

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS

Great Mills Oral History Project

HAROLD HERNDON

Interviewer: Merideth Taylor

Recorded: December 19, 2003

Interviewed at Compliance Corporation, his place of business,
Lexington Park, MD

[Notes by the interviewer] Mr. Herndon, a small boned, light-skinned African-American man appears to be a youthful sixty, but may be older than he looks. He is dapper and stylishly, though simply dressed. He has a warm manner, a well-modulated voice, and is an excellent communicator.

Born outside of Charlotte, North Carolina, Mr. Herndon moved to St. Mary's county with his family in 1960 to help develop and implement an instrumental music program in the public schools. As a band leader and instrumental music teacher, he was responsible for the instrumental music programs at George Washington Carver School for a number of years, and, in 1967-68, for Great Mills High School as well. During that time his job encompassed leading high school marching and jazz bands and developing rudimentary music programs at the elementary schools in the county as well.

Subsequently, he moved into administration, and served as Vice Principal at Carver, Spring Ridge Middle School, and Leonardtown High School. When asked how he felt about moving from music to administration, he replied that, although he wasn't altogether happy about it at first, "... I could see where I could probably touch, and help more folks. ...My job satisfaction was in being able to help folks. "

He left the field of education in 1980 to start his own business, Compliance Corporation, a security company, which he still runs. He does not regret leaving the field of education, but is obviously proud of what he and his students accomplished over his twenty years in the field. His enjoyment was palpable in reminiscing about the achievements of his many bands and students like Janice Talbert Walthour, Francine Dove Hawkins, Steve Hawkins, and Orlando "Tubby" Smith.

[Start side 1, Tape 1 of 1]

Merideth Taylor: This is an interview with Harold Herndon for the Great Mills Oral History Project, and it's December 19, 2003. The interviewer is Merideth Taylor. We are interviewing in Mr. Herndon's office; his place of business: Compliance Corporation.

[tape cuts off and then on again]

And I already put the introduction on this. So, I'm here talking with Mr. Harold Herndon. And, what we'd like to hear from you is anything and everything you'd like to tell us about your experiences at Great Mills High School. And, I can prompt you with specific questions, but I'm thinking that I'm interested in--Well, again, anything you want to tell us about your experience there, but I'm also interested particularly in the relationships between teachers, the relationships between teachers and students, and teachers and administrators because you can talk to us as a teacher, as a former teacher; and, we haven't talked to very many former teachers. So, that would be most helpful.

But, you know, as a community member--. I mean, there may be just other, other--comparing it to the other schools where you taught--any of those things. So, could you start by just telling us your name. I know what it is, but for the record so we can quote you, and what brought you to Great Mills High School and when were you there?

Harold Herndon: Okay. Well, my name is Harold Herndon. I came to St. Mary's county in 1960 and I came here--. There was an instrumental music program. I think it had existed at Great Mills for one year, but there was no instrumental music program in the county. And, I think--as I said before--there was a gentleman named

Miller. I can't think of his first name now who was a band teacher at Great Mills High School, and I was hired to be the band teacher at George Washington Carver, which was the black school at that time. And, I guess-- I got here a year after he did. So, we both developed an instrumental music program in the county for, until such time as the desegregation took place; and, that was, I think, '60? '66? '65, '66, somewhere around there. I'm not sure exactly.

And at that point, the Great Mills High School-- The students who were high school students at George Washington Carver went to Great Mills because that became the high school. And then, Carver became what was called a Middle School.

As I continued to be my main stay was at Carver; however when the desegregation took place, Mr. Miller did not stay at Great Mills and so, Great Mills was without a band instructor for that first year. So, I was tasked with, along with doing what I was doing at Carver, to go to Great Mills. I forgot the schedule.

MT: So you retained your position at Carver when you went to Great Mills?

HH: Yes, I--That was the way I was tasked. I continued to work with instrumental music at Carver and then for that year, I was the band teacher at Great Mills High School, which meant all the things that a band teacher's supposed to do in terms of preparing kids, to teach them to prepare for concerts, the football cheering--all of that stuff that I had to do.

But as I said, I was only there for a year so some of the things that you mentioned to me are very difficult for me to talk about because when I was at Great Mills, there wasn't any time to socialize with any of the teachers. It was time to do what I was, what I could. Not all that I was capable of doing, but what I could in

terms of the time I had with the kids. And, that's what I did. Some of the children who were in the Great Mills band were some of the children I had previously taught at Carver when they're at the high school.

