbar, Lufkin's African American high school. The panel included Willie Mae Burley, Lacy Chimney, Dr. Odis Rhodes, I.D. Henderson, Ellis Carrington, Sr., Charles Carrington, Ellis Carrington, Jr., and Reggie Brown. They discuss attending school and teaching school during segregation in Lufkin, the challenges and rewards of the segregated schools, and the differences once racial integration started. Mr. R.L. Kuykendall also speaks about the Dunbar trophies. Mr. Reggie Brown of Baytown then speaks about his position as a member of the Baytown Historical Association and his work with the T.J. Ford Foundation and their efforts to get Texas U.I.L to recognize the accomplishments of the segregation black schools. He talks about their efforts to recognize alumni all over the state, including East Texas.

**Dickie Dixon (hereafter DD):** We have not always given all the attention that we needed to, to the schools and before integration and so today, and even after integration, so we are hoping to highlight some of those experiences today and try to capture what transpired there, both good and bad. In doing that I'm going to in a minute turn that over to Bettie [Kennedy]. Bettie has done a lot of work in the African American community. Many times when we do a program, and we are doing those programs at Pinewood Park, I would go and ask her for information and she had notebooks with sheet protectors in them on different individuals in the community. So, it was not something she had to do it was something she had already done, and she has been really active in Black History month. She has been really active in trying to foster and encourage our local history. Bettie has been really active in civic affairs and been active with us on the Commission. She spoke one time on Will Ingram on the East Texas Historical Association so she has been as active as anyone on helping to preserve our county's history. So, now without further ado I'm going to turn it over to her capable hands.

**Bettie Kennedy (hereafter BK):** I want to thank the Historical Commission for the opportunity and most of all, this wonderful panel and this will not be limited just to their questions and answers. We want you to have an active part in this also. I will be giving a history of Dunbar and this will not be a detailed history, it will just be a rough draft that you might understand where Dunbar fit into the school system. Just a minute, Lacy is coming and I want him on this panel. Lacy come up and the second seat is waiting for you. (laughter) This may be the roasting time. (laughter) Each of these persons come with a very rich background and they will introduce themselves in a few minutes. I want to call to your attention the struggles and the achievements of the black students from the segregated schools from 1920 to 1968. There were two schools before Dunbar. There was

a Kelty's school which was a one-room school or a two-room school. One of the students of that school is still living, that is Chester Collins, who is 103 years old. Lucky Ward School, that is located on North Chestnut Street, that building is still standing and there were many students from that time. Chester Collins, James Hackney, who is still living is 94 years old, Teddie Hackney 92 years old, Emma Jones is 99. These persons are still living. Then Dunbar, Dunbar was in the 1920's, about 1923 it was a new school with 6 rooms. Malinda Garrett, Austerine Johnson and Mrs. Austerine was going to be here today and maybe she will get here. Mrs. Annie Penson was one of the teachers. C. L. Franklin was one of the teachers, James Boone and Saber Lee Stewart and there may be some others. Professor Brandon was the principal and he was known as Fess. There were few books and the books that they did get were old books that had been used by the white students and they sent those books over. Many of the teachers would slip and teach subjects like geometry and grammar. Lacy and I remember those years. They had student assemblies and the assembly would be...Mr. Carrington is here. What a blessing. Can you bring him down? Mr. Carrington is 96 and one of the students of Dunbar. Aren't we rich in such a rich heritage? Come all the way down Mr. Carrington. (pause) This is such a blessing to have him here today.

At the Dunbar building in the sixth classroom there was one science room that was located out in the back of the campus. There are several things and I'm going to ask these 7-8 persons now, but I'm going to ask questions and those questions will be good and bad points about segregation and integration, best things about your years at Dunbar, good points about your teachers that you remember. How are children suffering today compared to yesterday? The achievements of the students from the segregated schools? How can we improve the life, the school life of students today, their present life and the future life? And, then I will have Mr. Reggie Brown who is visiting us from Houston today. He drove up this morning and it is such an honor to have him here. We are going to open now the discussion; the good and bad points of segregation and integration. Before we do that I want you to give your name and just a little bit about yourself. Mrs. Burley we will start with you.

