

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS

GEAR-UP ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TYRONNE HARRIS

December 9, 2003

Interviewed by Merideth Taylor and the Gear Up students
at Great Mills High School Media Center

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[Begin Side 1, Tape 1 of 1]

MT: This is a Gear-Up Interview with Mr. Tyrone Harris, and—with Merideth Taylor and with Gear-Up students interviewing Mr. Tyrone Harris on this December 9, 2003 at Great Mills High School.

So, ladies and gentleman--. Ladies and gentlemen, we have our special guest here-- Mr. Tyrone Harris, and what I'd like you to do is: I know you have some questions for him. I'm going to ask him to just tell us a little bit about—introduce himself in terms of what he does now. And then, he knows we want to hear about his days at Great Mills High School. So—And when you have a question, I'm actually going to bring this around to you so we can get your questions. Okay? So, we have this long cord, and I'll hold this for you.

So, Mr. Harris, would you—Don't worry about it. I'll just hold it up here. Okay.

TH: Good afternoon, young folks.

MT: Good afternoon, Mr. Harris.

TH: Well first of all, I need to say hello to Dr. Dove here. It's always a pleasure to be in her company. I'm certainly sure that she has a lot to offer Mrs. Bates, which has been a wonderful model for many. And then Miss Taylor, which recognizes us all in many, many respects. But, she asked me if I would sort of come in here and sort of give you guys a little history about probably when I was sittin' in the same seats as you guys were: freshmen, sophomores, juniors, hopin' to get a senior one day, you know, because not all of us always start off being as gifted as many others or as brilliant.

There's some people that are gifted. And when I say that, I look at—I can see that with Dr. Dove here because he was also a A-student and we were always one of those people that wanted to be A-students. And you know, athletes didn't have this thing that feels although, that they feel that—for many instances—as long as they are good athletes, that they don't have the grades to get through school, which is just the opposite. Because if you don't have the good grades, certainly you'll attract a lot of other people—usually the nice-looking ladies and things like that; but that don't get you through school unless you get one that just want to hang around because you are a good athlete, and there are not many of those out there in today's time.

And, when Ms. Taylor asked me if I would come in, I said, "Certainly I would" because I enjoy sharin' stories with the young people. And all the way up until I guess I was a junior in high school, I always thought that there were really only me as part of an athlete on the team because I had nice average in high school. Didn't win any championships, but I had good average as far as points until I had a coach come in that made me understand and take on what responsibility really meant. And truthfully, until

that coach—which was Don Magnani my senior year, come in and told me that, “Basically, Tyrone, you hold a lot of records, but all of them are individual records. Now, what do you need to do—What do you need to do to stay on this team to show me that you can be part of a team? Or really, we don’t need you.”

Now, takin’ in consideration now here, as Dr. Dove can share with you, I was already All-Conference. I was already All-Met. I was already All-American status through my freshman, sophomore, and junior year. Now you get this guy to come in and tell you [that] you might not even play on the team. Now, that takes a whole lot because you feel as though you’re actually sittin’ there and you are the team until people put you in your proper place. And, I say that to sort of say that we all, no matter how good we are, we have a place in life, but we can’t do it alone. We have to do it with someone’s help. There’s always one person that’s going to make a difference, and it really only takes one person to believe that you can in order for you to do.

So, we went on and actually up until last year, 25 years prior to that, no one had a championship in this whole conference here at Great Mills, and there was many great players that come through here. And, in ‘72 was the last time a conference was won in basketball here, which I was honored to be on that team with a coach such as the one that I had. But even after I made the team, wasn’t any doubt in my mind that I was going to make the team, but I think there was some doubt in his mind whether I could stay on the team or not.

And so, needless to say, bein’ the athlete that I was, I challenged him right away, just as I’m sure many of y’all will in life and skipped a class. The one class that I skipped my senior year the whole time during basketball season I happened to get caught.