And, the kids--The band group: That all worked out quite well. I never had any problems with the children, in terms of the mixing of the children. I never had any problems with that. I mean, we were all there for a purpose and we did as much as we could. I wasn't able to give them as much as I could have given them because of the time factor, but we did what we could with the time we had. And, we were able to at least make sure that, you know, they had the concerts as they were used to having, the football team--the half-time shows and the parades and--.

MT: So you got them out on the field marching and all that?

HH: Yep. I did that and participated in the parades. And then, the contest where they would go away to play and get graded and all. So, I had--. I did all of that for them and for the Carver group, which was the Middle School at that time.

MT: Did the white kids in the band, would you say, were welcoming to the black students coming from Carver?

HH: Well, it appeared that way. No, I had no problems. Had a jazz band, too, by the way, along with all the other stuff, but I had--like I said, I did not sense any tension in that setting that I was involved in anyway.

MT: Did you sense that in other, around--? Were you aware of any tensions outside the band? I mean, you said you weren't there much, but were you aware of any, at any time, did the students reflect any problems they were having outside of band? Or any students, were you aware of any problems?

HH: Well, I really wasn't aware of any.

MT: Okay.

HH: It appeared to me that the--I would say at least the majority. You never can speak to all, but at least the majority of the students were able to accept that desegregation process and go from where they were to-- Obviously, there were some changes. Most notable change is, I guess, is that for the different kind of student organizations--I mean, most of the leadership was of the Caucasian folks. Why? I don't know. Maybe it's because the geographical, the change geographically or, you know, since where the kids were moving from Carver to Great Mills that that was it. I think as the years went on, course, some of that obviously changed.

And then, but, the kids at-- The students at Carver were all used to being in those leadership rolls. You were the President of this organization or the Student Council or whatever and now you're not. So, that was--I think that might have been a little difficult for some of them because--

MT: Do you think that was, basically, you're talking about elected roles that they had already, maybe, had elections or are you talking about leadership beyond elected roles?

HH: Well, I'm talking about a combination of both.

MT: Okay.

HH: Mostly elected. I mean, those children who had been in leadership positions at Carver, obviously after being in that environment for awhile, those leadership qualities, you know, they blossomed and they became part of the leadership structure at Great Mills. It's very difficult for me to talk a lot about the, you know, how--the

evolution of the process at Great Mills since I was not there. Some of the teachers who were transferred from one school the other--there were a few; not a lot of them--but I guess, I don't know how well some of those people made that transition.

I have--I'm going to have to say that as a result of the desegregation process, I--. There was a difference in terms of the control of discipline, I should say. Okay? I have my own thoughts about all of that, how it happened, what happened and why, but I don't know. I just know that--. I know that there was a certain, what you might say? A certain competitiveness that existed.

MT: Between?

HH: Example of this, for instance: While-- let me clear: I am not advocating segregation. I think desegregation is--integration will be fantastic, but we not there yet; but, we're getting there I hope. Anyway, there was a certain, a pride I guess you might say in those students at Carver who were able to take not sub-standard teachers, 'cause the teachers had a commitment that I wish all educators had now to teaching, really teaching kids. But, there was a certain pride that they had in being exceptional in terms of performance. Okay? And, I'm not necessarily talking about band at the moment, but being exceptional in terms of performance when the fact that the, some of the materials especially and, were substandard. So, you took things that were, I guess, a little substandard and you were able to take that and compete and excel against some folks, at least in perception-wise, had things that were of a much better quality than of yours, what you had. And all that wasn't perception, by the way. That goes back to that business about separate but equal and that's never been the case.

But--. So, there was some--. There was something there, I think, to drive people to--. I want to make sure that everybody knows that, "I can do this thing as well as anybody else, if not better." That's just something that I noticed in terms of a--.

MT: Well, I have two questions about that. One of them is: I am interested in hearing about specifically any differences, in terms of facilities and materials and so forth. But also, you started off by talking about differences in discipline with that when you were talking about the competition. Were you going to say more about that or--?

HH: Well--

MT: What happened to that feeling of, "I'm going to excel" and not "I'm going to," as you said in the exhibit, "Strive not to equal but to excel." Kind of sounds like what you're talking about a little bit. What happened to that competitive edge? Are you saying something happened to that that changed or--?

HH: Well, I'm not--. I think, to a certain extent, it didn't change in those individuals who had spent the, you know, their many years, you know. But as things--. I think that competitive--. There's no reason to compete now we're part of the same group, so to speak, if that makes any sense to you. So--. And, that was not a bad thing. It was not a bad thing that everybody's part of the same group. I'm just saying that, that the, the reason -- the competitive reason disappeared.

MT: Okay.