**Willie Mae Burley (hereafter WMB):** My name is Willie Mae Burley and I came to Lufkin in 1960 as a teacher, one of the teachers and my assignment was girl's physical education and health. At one time I taught a history course. In teaching at Dunbar, high school girls, the high school girls loved Dunbar and we tried to organize several activities that girls really do like and that is being a cheerleader. A cheerleader was the highest element for girls, making the cheerleading team. We had what we called tryouts. There were so many girls at tryouts; we were only able to select thirteen. Those thirteen girls worked very hard and at that particular time the Interscholastic League at Prairie View A&M had a clinic for cheerleaders. We carried those thirteen girls to Prairie View and the girls participated and believe it or not, Dunbar girls came out with first place. I don't know how they did it but they did. They were very proud of themselves, but during this time we didn't have money provided for us. There was no money provided. We depended on parents. Parents were cooperative. They wanted the girls...the girls wanted new shoes, they wanted them to have those new shoes. Whatever they needed the parents gave it to them because we didn't have a fund like at Lufkin High School there was a fund for

cheerleading and the funds would help them get things that they actually needed – that is looking good and wearing a lovely uniform. But these thirteen girls worked very hard and we were competing against schools like San Antonio and Austin. Those schools were well equipped and had a lot of things to offer them, but my girls learned to compete with them and they were able to succeed and they came back and of course we had pictures all in the paper in the Lufkin Daily and all showing their little awards. But in teaching in Dunbar we had to make a lot of things that we needed. We had to make a lot of things that we needed. We had to ask parents to help us get those things that we needed and it worked out well because at that time we had a real good motivated parental group and we need that right now. It just hurts my heart now to see the young mothers and young fathers they just not with us right now. And we would like to see that again, that whatever we needed it was give them to us and we will sell hot dogs and so forth and we were able to get those things. In 1967 one of the superintendents of the school came over to Dunbar and told us that they would like for me to come to Lufkin High School and that they were going to ask our second teacher, Mrs. Odessa Sanders, was the second teacher to go over to Lufkin High School. Mrs. Sanders was the first teacher and I was the second teacher to go to Lufkin High School and it was a brand new day for me going to Lufkin High School. I said, “Are we suppose to have all of this?” We had everything that we needed. If we needed balls we had balls. If we needed (unintelligible) and everything that we needed we had. I just couldn’t believe it and I just looked up sometimes and said, “thank you Lord for what we need” because we had so many things that we didn’t have at Dunbar. We improvised at Dunbar, but in the meantime in the spirit of the parents and the spirit of the girls made it a beautiful setting for you to work because there were a lot of things we needed at Dunbar we didn’t get. At Lufkin High school I was so happy because when I opened the closet many balls would fall out. (laughter) At Dunbar we had to look for a ball, or borrow one from the boys. It was a lesson to learn and then it was a lesson of love to learn. When you work with girls, girls are wonderful to work with. I don’t care what age they, were just wonderful. They made you happy and we just bonded together, Dunbar students and also Lufkin High School students we bonded together. I still love them girls right now. I see them and I keep up with them and they keep up with me. Here recently I received so many clippings from the paper from some of my students and I just couldn’t believe they still remember an old lady. I say “my goodness,” but it was a joy, a real joy and it’s always a real joy when you have what you need to work with.

**BK:** I’m going to ask Lacy, we have known each other since we were three years old. He brings a rich part of his life to this table. Give your name and capacity he served as a teacher and I think you were the first black male teacher to have been hired at Garrett School. He was my principle for many years.

**Lacy Chimney (hereafter LC):** I can’t remember very far (laughter) I went to...I was born out at Cedar Grove and we had an eighth grade two-room schoolhouse, so the height of my ambition was at Dunbar. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work in Lufkin after I finished college with my bachelor degree. There is something special about Lufkin. I’ve always loved how things have improved. I had a great time at Dunbar. My classmate, Dr. Rhodes was in the class behind me, just a little boy. (laughter) I don’t

know anything, I never called it Dunbar. It was on League Street where Garrett is now. The front of it faced League Street and Tims Funeral home back in there.

**BK:** Tell the story about when you came to Dunbar and they wanted to send you back.

**LC:** I came from Cedar Grove and our graduation class out of eighth grade, we had nine people and we came up to Dunbar all excited that September, going to the ninth grade and they called us all in the principal's office and told us that all of us who came from Cedar Grove was going to have to go back through the eighth grade again. I said, "oh no, we are not going to do that" and they said, "yes" and I said, "why?" They couldn't give me a good reason, so they told us to sit down over there. They were enrolling everybody else, so we sat down for a minute and when they wasn't looking we slipped out. Our principal out at Cedar Grove lived next door to Dunbar and we left and took our lunches and sat on her front porch all day long waiting for her to come home in the evening. Mr. Franklin, who hired me and may have hired Odis and everything finally found out where we were and he came over and he said, "you kids come on back to school and you just go to eighth grade for the rest of the day and we will straighten this out tomorrow." And, I don't know what it was that we conformed to not to go back. We told Mr. Franklin we were waiting for Mrs. Poffer to come and she finally got home that evening and we told her that we had been sitting there all day long, and she finally got home that evening and we told her what the problem was. And Redland was an independent school district then so, she went out the next day and the superintendent from Redland came up there and I don't know what they did but they straightened it out and sent us to the ninth grade. They didn't think we were prepared enough to go to the ninth grade and everybody that would see us sitting over there, we (unintelligible) is what it was (laughter) with those overalls on and those brogans, but we did look kind of forlorn, but they finally let us go to the ninth grade the next day. When we came back to school the next day we had an understanding we would not go to the school, we would go back to Mrs. Poffer's house until she came and got us until about 9:30 or 10 o'clock she came over and got us and all the other kids were looking at us strange, all these little black kids sitting out there, but we did alright and we graduated with that class. That was my first demonstration. (laughter)