And, it wasn't like I could sneak away because there was only one store right across there where those developments were. One store in the entire area and we decided we would go over there during an in-school game before the game started.

Well, Coach Magnani never let me know that he knew that I had skipped a class until game time come, which was a in-school game, and—which was one of the two games that we lost the whole year. And, I went in the locker room to get dressed for in-school game. At that point in time, as I tell many people, I knew I was pretty much the star and I knew that the girls were coming for the in-school game to see me. [laughter] And, it was no if's, and's, or but's. I mean, I knew that. And when the coach—When the coach told me that I wasn't dressin' out for an in-school game, I mean, that was all he could do. I mean, I was like, "I know you're not going to make me sit out this game. Let me sit out of the game that's away from home."

Well, not only did he ask me to sit out that game, he told me, "Sit right behind the bench" right by my street clothes and pass on to everybody that walked by the bench that axed why was I not in the game, I was supposed to tell 'em the exact reason. And if it was anything other than the truth, then the season was over for the remainder of the year. We were only five games into the season.

And so, my first thoughts were, "I'll tell 'em that I'm sick. You know, the coach just decided that I wouldn't have to get dress." And he said, "Tyrone, if I hear anything like that again, you're done for the year."

XX: Oh!

TH: That's the same type of effect that I thought I had on women during school, when I was in school! [laughter]

But anyway, even with those types of effects, you find out that discipline is extremely important. Had it not been for Coach Magnani saying that I would have never got the opportunity to have a scholarship because I wouldn't have had the discipline to go to school. I wouldn't have had the discipline to play out for the classroom.

Now up until he coached again, grade point average: I think I was satisfied with about a 2.5 average, which was just a little bit better than a C. But on his team, nobody played on his team with less than a B average. And when I say B average, that's less than a B. Anything below a B meant you didn't play that semester on his team. So, that was a new trend for me—goin' from bein' just above a C student to now havin' to maintain a B average.

Now sure, that doesn't seem like it was difficult, but it really was just the support that you received from people that wanted you to play, wanted you to have a good time, and it really wasn't that difficult. The coach was always there for us. We had after-school activities very much like this where you had homework centers. It doesn't appear that just comin' to a homework center that it can make that much of a difference, but it really makes all the difference in the world, especially when you got people in there that care, that show that you have undivided attention that they can give to you. Because, all of the people that come in here to give this time are doin' it because they enjoy bein' around you all. Not because they have to, not because they need to do something different, not because they receive accolades for how great you guys are doin'. Because in many cases, people are tellin' them that they shouldn't be doin' it. So for them to come in here and want to do that, it's incredible what can happen.

One of the things that happened just this summer: We were able, just because of

the Give Program, we was able to hire a young man over the summer to help out and come over to Campus Run to work. Now certainly, we didn't think that they were going to turn out to be a whole lot, but I think that he received tons of experience just by dealin' with the older generation, the younger generation. He was able to share a lot of experiences that he would maybe not have ever been exposed to, had it not been for this particular program, the Give Program. He finished the summer and it was very nice of him to sit back and write us a letter back. The seniors got a chance to read the letter. And when I say seniors, I'm talkin' about people that are 55 and older. And I'm sure when he came there, he thought they were probably just like many of y'all think: dumb and probably not worth a whole lot and they don't have a whole lot to offer, but he found that to be just the opposite. He was able to learn a lot about everything. They sat down and told him stories when he came in. He was able to be so helpful to people.

And, that's just an example of what this program can do because it's not all about us because all of us have got what we need to get where we need to go, for the most part. But, we need to be able to reach back and give that the same thing to you all so that y'all can do what y'all need and be able to come back and do the exact same things that you are doin' now for you all for someone else. That's the only thing that we do by givin'. We give to you now so that you can give to someone else later, and that's pretty much it.

MT: That's a lot. That's great! Can we just back up and just ask what years you were at Great Mills?