HH: Yeah. Now, you don't have two teams anymore. So since we're one team, we don't compete against each other, but we try to compete against, you know, find some other group to compete against, so to speak.

The remark I made about discipline. I recall having been in the high school and how that it used to be. You know, I was a very young teacher, but I was a teacher and there--. I had students in my class who were if not as old, very close to being as old as I was. But, I was a teacher and there was a certain amount of respect that came with being a teacher that--. For instance, if I had a problem with a student, I'd call their parents and I didn't have to go through a whole process of justifying having called and what I said didn't get scrutinized. You know, "Who's telling the truth?" I didn't have to go to a, get into a discussion about whether the student was correct or I was correct.

And, that's not to mean that every time somebody--a teacher said something that that was taken, you know, without any, you know, I guess questions as to whether it was truth or it was correct or whatever. But, it helped in terms of the discipline that was required to establish the order needed in order for you to be effective in your classroom. I mean, if you have to spend half your time or more trying to deal with inappropriate behavior, you can't get your job done. So, we didn't have that as a problem.

Did we have students who sometimes disobeyed, or I mean, broke the rules? The answer is yes. None like what goes on now, but I couldn't survive in that environment. Now I know I couldn't, and nobody--I've never imagined a student who **dare** say some of the things to some of the teachers, any teacher then, that they say [today]. Don't even think about it, no.

So, I think that there were some things that--and I'm not necessarily advocating corporal punishment necessarily, but there were some cooperations that

took place between the parents and students – I mean, the parents and the teachers also that--there's some of it now, but not nearly as much as should be. I can say that when I went to Great Mills, with the parents I had to interface there who were part of the, you know, of the Great Mills, the band boosters kind of things; that kind of interest in students and respect and all the other things are contingent. So, it didn't just stop when desegregation took place. Course, over the years, a lot of things have changed. So I mean that's kind of where I was going with that, the discipline part of what I was talking about.

MT: That's very helpful. What about--. Can you contrast, in any specific way, what you had at Carver versus Great Mills in terms of just material things, physical plant, any of those things. You know, you had said it was never separate but equal - never really worked. Was there anything you would contrast?

HH: Well, for instance: I'll be specific to the band. To get the band program started off, the parents either had to have the instruments or buy instruments. Many of the kids would show up with instruments that their parents had had from wherever they might have come. Nobody was here, of course. No native people 'cause they didn't have any. There was no instrumental music in the public school system. So consequently, no--. Only people who had previously been some place else and belonged to a band or something had an instrument.

So, we had, you know, instruments – brass, in particular, with holes in them that leaked. The things with the pads in them: The pads were all dry. So along with teaching, I had to learn how to repair. And also, as, in terms of the budgeting process to get music for the kids, you know, kind of tough to have to go out there. Got some

help from the Board, but not a lot. Instruments that normally parents would not buy, it took us awhile to get them and we got usually the quality of, we probably got was, was not good as compared to what Great Mills got, I should say.

And I say, I speak to, in terms of Great Mills specifically because that was the closest one. I mean, there were two other school along the other end - Banneker and I guess it was. It wasn't Chopticon. It was first, Margaret Brent then, I guess. Wasn't it? Leonardtown. Leonardtown had a high school like that.

MT: Chopticon was—

HH: Chopticon came in later.

MT: Yeah, but before Leonardtown.

HH: Huh?

MT: Right? Chopticon was built before Leonardtown.

HH: I'm not talking about Leonardtown High School now.

MT: Okay.

HH: Okay? That's a whole different story I can tell you about.

MT: Oh yeah! I can't remember when Chopticon--I think--

HH: Chopticon: It used to be--I think, if I remember correctly, the place is in Leonardtown now, it's an elementary school now. Used to be the high school, then they had Margaret Brent. Margaret Brent might have been the high school.

MT: Okay.

HH: There were--. The separation was at--. I know that Banneker was the high school on the north end of the county.

MT: Right. There was just Banneker and Carver.

HH: Yeah. And then, and I think Margaret Brent was the other high school.

So anyway, they had--. Music hadn't gotten that far yet. It was down here that it started. But anyway, the quality of the instrument. What we would do, they were given--. We were given a budget to purchase, you know, instruments or music or whatever we felt like we needed. And course, you did the best you could with what you had, which meant that you, sometimes you had to take substandard material in order to--.

For instance, an example of this: You would not expect students to buy tubas and French horns, necessarily and things that need, you need to have a band that people don't generally--or at least at that time generally buy. Did not buy. You know. And music, of course, and any other training materials that you thought you might need. So, you had to stretch your money as far as you could, and that was sometimes very difficult.