**BK:** As principle did you use all used books from the white school?

**LC:** Oh Lord, we were lucky to get them, yes we did. Yes we did and we had a very active PTA and had some supplemental stuff. We had the first male PTA president in town. Butch Brown went on and had a marvelous family. He had some kids that were great athletes and they had followings all the time. Mrs. Rose was in that building, she was one of the staff members and we had fundraisers all the time. We supplemented and I've always said this about the teachers, the black teachers, they never objected giving up their money to buy things that they thought would help the kids. And they have always been notorious for that and so as a result we actually bought some new text books with our own money. We ordered them from somewhere, some company, and Mr. Anderson told me, "as long as it's not the same ones we use I guess I can go along with that."

**BK:** I hope you listeners will come up with some good questions in just a minute. Dr. Rhodes has served as teacher, principal and then a professor at SFA [Stephen F. Austin] so, he comes from a rich background, Doctor.

**Dr. Odis Rhodes: (hereafter OR):** I come from a little country town kind of like Lacy did. I came from Winter's Hill, Texas in west Nacogdoches County. My family moved to Lufkin in 1945. I believe I was about 12 years of age. I was in the eighth grade. My little country town was about like Cedar Grove because we were farmers. We finished 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Winter's Hill and then we were transferred to Nacogdoches to E. J. Kettle school downtown but before I got an opportunity to go to E. J. Kettle my family moved to Lufkin and I went to Dunbar. I heard quite a bit about Dunbar and I am just going to give a brief background. I finished Dunbar in 1950, went to Wiley [Wiley College] in the fall of '54 and then I went in the service immediately after finishing at Wiley. I spent two years in the service and 18 months in Korea, came back and spent the first year looking for a job. Nobody would hire me. I got my first teaching job in a little town called Waskom. They were looking for a person that could perform about six different tasks, teach physical education, coach football, basketball, track, baseball, drive a bus, clean the gym, teach English, language arts, you name it. They said you have come closer to what we need than anyone, but first you have to drive the school bus. I taught there for two years then came back and taught in Lufkin for 4 years and became Assistant Principal at Dunbar in the fall of 1967. Then Mr. Franklin, principal at Garrett, died suddenly over the Christmas holidays and they assigned me as principal at Garrett School where I served for 4 years until I was sent, called, begged to leave and went to Stephen F. Austin. I spent 24 and a half years there. I stayed in Lufkin all that time. I did serve on the school board here for 9 years and on the commission on the city of Lufkin.

**BK:** We are coming from the African American heritage and if one was taught to read and, "will you teach me to read sir" if you taught me to read he would get a beating for teaching you to read. I would get a beating for learning to read even possibly death. So, I hope you will recognize the struggles of the black schools in Angelina County. Lacy I apologize for not including you as a student at Cedar Grove. What was it called?

**Lacy:** It was T. J. Rosenwald [should be J.T Rosenwald, after the founder of the Rosenwald Fund, Julius Rosenwald]. If you remember many years ago there was a Rosenwald Foundation that would go around building schools for black kids. Rosenwald Foundation was founded in Chicago and this was a T. J. Rosenwald School. It was part of the Redland Independent School District, but our school was a T. J. Rosenwald Foundation School and a great big picture, in two rooms a great big picture of Mr. Rosenwald on the wall in each room. It always looked like wherever you go he was looking at you. We were reminded of this great sacrifice that he was doing and we ought to appreciate it and try to do the best we could, the T. J. Rosenwald Foundation.

**BK:** I appreciate the knowledge. I wasn't aware of that. We now have Mr. I. D. Henderson. We attended the same church together as children and he brings to the table a very rich background.