TH: Now, Ms. Taylor-- [laughter]

MT: Well, we can look up that record. We can look that up.

TH: Actually, I graduate in '72.

MT: And was that--That win was in '71?

TH: '72.

MT: It was '72.

TH: '72.

MT: Okay, because we've been talking to some people who are here. Some graduated in '69, '71, '72.

TH: All of them were good class, but they just weren't as talented as we were! [laughter]

MT: I guess not! Okay. So, thinking about questions about, about the playing on the team, about basketball or about other aspects of his experience at Great Mills, who has a question?

?: ...AJ because AJ's on our football team, and I bet he has questions. You're record was a little different than Mr. Harris'! [chuckle]

MT: Oh okay. Who has a question?

?: What about _____? He played on the basketball team.

?: What was your record?

MT: How about asking him some of the questions we've been asking other people, other visitors, other guests? About his experiences here at Great Mills High School, segregation.

?: How did you handle that at that time?

TH: Well actually, I was right on the cuttin' edge of segregation, or integration rather, because when I came here, it was right after, right after the transformation of when Carver was goin' from a high school to where we was transferred into Great Mills. My freshman year was really one of the first year that I've actually totally experienced integration to its

fullest. Certainly when I was at Carver through the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, I experienced minor doses of it, but not to the level that we had here.

And, integration didn't affect me as much because bein' an athlete, athletes tend to stick together whether you're black, white, blue, purple or green. And contrary to what many people believe, it's just another form of a gang. We look at it as a great gang to belong to because usually there are people that are recognized there in the public eye for many eyes, but it's just another form of that. So, we didn't experience it as athletes as much although we had the opportunity to experience a stabbing. I actually watched one guy get his whole insides cut out.

?: Woo!

TH: And right to this day, that person that did the cutting was never prosecuted. I mean, and they call the guy "Guts" right. I mean, play softball and baseball. We had the chance to experience a lot of things that you guys think is new, but really isn't new. I mean, so, the stuff that you're bein' experienced, bein' exposed to is really minor in nature when it comes to what could happen. I mean, if you're sittin' at the cafeteria and all of the sudden you see this guy's insides layin' on the table, I mean, it's not really a pretty sight.

MT: Can you tell us a little bit more about how that happened? The story of the stabbing.

TH: Well, I don't think that anyone really knows the whole story as to why it happened or how it happened or what have you. It was just that there was a group of people standin' at the back of the room and supposedly there was a disagreement that took place. And next thing you knew, you saw this guy's insides layin' on the cafeteria table.

?: Ew!

TH: You know, which he took about 190-some stitches, you know. And like I said, we're

good friends today. I mean, went to the softball arena together and all that stuff. He played in one of the more racist areas there was, as far as softball goes. And when you talk about racism, up until 1980 in the slow pitch softball league, which I had the privilege of being the first African American to play in that. And you go through all the things that you could that you would never think, or that you see on television, and it happened right here at your school, you know. So, it's kind of—It's not new, in other words.

MT: Such as? You're talking about with the softball?

TH: Well, softball. I mean, you could—Even in today's time, there are areas that you can go within the County that are not, not the most pleasant areas that you'd want to be in. And only because they know who you are, you are accepted. And, you often hear the fact that you may not be one of them. You may be somebody else or you may be somebody else or you may be this, and it's just an informal way of tellin' you that we don't necessarily like who you are. So you have to make the adjustments and show 'em why you deserve to be who you are. You know, there's nothin' to be ashamed of because of who you are. You know, everybody should be the best they can be at whom they are.

?: How did you get involved with the Slow Pitch League and how many years was it, was it in existence before you—the first African American—got involved?