MT: Was there a difference, then, in the budget from Carver to Great Mills, as far as what the school gave you?

HH: Well, let me say I never saw the budget figures; but based on the quality of and quantity of the materials, I'd have to assume that there was a difference.

MT: Okay. Yeah, that's something I'd really like more specific information. So, that's good to hear. I mean, it's very helpful 'cause we really don't have very much information on the specific differences. You know, I've been told that some of the school rooms were smaller--the space in the black schools. It was more of a problem, and that much like earlier times, the books still were, you know, new books; that there was a difference in the quality of the books, which I mean--. I'm very well informed

invariably about way back when, but this era of the early 60's, late 50's I don't have much information.

HH: Well, I have--. The only part I can talk about is those five or six years before the desegregation process took place.

MT: Which is great, though, because we have very little information about it.

HH: And so, I do know that there was--. There was a difference in terms of the materials that were available to use. For instance, we had band. Our band room was the stage of the, at the high school, which is, you know, that was the band room as opposed to a band room. Okay? Which required having to have a place to store, you know, chairs, music stands. Every time you moved, you had to move all that stuff. Anyway, so that was different. It was definitely different there.

We didn't focus on those differences, though. We focused on trying to get things done that we wanted to get done, and we had some - We had some successes with the students. I mean, for instance, I started--. I have a picture that I cut out of *The Enterprise* years ago of Carver's band marching down Lexington Park.

MT: Um! I'd like to see that.

HH: In which we won first place! And of course, you know, the kids went to, to the different kinds of contests you have, you know, where the kids go to play to get graded and see how well you've done and all that kind of stuff. Kind of amuses me now. For instance, I was at a program a couple, yesterday--last week in which they had this group of freshmen. Freshmen and sophomores, I guess, with the string. The string program in St. Mary's county, and I listen to people talking about intonation. I'm saying, "Man, they should have been here when I got here. Intonation? I was

just happy to hear somebody make a reasonable sound let alone worry about whether it was in tune or not, you know?! It really, really, really--I mean it just pleases me to see how far this county's come. I mean, you were talking about kids playing string instruments and it sounded decent. You know? And from the drum and bugle corps days when nobody read a note of music, they just made it up as they went. I mean, trying to think.

MT: When did you have the drum and bugle corps?

HH: I never had a drum and bugle corps.

MT: Okay.

HH: Drum and bugle corps existed. That was what existed and they were basically in the parochial schools.

MT: Okay.

HH: In the parochial schools. And of course, the kids--. Then, we had the experience of getting band uniforms for the kids. In fact, in that one exhibit--

MT: That exhibit, yeah! I was going to say we had those uniforms.

HH: That's the band uniforms.

MT: That was one of my favorite things.

HH: That was a Carver Band uniform. And I say, the parents and the kids sold candy and cones and all kinds of things to raise the money to buy those uniforms. Mr. Lancaster was the principle guy there. John Lancaster?

MT: Um hm. [yes]

HH: He was the principle guy, in terms of that group of parents, to raise money to buy those uniforms for those kids.

MT: And his daughter was?

HH: His daughter and his son were, yeah, wer both a part of the band. But, as I say, Janice [Walthour] was in the band, Francine Dove Hawkins, Steve [Hawkins]. I could just go on. Oh! The other guy, Tubby?

MT: Tubby Smith?

HH: Tubby Smith was in the band, and I mean, just a lot of folks.

MT: Impressive alumni.

HH: Yeah, a lot of people. And so anyway, I'm just rattling on here.

MT: So, you had a band and a jazz band, but not an orchestra.

HH: No, no, no. No. The only string instruments that anybody saw were guitars, maybe.
[laughter]

MT: Did you have the jazz band at Carver, too, and then at Great Mills?

HH: Yes. They had a jazz band at Carver and at Great Mills. Course, when the--when Carver became a middle school, so to speak, well, you couldn't have a jazz band because the kids had not developed. And by the way, while I was doing all of this, I also got to go around to all the different elementary--not all of them, but many of the elementary schools in the county to start kids in the early grades.

MT: Lessons or meeting as a band?

HH: Meeting as a--trying to meet as a band. It was lessons, basically. It was trying, you know, it was kids who were, whose parents wanted them to learn how to play instruments. You know, I'd go, sometimes a couple times a week, whatever time I could work out to get there and meet with the kids and teach them how to play the

instruments. And then, there was the kids that could eventually end up in the school and in high school itself. But anyway--.

MT: So what happened after that year, then? Did you change schools?

HH: Well, that's an interesting story.