**I.D. Henderson (hereafter IDH):** I'm I. D. Henderson. My home is north of here at Kelty's. I was born and raised out there. I went to Dunbar, in and out of Dunbar, I didn't finish at Dunbar High. I was what you might call a dropout. I used to like to go to Dunbar because I would always go to Dunbar when school first opened. I like the smell of new clothes and lunches was going to be carried out there and I was instrumental in getting some of those tater sacks from school. (laughter) At that time we had a little deal where we spread, all the kids get together and we would spread our lunches out on the panel out there and I had a chance to get some food out there. I didn't have much just bread and stuff so they always run me off. I'm honored to be amongst these alumni from Dunbar. I know a lot of them. I knew most all of them and it's hard to beat them, you know. I got out of Dunbar and my time was spent running up and down the road, working at the golf course and doing little odd and end jobs at the sawmill and down through the years I wound up in the military. That is where I got most of my...I got all of my education. When I first left here I was deficient in reading and writing. I regret that I didn't do that and graduate from Dunbar. I went on to retire from the military and after I retired from the military I came back home here and had the opportunity to run for a commissioner job here which came open. I had 30 days to prepare two runs after I had turned it down about four or five times before I finally run. I was instrumental in spending 20 years doing that job. Now I am retired. I'm not active in anything right now.

**BK:** Mention you organized the black history.

**IDH:** When I took over the commissioner job here at Angelina County there wasn't too many commissioners in the state of Texas that were colored. Well, I saw a need at that time and we did organize ourselves into some type of coalition so we could have some kind of clout. Out of 240 counties in Texas we were not represented like we should have been. I was able to organize those men and we began to move throughout Texas. I have pictures of them, the first to be organized and I understand it is still organized.

**BK:** Next we have Mr. Ellis Carrington, Sr. Mr. Carrington was one of the students at Dunbar, an outstanding student, Mr. Carrington.

**Ellis Carrington, Sr. (hereafter EC):** My name is Ellis Carrington. I came to Lufkin in 1922 and at the time I went to Lucky Ward. (unintelligible) I married at an early age. I retired in 1975.

**BK:** And you were married how many years before your wife passed? How many was it 60?

**EC:** Sixty-nine.

**BK:** Sixty-nine years, isn't that a blessing. Has a wealth of knowledge of the city of Lufkin and his tenure; now these two persons are his son. Charles was just a young lad. Come on Mr. Carrington. I'm trying to talk to Charles. Charles what class were you in?

**Charles Carrington (hereafter CC):** 1951, I was the last class.

**BK:** Oh, you were younger than we were, much younger than we were. Okay, tell something about yourself and where you are now and the outstanding...if you want to mention the kids you can since they are doing outstanding.

**CC:** I graduated from Dunbar in 1951, the last class to graduate out of the old Dunbar School. Had some very entertaining things go on at Dunbar at that time and I have a lot of regrets about things that we didn't have. In the classroom we didn't have chalkboards, typewriters and things like that. Back then there were so many other things in our lifetime. I experienced hardships of going to school. I was, some people might say I was a little rebellious because I wouldn't say yes sir, no sir, yes ma'am and no ma'am. They wouldn't allow me to go to school until I was almost eight years old because I refused to do so. I talked to my Paw about it and he said you are not being disrespectful for not saying yes ma'am and no ma'am. If they ask you a question you answer them yes or no. If you recognize them as Mr. & Mrs. but yet they wouldn't let me go to school for about six months, but that is all things of the past. My favorite teacher was Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Garrett. They were very strict and that helped me a lot. I have a lot of good memories about Lufkin. I have a lot of bad memories about Lufkin. It is still my home, I love my home, I love my community, I love the people here, but I can see Lufkin still needs some help in a lot of areas. I'm not saying that to be disrespectful or anything. If everybody pulls together...I lived in California. I helped (unintelligible). I have two daughters and I have in my family. The education I received is minimal. I did not go to college; the opportunity at the time did not present itself. I gave my kids the best education I could provide them and my wife. Lufkin is a wonderful community, need to improve and spread out and get some new businesses in this community. I see a lot of changes being made in a lot of direction but I see it being wasteful as well. If you are going to rebuild you need to have your planning commission spread out. Need to tear out and widen the streets. The streets are dangerous, the highways are dangerous. We need sidewalks and you go up the highway you (unintelligible). Anyway, I don't want to get into politics and that kind of stuff. It's great to be here. I'm a resident now but I've got some outlasting memories but it's all been educational for me. It's helped me through life a lot.

**Unknown:** I didn't understand you saying 1951 being the last class at Dunbar.

**BK:** He was the last class...

**CC:** It was the last class to graduate from the old Dunbar.

**Unknown:** Old Dunbar, okay.

**CC:** They built a new Dunbar.

**BK:** That was before they went up on the hill before they went to the newest building.

**CC:** It was the last class to graduate from there.

**BK:** This is a picture of it here on display. This is a picture of the school on League Street and that building now is not standing. Ellis Carrington, Jr., Ellis is Oden's classmate.