TH: Actually, the Slow Pitch League started in 1965. When I came home from college, which I was All-American in baseball as you know, I came home from college as an All-American in baseball, as well as All-American in basketball, and at 21 years old then could not play on any of the County teams. They were considered white leagues at that point in time. First year that I got a chance to play was 1980, which was nine years later,

and those nine years—That nine years later, Commissioner Dement, which is the County Commissioner today, was the first person that was willing to give, give me an opportunity to outreach into that area. Fortunately, I had a good year and, you know, when I say a good year, I hit 119 home runs in 33 games; and, that opened the door for others to be able come in 1981, which was Babe Williams and Mike Boggs. They come in on the same team as I was on, and I was Rookie of the Year and MVP my rookie year. That was—That allowed an opportunity for people to, again, to bond.

And same way with Lucinda Rothwell ‘cause she came in 19 of 80 and we were Rookie of the Year the same year. She was in the women’s league and I was in the men’s league, and she was the one that kind of opened a lot of doors for the women to go on and share a lot of the things that they now share today, as far as integrated leagues.

?: Was she the first African American female?

TH: No, Jackie Rice was.

?: Jackie Rice?

TH: Jackie Rice was for our south leagues. Well at that time, Raley’s was the only one that would accept African Americans on their team, as far as females go, and it was the same way with Raley’s young men when Donnie Brank came. Donnie Brank was the first African American to play in the young men’s league in 1966.

?: Is Michael Lawrence the one that went to FON?

TH: Well, he’s the Vice Principle at _____. Believe it or not, he had some talent back then!
[laughter] I think he may have graduate with Dr. Gunnar.

?: I think he graduated a year before in 1970.

TH: 70. Okay.

?: I read stories about Jackie Robinson and his first year in the pro baseball league. I was wondering if you saw any similarities between what you had to do among the players on your team, among the other teams that didn't have African Americans. Did you—Did you experience any types of things like Jackie Robinson did his first year?

TH: Well, certainly I didn't ex—It wasn't as dramatic as Jackie Robinson because I was not at that level. But as far as the name-calling, not being able to go into certain bars after ball games, being it having to go in the side door versus goin' in the front door, havin' to drink out of certain water fountains versus the other water fountains: All those things were still in existence within the same county in 1980. I mean, there were areas that you really, you know, people on my team had to say, "Look, either he goes in or none of us go in." You know, and—So it's not that far removed right at this point in time as to what people really believe in their hearts.

?: We came down in '71, my first husband, and he wanted to play softball and he called one of the teams. I think it was 3rd base, and he called the 3rd base team manager. And the 3rd base team manager said, "Well, we do need some guys. Come out and we'll look at you." Well, what he was looking for wasn't whether he could play ball or not. It was whether he was black or white. And since we didn't have a county name, he wasn't sure whether we were black or white and so they invited him out. That's what they were lookin' for. They didn't—It wasn't whether he could play because they didn't have the roster full. It was whether he was black. And if he was black, they weren't going to let him—They were going to say they were full. They told him that later.

TH: It's strange that you should mentioned that because actually up until '70, '71, there was two different leagues. There was a rockin' chair league and a slow pitch league. Then

the rockin' chair league—I mean, Kenny Bryant was the first African American, and only African American, to play in that league that you're talkin' about—the rockin' chair league—before it dissolved. Now, he played for a team called Ben Franklin and so, you know, the Bryants set a lot—They've set a lot of parallels for people within this county without even knowing it, without even tryin'. 'cause like I say, Donny, Kenny, that family of Bryants have done some wonderful things that paved ways for this community.

I mean, even when you start talkin' about St. Mary's College. I mean Donny Bryant bein' one of the first and probably settin' many, many records for St. Mary's College.

?: What year did he play down there? 'Cause I think he was there when I was in the school.

TH: Donny was actually playing there in the 70 'cause he graduate in '69 and held every record that they have holding _____ at St. Mary's College, actually, in basketball. He worked down at Admissions, as well.

MT: What do you think, folks? Is any of this surprising to you? I mean, in terms of how recent it is or—? Other questions? And, the reason I'm taking you the mike is the last discussion we had like this, we couldn't make out some of the questions students asked so I just want to be sure we get your voice so when we transcribe it, we know what you said. It's not really that I'm pretending I'm a TV show! [laughter]

?: Well, I think it's probably curious that Mr. Greer said that, before Mr. Harris came in, "I know everything about him already!" I'm very curious as to what have you learned about Mr. Harris? [laughter]

?: ...like one of the head people at Recreation and Parks, and he got a million trophies in the garden. [laughter] ...trophies, like that's not all.

MT: What a minute. Do you have a question? Hold on.

?: Want to ask _____ why he didn't go to the pros?

TH: See, that touches on another story that you could tell them. And like I said, one of the reason why the priest probably knows very little is because I only share things that they need to know at the level that they in. But, that, again, comes with falling in love. You graduate from college and have many, many opportunities. Fall in love...

?: Aw! [laughter]

TH: You know, fall in love. And then, it changes a lot of things in life, believe it or not. You know, you reach that point where you don't want to be that far away from home. And you know, the same way with Pepe—I mean, Pepe's once coached here. You know, him and I coached together in high school. So I mean, there's a lot of history there. You talk with that family. Tevon [and] Donny played on that same team, you know, so there's a lot—A lot of things out there that can make a difference. And, the same way it takes a woman to make it also keep working; and he has a good woman behind him and he's goin' where needs to go and doin' the right thing. So, it takes two, but it always takes a strong female for you to be successful, believe it or not. [laughter]

?: ...have a girlfriend?

TH: No, I had a girlfriend. She was here and I was there. [laughter]

?: But you came back to her?

TH: Well, back then, when you sign—When you sign a pro contract, you were only given \$15,000 a year.

?: Never mind. [laughter]

TH: \$15,000 a year for pro contracts then.

?: I'm curious, Mr. Harris. If you had to re-live your life from the time that you came to Great Mills to before taking this position that you're currently in, which you can talk about that, how would you change your life?

TH: I don't know that I would because I think that everything that I've did, I've had an experience and I've learned something from it. I mean, I went to jobs at, with Baltimore Gas & Electric where I was makin' \$85-90,000 a year to jobs where I wasn't makin' anything to where I am today. And you know, with that, I find that even with the jobs—I mean, I make good where I'm at. But at the same time, I think that what I do by bein' able to give back to others and comin' in doin' things like this open opportunities to keep young people safe and off the streets is worth a whole lot more than the money that I could, would take. So, I don't know that I would do anything different, you know, because everything has sort of followed this road without any one element. With any element missin', I probably would not be where I am today 'cause I think, goin' back to Coach Magnani, the statement of saying, you know, "Winners never quit." You know, and you can't win if you quit. So, that—That just kind of placed that little stigma in the back of your mind that says, No matter which way you go, you want to go this.

When I was makin' 85, \$95,000, it had positives, but it had negatives. When you're workin' shift work, you're gone all night. You're comin' back in the morning. You're drivin' all around the country, you know. I mean, you get up in the morning and today you're here; tomorrow you may be in California. You know, I mean, it's great and it sounds great to people when you're doin' it, but it really isn't that great. You know.

MT: Say that again, please. What did you ask him?

TH: Well actually, I wasn't workin' in electrician. I was workin' in security.

?: [inaudible]

TH: Well yeah. Back in those days, I mean, nuclear security paid extremely well. Nuclear security. Not just workin' at Food Lion. [laughter]

MT: Maybe since everybody doesn't know you, just tell us a little bit more about what you do right now. Yeah, tell us about your position.

TH: Actually, right now I work with county government with St. Mary's County Recreation & Parks. Facility Manager of Chancellor's Run Skate Park and now newly acquired Carver Elementary.

MT: What are some of the programs that you coordinate or oversee?