**Ellis Carrington, Jr. (ECJ):** He is three years older than me.

**BK:** I am so sorry. That is right you are older than I am too.

**ECJ:** You didn't have to mention that. (laughter)

**BK:** We are honored to have you here. Share some of your experiences with us.

**ECJ:** My experiences with Dunbar, I didn't grow up here in Lufkin. I was raised over in the Walker Quarters on the railroad track. We were very close in high school. I. D. Henderson and I we went in the military together. We were with each other. The next class after I graduated in 1940, he graduated in 1949 and I gave him the key. I was president of the 1940 class and I had the key to Dunbar. I remember he came down and we were talking and all and we always had a good time. We walked through the mud, the rain, the snow, whatever came up we walked to school. We came from a (unintelligible). A lot of things we didn't have in school like my brother was saying. We didn't have new books, some pages would be torn out of the books. When you look at it this day and age at what we had to go through, we got hand me downs and things like that. They were raggedy and most of us were small in stature. The team before us were all were 200 pounds or better. Most of us were about 160 pounds or so. (unintelligible) We had some great coaches, Coach Franklin, Coach Smith carried us out to an undefeated season in 1945. We only had one team score on us. I left and went to the military and I came back and got married and I left and went to California in 1957. I stayed there until about 3 years ago. I regret not going to college but I did do a lot of seminars and I got to be president of the California State Authority Association, the union that we had to govern our state employees. I really enjoyed doing that. Lufkin, I came back here and I see a lot of improvements in some of the things. Just hasn't come up to date, it's still lacking in our area in North Lufkin. The streets are so narrow you can hardly pass by each other on the street, you have to go off in the ditch. The highways are the same way. I saw an accident coming a couple of weeks ago in Jacksonville where the car tried to cut another car off and when he pulled off and tried to get off the highway the car just flipped over. Those people, it's tragic to see the way the highways are done in this area here in East Texas especially. In North Lufkin you got sidewalks on one side of the street and don't have any on the other side. Some streets don't have sidewalks. You got streets that are dangerous, very dangerous because there are businesses there. Mosquitoes get in those areas and I hear them talking about spraying and those streets are very busy and a lot of water in them, mosquitoes, there is a hole. We all need to work together to try to make Lufkin a better place. Lufkin is...I've seen Lufkin be a real positive place years ago and I come back and I see it different. It's time for Lufkin to move up.



**BK:** I want you to name one thing that you thought was the best thing about segregation, one thing, just name one thing you thought was the best thing about segregation, Mrs. Burley, one thing.

**WMB:** We had what we needed to work with as far as equipment.

**BK:** Integration, I meant segregation, when were the black schools segregated?

**WMB:** One thing about segregation was the teachers. We had super teachers and the teachers were close to the school and the parents and family and the history. Whatever text book you had you could learn. If you didn't learn...

**BK:** That is good, excuse me I'm trying to get to Mr. Brown. Lacy one thing...

**LC:** One thing, there was a certain universealogy about our being together as a group and there was more comradeship and more (unintelligible) it was healthy for that reason.

**BK:** Dr. Rhodes.

**OR:** Blacks had more opportunity to be in leadership roles in segregated, superintendents, principles, head coaches, those kind of things.

**BK:** I. D.

**IDH:** Black folks at that time everybody knew each other and more or less kin, you act like kin; people and everybody helped each other. A lot of times that could be good and bad. In some cases it created a lot of jealousy at the school.

**BK:** Mr. Carrington one thing about the segregated schools, one thing.

**ECS:** One thing good about school?

**BK:** One thing about being in a segregated school that you remember?

**ECS:** I had a teacher that was really good. (unintelligible)

**BK:** Okay, Charles one thing.

**CC:** I don't think I can give one thing.

**BK:** Okay, Ellis. Think about it and I'll come back to you. Ellis one thing about segregated school.

**EC:** One thing I thought of was my family we had in school all of us we knew everybody in Lufkin at that time. You would go down to the bank and Mrs. Garrett was a very strict teacher and I just loved her. She would take you if you did something wrong

she would take you and grab you up and tear up your behind and give you a whooping.  
(laughter)

**Unknown:** Would you like for Dunbar to be black today?

**BK:** Okay, would you like for Dunbar to be black today is the question. Anyone want to answer that?

**DOR:** I will answer it, no, no.

**BK:** There is your answer. That is pretty good isn't it? Okay, the dress code: the teachers could not wear pants. I remember that. The dresses had to be below the knee. I remember those kinds of things.