TH: Well, I could—At Chancellor's Run; we oversee a lot of the tournaments. We do a lot of the senior events. We do a lot of special events. Last year, we had 19 different tournaments which brought in just a little under 125,000 people from Connecticut all the way to South Carolina which played tournaments at Chancellor's Run. We ran an after-school program up until last year, which had been transferred up to the daycare in Hollywood.

At Carver, we now have formed a partnership with Boys and Girls Clubs just as of yesterday, matter of fact. So, they'll be goin' into Carver during the day from 1:30 to 7:30 each day. And then, we run all the adult sports and we do the Team Go Go's, which most of you guys are familiar with. We do alternative rap.

?: What is that? What is the Go Go's?

TH: Yeah, so. That's pretty much what we do right now. Open gym: We do that, too.

MT: Do you have any questions for the students?

TH: I guess the major question for them is probably, you know, is start—Well, it's not even a

question. It's more of a statement—is start visualizing where you want to be in the future, and you need to start doin' it today. Tomorrow's often too late. And you know, pick your role model. It doesn't have to be a person that you see on television that you can never reach or never touch. You know, you got many, many role models within the county. I mean, you've got excellent role models that, that are right here in this room with you guys. It can even be your peer can be a role model for you. It doesn't have to be somebody that you can't, you know, can't touch. But, try to pick a positive role model! [laughter]

MT: Okay.

?: Mr. Harris, I know that, in hearing the other comment about the other Gear-Up student, you mentioned the possibility of employment. I know many of our students around this table are really interested in employment. I'd like for you to tell us: What do you look for in a student who you would possibly employ?

TH: I think the first thing that was look for is a person that has the ability to be people-oriented. If they are people-oriented, the rest of it we can teach. When I say “people-oriented,” mannerism is a key component, I mean, 'cause we work around—Our center is around a lot of older people and respect is a key—is a key thing for me. I mean, I'm not going to have people come in there, “Yo” this and “Yo” that to the seniors. You know, the seniors have earned where they need to be and they, of course, have such great information for us that when you come around, you have come there with a professional attitude and a positive attitude. And, the other skills we can teach. But professionalism, as far as mannerism; and you have to be 16 unless you're working through the Gear-Up program, we do 14.

?: Do you think you'll have any openings this summer?

TH: Yeah. We always have openings. Actually, not just my section, but throughout the entire Recreation & Parks; and probably a lot of you guys don't realize, but Recreation & Parks actually also offers scholarships, as well, you know. As far as when I say scholarships, if you can't afford to pay for a program that you want to participate in, they actually offer the opportunity to file for that and you could actually be granted whatever your registration fees are for that particular program.

So—And I'll be honest with you, I'm kind of disappointed at being a person, a part of Recreation & Parks, to see how many minorities are actually participating. When I come through in basketball, African Americans were the prime people in basketball. Now, it's down to about 30% and 70% is actually people that are not African Americans: Hispanics or Caucasians. So to me, that tells me that there's a lot of African Americans out there that are young people are really in areas that they shouldn't be and doin' things that they shouldn't be. And, that's rather disturbing because sports is one of those things that can really can put you in, even if it's not a sport. Even if it's a gymnastics or something, but you really need to find somethin' to occupy your time other than TV because TV will really destroy you. Yeah, the telephone will get you, too! [laughter]

?: [inaudible]

TH: See, I think you guys—I think you guys misunderstood.

MT: Quiet, please.

TH: Okay. See, I think you guys misunderstand what rappers do and why they do what they do because most rappers are relatively smart and they already got what they need to have. And, they are actually excellent entrepreneurs. And by reaching down to people that

have nothing and really out of focus as to where they want to be, are people that they make their living off of. So, you guys really need to smarten up and try to be—if you want to believe in rappers or whatever they call themselves nowadays, you need to get on that same level and figure out how you can be an entrepreneur. You know, not just sit up there and think that, you know, because they're talking about this girl and that girl, girls need to be—And the girls need to respect themselves more 'cause it's—I can't ever remember dating a young lady that would have tolerated me calling a “B.”