**DOR:** Knee length was to the ankles. (laughter)

**BK:** Yes it was almost to the ankles. I remember as a teacher I sweated one evening. When we first got those report books someone pointed out that the principal would keep your check until you got your report finished. Isn't that something? When we integrated there were many of the male factors, the male teachers, who lost their jobs because of integration. I've seen some of them along, L. D. Taylor and Mr. Curtis, Sippio, these are some names given to me. I don't remember Roy Washington, Huey Allen they didn't merge them in but the women teachers were merged in and held jobs. You have done an excellent job and I appreciate that, but I want now for Mr. Reggie Brown to come and tell us some of the things that he is doing. I want you to mention the UIL because some of these...Lacy did you have your hand up?

**LC:** No.

**BK:** I thought you wanted to say something. But, I wanted him to share the things he is doing. He drove all the way up from Houston this morning to be here with us. Mr. Brown.

**Reggie Brown (hereafter RB):** It is kind of ironic.

**BK:** You may come up here if you want.

**RB:** Okay, I told her what my name was and (unintelligible) but he ran for county commissioner. My dad was elected county commissioner over in Palestine. They were the first black county commissioners in the state of Texas. My mom and dad were both educators in the Palestine schools and out of it I went to a segregated school. We did a lot of good learning and one of my teachers was Mrs. Hurley in Palestine. And to go full circle, why am I here? What years were you on the baseball team?

**CC:** I wasn't.

**RB:** Why?

**CC:** (unintelligible)

**RB:** You like it for the state. I got a UT Jersey, but a lot of times when I go places I have a suit and tie on. First thing people see is “man you must be the best fan.” I say no I’m not I’m a T. J. Ford fan, UT basketball. I mentor him. He is an NBA man making big bucks and we are taking those big bucks and putting them back into things that kids can remember. You all are the Historical Commission here in Angelina County. I’m on the Historical Commission, we call it the Baytown Historical Commission, Baytown, Texas. I work with Exxon Mobile. The largest refinery in America, okay. We started off in ’76 with \$25. Now in our budget we have 25 million for our Historical Commission. T. J. Ford Foundation when a player gets drafted into the NBA the first team has guaranteed...

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END OF SIDE ONE**

**RB:** ...which gets to why is Reggie Brown here, because what we learned and one of the best things I’ve learned in life was just like Mr. Henderson said, he had never met me. I was at work one day after 9/11 and I got all these people from the government needing to talk to me about the federal regulations we have on our refinery, and it dawned on me. My mother and dad had never seen what I did for a living. They just knew I made good money but they didn’t know what I did. So, I brought them down one weekend and took them to see some of the things that I had done. And, the first place I took them was to the historical museum and it brought back so many good memories of my dad from the fact that he was a teacher in the segregated system. He got a chance to see who interact with the people who did not look like me and we got along fantastically. He said “I thought I would never live to see that.” It made him feel so good to see the camaraderie. So, what you all are trying to do here in Lufkin I see from a positive standpoint. That is all Exxon teaches us. That is why we run reins around everybody else. That is why we bought Mobil, we did not merge with Mobil we bought Mobil. When Mobil came in they do things way we want them done because undoubtedly we were doing right. We were number one. So, now why Reggie Brown is here today you got good sides and you got bad sides. T. J. Ford went to the University of Texas and most people don’t realize that what really helps our kids perform is extracurricular activities. The UIL which controls all of that comes under the umbrella of the University of Texas. A former black band director is the vice president of University of Texas and he controls the UIL. He is our friend. He is a T. J. Ford fan. When you guys were in school y’all played football and none of those records carried over when integration came in. In 1967 when everything stopped, when we stopped going to Prairie View to go to the state track meet, the state basketball meet and so on and so forth, all of that got wiped out at integration. There was a group of guys, and I don’t know if you know this lady Mrs. Burley. I think she came to replace you. Her husband’s name was Billy Howell, he was my high school football coach. He has passed on. In 1980 he started trying to work with a group of guys to get those records recognized. So, I came along with my group of Exxon people and we don’t take no for an answer on anything, that is just how Exxon works. In 2005 Coach Howell