?: [lots of conversation]

You know. So you guys—You young ladies need to tell, to start to tell these guys that you don't tolerate that and you need to start—

MT: Do you all agree with that?

?: Yes.

MT: Okay.

TH: But guys, you need to also step up and say, “Look. I wouldn't say something to this young lady that I wouldn't say to my mother.”

?: [inaudible]

MT: Say that—Say that one more time.

?: [inaudible] [laughter] She tell my brothers to treat girls like you treat you mother and don't treat them better than your mom.

MT: Don't treat them better than you mom.

?: Yeah.

MT: I like that. Okay. So, last chance, I think. Now—Yes, so you have a—This is a wonderful opportunity to have, at, right here in our room, someone who has all these wonderful

stories, as well as great advice. So, questions? Although you might be able to find him--at his--Chancellor's Run after this to follow up, but does anybody have a last question?

?: What was it about your senior year that made that team...? What was the difference between that team and the other year?

TH: Well, I think--and I probably had a lot to do with that because one of the things: The year before, we had a great coach and the fact was the he allowed me to do whatever I wanted to do, for the most part. I mean, I could shoot whenever I got ready to shoot. I could do whatever I wanted to do. So, I was pretty much an individual and we always played above 500. But the fact that we had excellent leadership that come in the following year, and Coach Magnani made us play as a team. Now, certainly my average dropped by 6 or 7 points a game, but that was all the difference in the world because now all the people on the team with me felt as though they were now a part of the whole circle. You know, it was not, you know, a triangle. Tyrone was out front. Tyrone was gettin' all the publicity. When it was time for the ball to come in somebody's hands, they knew at the end it was going to be in my hands. However, to get it to that point, it took all of us to get to that goal, not just me.

?: Who's your ...

TH: My sophomore year--Well, my freshman year I only averaged about 14 a game. My sophomore, I was 31.

?: Good God!

TH: Then my junior year, I was 22 and my senior year I was 19.

?: How many points the whole team have?

TH: The whole team?...My senior year—and that was the other reason why we were as good as we were because we had excellent defense, and we only averaged about 48 points a game my senior year. I guess my highest scoring game was my sophomore year at La Plata, which was 61.

?: 61? God!

?: When you first came to school, was you _____ down here? Sports...

TH: Well, sports is one of those things that everybody..., but you kind of pave your own road. Either you're going to be as good as you want to be or you're not going to be as good because when you're out there, you kind of have to take your own road, I mean, because coaches have their minds set as to who they want to play. And, you have to come in and make the coach change his mind.

And, I'll tell you: We had a 6'5" kid on our team, white kid—Eric Herr, that cut off our team. And, it come to be that had it not been for him comin' back to the team—and Coach Magnani, because he actually discussed just about everything with us before it happened. And when he cut the guy off the team, he come back to us later and said, “Well, how do you guys feel about bringin' this guy back to the team?” because we were all good friends with Eric and we knew that he had the one element that we were missing for us to win. There was not one person in our entire team that said, “No, Coach. We don't want him on our team.” And believe it or not, because of Eric Herr and his free throw shooting ability—And that's what I say: Everybody had a role on that particular team. Some was the rebound; some was to shoot free throws; some was defense.

I mean, we talk to—I talk to Roscoe just yesterday and we're going to visit him in Florida here the next week. But, he was one of those people that play defense to five

charges a ball game. Now, five charges don't sound like a lot, doesn't sound like it should make a difference, but that's 10 points that he stopped the other team from giving, from scoring on. So, that's actually a 20-point come-around because just about every time that he would charge, we scored. And so, that makes a big difference...I mean, ... Odell Smith. All those guys were real key in what we did. There was not one person that really stood out on the team, and we won the championship over. I mean, it was— everybody was pretty much right there for each other.

MT: We have a question here.

?: [inaudible]

TH: I was very lucky in that respect. I think the only thing that happened to me—Well, the only thing that happened to me was I broke a leg and that was actually when I was out of college.

?: [inaudible]

TH: Concord _____ in West Virginia.

?: [inaudible]

TH: Oh yeah. I certainly regret not being a team player, and that's the one thing that when Dr. Dove says about regrets. If I had it to do all over again in sports, now I would always practice bein' a team player because the results are so much greater when you can be a team player; and, that's more than anything. It doesn't have to be a sport. I mean, if we're sittin' here in this classroom and to get out this door in a fire drill, everybody can't run out the door at the same time. You know, we'd all have to work together for everybody to get to that door safely, and that's really the same way it was with my sophomore year and my junior year.

And like I say, I was in Sports Illustrated and everything my sophomore year and all that. But really, what did that mean? I didn't win a championship. I didn't win a conference, you know, so all they ever knew was 30 years later. Tyrone was one of the people that could have been, you know, but everybody remembers the '72 year when we all won the championship. And, they can go on that team and they say, "Well, we can just about tell everybody who was on the team, even to the guys that sat on the bench." You know, the team that I support...going on had the great year that they probably can't even tell you the other, two other people that was on the team, you know. So you really got to realize what that does.

And, will it help you career-wise? When you get out here in today and 25 years later, those same people that you played basketball with and now the same people that have key government positions, own their own businesses, that you have to pick up the phone to call for advice. Now if you had been a jerk the whole time, you pick up the phone and they would realize—They would realize you were the same jerk that was back in 1970 doin' all these things that were not a team player, and they really don't want to look at you today. You know, so you don't just playing for today; you have to play it for the future, as well.

?: If you had one word of advice for these students about how to show up..., what would it be?

TH: I think the one thing that if I was—First of all, if I was...in today's time, I think I would want to be one person that was going to be part of a team. I think I would want to have to make people recognize who I am in a positive light, and the only way to be positive is by doin' positive things. There's enough people in Great Mills, including Dr. L_____ that

you can go to that would—that's willin' to help you. And, seek all the knowledge that you can while in you're in school because it's—You don't realize the impact that it has on you when you get older. I mean, Ms. Cole reminded me: We, from ____ Ridge, there's a lot of times that we share things because we get to deal with a lot of the same youth. And, she's started stealin' my staff so I guess it's somethin' to say there that we got to learn to work together. And, I would steal her kids and prayin' I'd get them over there where I was. So you know, it's all in working together, and that's what I think you have to do at Great Mills is you guys really have to build a bond. If you don't bond together, I think you're set up for failure.

?: [inaudible]

MT: Yeah. We have a couple people who feel kind of sad about getting cut from the team, so.

TH: Well, you know what? Gettin' cut from the team is not necessarily a bad thing. You know, but—you know, that allows you to re-focus.

MT: Listen!

TH: It allows you to re-focus and actually, Recreation & Parks now have a 9th and 10th grade league, so it allows you to get out there and sort of pull back and do what you need to do and prepare yourself for next year.

?: ...not high school ball...

TH: When I was in school, they had middle school leagues. And when they had middle school teams, for me, that was like the same guys that I ended up running against in college. And had I not had that avenue, as in Recreation & Parks, if you run in there and you get proper coachin'—And, it's all about proper coachin' because you have to do something for a coach to recognize you're worth keepin'. You know, you only get

usually one or two opportunities to prove that you're worth keeping. And if you can't show that you're worth keepin' those one or two times, you kind of have to wait until next year, you know, and start preparing. Where it got us, like I said: The one guy that, that probably the best athlete in the school, better athlete than I was, but had all F's on his report card, you know, and ended up droppin' out after spendin' four years in the 9th Grade.

?: Good God!

TH: You know, so I mean. You've really got to decide what you want to do.

?: Four years?!

MT: Okay. Well, let's ah--. Let's give a big thank-you. [applause and cheers] Oh, I'm so glad.

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 1]

[End of interview]