is deceased, I talked to his wife and she said, "Yes, you know it would mean a lot." She said "Billy is probably still watching you; as much as he used to beat your behind he would appreciate you doing this." What we did, we got data together, we made an appointment with the vice-president of the University of Texas and he also brought in UIL executive director and he brought in the athletic director. These three guys controlled all the sports and extracurricular in the state and two days before that we went down to Prairie View and ran a base case with the president of Prairie View. These guys been trying since '67. We went in, in 15 minutes and now those records are recognized. That is why I'm here in Lufkin. We are going to have a banquet to recognize the former all-black schools. It has never been done in East Texas but we are going to do it in Lufkin. We are planning to do it sometime in February. When we made our presentation we didn't go in like most people, like if I came and approached you and said, "why haven't you done so and so for us? When are you going to do it?" That puts you in a defensive mode. When we went and approached them instead of saying we want you to do this we already had the data and all they had to do was put it in the computer. After fifteen minutes we went to lunch. The next week the UIL website was changed and everything since then have been going fantastic. Back in January we had a meeting down at Prairie View. The president of Prairie View was there, the president of University of Texas was there, these two guys from UIL were there and the vice president of UT who is over UIL was there and they said undoubtedly y'all must be doing something right to have these kind of people in this room. And we are and what they did they presented a plaque to Prairie View because that is where events used to be sponsored by the Prairie View Interscholastic League, they are going to give us half a floor in the library at Prairie View for the memorabilia from back when we were all in segregated schools. The T. J. Ford Foundation has helped financially to do this and all of these come under the umbrella of a 501C3 which is tax deduction. So, really our group is made up of Exxon Mobile people because our historical museum in Baytown is we use other people's money and we use it big time. So, for every 20 hours of work we do we get \$1,000 for our museum. What we do, all the display cases in there and we have stuff all the way back to 1811 in our museum. It is fantastic. The reason why I came is Mrs. Bettie asked me to. She didn't know who I was. She just heard her son-in-law talk about me. And, believe me we look forward to doing some good things and we look forward to making the community better from a positive stand point and that is the only way we deal with it. When we approached the UIL, we don't have to hear any more noise from anybody asking me why haven't we done something. So, that is my speech. That is why I'm here.

**BK:** Mr. Brown thank you. You can ask him questions. This is a lost area of our community and we are hoping to preserve it.

**Unknown:** (unintelligible)

**Unknown:** They were on display at the Lufkin High school for years but right now I don't know where they are.

**OR:** They went unknown and unnoticed for years. Somebody raised concerned and raised a ruckus about it. We didn't know whether they were destroyed or not but there

was a committee or somebody got together and started looking, searching for and they found a portion of those trophies, a portion of those displays but not all. And, just where they are located some of them were brought back to Dunbar I think. Some they are displaying at the high school, some they never found.

**BK:** Yes, that is right.

**Unknown:** If they are trying to get records for UIL (unintelligible) what constitutes that?

**RB:** What constitutes their recognition, which is something that my Exxon training teaches us, is never ask somebody for something if you don't have data to back it up. Prairie View Interscholastic League started in 1920. You started high school in 1922 right?

**CC:** He went to Dunbar.

**RB:** But, the League started in 1920. We have the newspaper articles. That is what the UIL wants all the way back to 1920. So, if we say somebody won state championship we have got the newspaper article to back it up. Now, most people come saying well we did this or we did that. I know people remember better what they see than what they hear so our thing is most of the time I try to give 150 percent of what I do. I could have brought some stuff here to really show you what I'm talking about. All the records are in a computer. If I want to know what Lufkin Dunbar did, all I got to do is type in a name and it will come up and it will show state championships they won, football, basketball so forth. We've already got that in the computer and we got the newspaper articles to back it up. That was one of the things that was the driving force for UIL to say hey we understand what you saying. If I'm showing you a newspaper article that is dated and you don't believe me go look it up it is there.

**Unknown:** (unintelligible)

**RB:** What happens they really...so you will totally understand what I'm saying, okay. I told you about my strength with the T. J. Ford Foundation because you can't do anything without money. Wish all you want too but without money you can't do it. The T. J. Ford Foundation helps us have the money. Okay, there was a group of guys that my former high school coach formed in 1980. He died and it kind of died off and they just kept wishing and hoping and we came along with the TDIL Foundation and we got money and we got contacts behind us, so out of that what we are doing, we are not just recognizing sports we are recognizing teachers. We are recognizing band directors, we are recognizing administrators. We are recognizing people like Mrs. Bettie who has carried on the torch. So, out of the 36 people we recognized they would not all be athletes. They will be in different sports. There will be academics. There will be education, administrators because a prime example my little high school girlfriend, real shy, she was from Athens and she went down to Prairie View and won state 4 years in a row in Tyler. I see her every once in awhile when I go to Prairie View now. We got separated, she went to PV I went to U of H. She went on and she became an OBGYN. She said without that

confidence she gained by being state champion in something she would still be in Athens probably working at Jack in the Box.

**Unknown:** So this is (unintelligible)

**RB:** No it does not. It churches a lot of pre-integration but we also include the integration side because one of our biggest allies is Prairie View. We recognize it is not just an all black thing okay. So, we are trying to cover all the bases because it takes us all to make it work.

**Unknown:** (unintelligible)

**RB:** There are a lot of companies that have what is called volunteer programs and they will match it for their employees and a lot of people with historical museums are former Exxon employees or they have a spouse who works. You can do it through your spouse. It is set up on a 501(c) 3. Out of that 501(c) 3 we met a lot of people who did real good in life and they realize I only have a couple years to live and they will end up giving us a couple hundred thousand dollars just for the museum because it's a tax write off. So, it's worked out to be a good thing.

**Unknown:** You said this is UIL, this is not just high school these are records that the student did good on reading these will be on file and on record as well.

**RB:** Right.

**Unknown:** So, it's not just a high school thing?

**RB:** Right because what happened with Prairie View Interscholastic League when you set up your districts you needed an equal number of schools and a lot of times they dropped down and had the elementary and pre-k in a district especially in the extracurricular, not the football but the other stuff.

**Unknown:** So academics and sports.

**RB:** Academics and sports.

**Unknown:** (unintelligible)

**RB:** That is why I'm here today to try to find out.

**Unknown:** You will let us know.

**BK:** Yes.

**RB:** We just did...I'm going to tell you this and then I'm going to sit down. We just did T. J. went to Willowridge High School in Sugarland. They should have won three state

championships in basketball but they won two the last two years. They lost four games in basketball in 3 years and they were wondering...they had always wondered why they couldn't recognize some of our students. They have had some fantastic athletes come through. So, T. J.'s mom and I got together and said why can't they recognize more than just your former students. So, to answer the question you were talking about we had a banquet September 9<sup>th</sup> and I gave them the impetus, she and I both did, we had to go out of town and they were concerned they wouldn't be able to do it. When they got through counting money they had made \$39,000. I'm talking about made after everything was paid. What we did there was a guy who is the assistant coach at Rice right now that used to be the head football coach at Stephen F. Austin and he was one of the people we recognized. The guy who was head coach at [unintelligible] was one of the people we recognized. There was a guy who plays on Grey's Anatomy were one of the people we recognized. We ended up recognizing 50 people and the program lasted an hour and 35 minutes and we cleared \$39,000.

**BK:** Mr. Reggie doesn't have enough so let's take one. I want to bring this out, Lacy. We have lost the name of Dunbar and that building was called Lufkin Intermediate and Lacy was responsible for the restoration or restoring the name of Dunbar and we deeply appreciate that. We have not touched the surface of the segregated period. I've already got people writing the story because no one can write the story like we can who have struggled being segregated here, but I also said as I complained about who wrote the stories. The Lord said to me it doesn't matter who writes the story just so it is written because the written language will outlast you. That written language, even with mistakes, is better to have it written than not written at all. We just deeply appreciate Mr. Reggie driving up and being here and sharing what they are doing. We deeply appreciate that from the bottom of our hearts. We are going to close now.

**RLK:** Mrs. Kennedy may I say something in reference to something that was mentioned a few minutes ago concerning the trophies.

**BK:** Please.

**RLK:** A few years ago back in the middle eighties the school district had a cleaning crew that they had hired. Lacy you were not here yet. I was saying back in the 80's over at Garrett, it had to be after '86 the district had a cleaning crew they hired and the guy who was in charge of the cleaning crew came to my office and asked what they could do about this that he had found. They had found the Dunbar trophies in a room at Lufkin High school in water, broken, those kinds of things. They had never been placed in a permanent place. On his own they built the cabinet that is at Dunbar right now and moved those trophies from where they found them to the place they are today.

**Unknown:** I picked up a truck load of trophies over at the high school and took down there. We picked up pictures, some of them are missing, but we moved them down there. We continue to put things down there. One of our outstanding students James Brown, a colonel in the Air Force he crashed an experimental jet rather than allow a crash in to the housing project, we got a monument of him down there and we continue to add to it.

**RLK:** You were here?

**Unknown:** Yes.

**RLK:** I came back to Lufkin you were here, so you were here. I just wanted to let there be acknowledged that I was aware that those trophies were misused.

**BK:** Mr. Brown I would like you to consider this. As you honor the class there are many who have passed on that gave their life during the segregated years and gave much not only to those listening but to many persons who went on to achieve. Give me a big word Lacy? (laughter) A big word. A granite piece or a metal piece or something.

**LC:** A monument.

**BK:** A monument, that is a good one. If there is no more questions for them, I have some on display here, let us all say thank you. Carol you want to say something? (clapping)

**DD:** Just remind you our meeting will be November 13<sup>th</sup>. Linda Hensarling will talk about her father Sam Schultz. We will not be at the Chamber nor here, we will meet at Carpenters Way Baptist Church, November 13<sup>th</sup> 10:30, same time and I hope to see all of you there.

**BK:** Can we get a picture or two? Can you stand close together here? Can all of you come and stand. Who is going to arrange them?

**RLK:** You are Mrs. Bettie.

**END OF INTERVIEW**