MT: Well, I'd love to hear it! [chuckle]

HH: 'Cause I guess when the band teacher at Great Mills left and they asked me to come over there 'cause they didn't have anybody; well, my assumption was since I had been the band teacher at Carver High School and they would be asking me to come over there that they would be asking me, maybe, if I would be full-time at Great Mills. Well, that didn't happen and I found out along about the end of the year, for next school year that they had hired a band teacher.

MT: And you hadn't even--

HH: Nobody--

MT: Been invited to apply.

HH: Nobody bothered to ask me whether I was interested and all. That bothered me. It really did. I'm happy now because I probably wouldn't have been here talking to you. I'd probably be sitting somewhere as a retired band teacher. And so, I'm enjoying--. Anyway, but the guy that they got, Larry Brown is his name. Larry and I--Larry's along. We've been friends for a long time and worked together. He had no idea, I guess, about all of that. I didn't make no issue out of it. You know, I just went on and did what I felt I needed to do and not stay at Carver, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise, in a sense. Because as a result of staying there, I got--. They had a guy named Fitzgerald who became the Principal and that Fitzgerald convinced

me to get involved at administration. So, I became an assistant principal. And anyway, that has nothing to do with what you're talking about now. Just to do with me.

MT: Well, that's fine. I heard that you taught at--. Did you go to Esperanza at some point? Were you an administrator there?

HH: No. That's another story, but no. I was not at Esperanza. No, and I was not an administrator there.

MT: Well, it was your son that told us that.

HH: Huh?

MT: Well, it was your son that said that. When I called, I got your son once.

HH: Okay.

MT: And I said we were doing this project and I want to talk to you because you taught at Carver, and he said, "He never taught at Carver." I said, "Well, my sources say that he did." [laughter] And he said, "No, he taught at Esperanza."

HH: No.

MT: And anyway, I said, "I really thought he taught at Carver." And you know, he said, "Well, I was young."

HH: That's right. He was.

MT: But so, at some point, though, you were also at Esperanza?

HH: No, I was never at Esperanza. Never there. Uh uh [no]. The schools I worked at, as I said, I worked at Carver. I worked at all of the, a lot of the elementary schools, especially these on the southern end of the county. I think Carver went to Spring

Ridge. That was the middle school. Carver became elementary. Spring Ridge was built and that was the middle, became the middle school.

MT: Do you know when that happened? I can look it up. Was that a long time after--I mean, you stayed--alright. After you left Great Mills - well, stopped teaching at Great Mills, you were teaching at Carver and then how soon did you stop teaching and became an administrator?

HH: Well, I was doing both.

MT: Okay.

HH: At Carver. Okay? And then, I guess Spring Ridge must have been built some time in the--. When was it? '70? In the late 60's I think. I believe. Maybe late 60's, early 70's. Somewhere around there.

Anyway, we all did--. The whole school just transitioned from Carver to Spring Ridge. And at that, when the transition was made to Spring Ridge, I ended up being totally administrative, and in administration 'cause they hired another person to do the band.

And then, we were there for a number of years because that was--. It turned out they were working on a new concept of open space, which we were preparing--we prepared well for that, and the team of people who moved were trained and could do it. For someone who had not had that training, it was impossible. I mean, you know, you got four classes going on in a big open area and if you didn't know what you were doing, it was, you know. Anyway, it turned out--. It started off as a, you know, very successful thing. And as I said, I was totally administration. And then, they

built Leonardtown High School and I got moved from Spring Ridge to Leonardtown High School.

MT: To do?

HH: To be assistant principal.

MT: And what were you at Spring Ridge?

HH: I was an assistant principal.

MT: Assistant principal there. And was that a choice of yours?

HH: A choice of mine to what?

MT: To move?

HH: No.

MT: No.

HH: No. It was not a choice of mine. But, you know, it was a case of you do as you're told. That's what I did.

MT: How did you feel about going from being, working with music and the band to being an administrator?

HH: I--. Initially, I didn't particularly want to do it 'cause I really enjoyed music. I still enjoy music, as far as that goes. But then, I could see where I could probably touch and help more folks. I may not be able to help them to learn how to do music, but maybe I could learn, help them to learn some other things that were as important if not more important than music. And so, I guess my job satisfaction was being able to help folks and a lot of different people. Most of the time, most of the students you had in band were not necessarily students who had some of the problems that some of

the other students had. And so, I guess I got some personal satisfaction out of trying to help some students with some of the problems that people have as they grow up.

And then, of course, I aspired to, to be a principal, you know. Initial, "I want to be a high school band director." That ain't going to happen; or if it happens, it won't happen here anyway. Well, yeah. I went from being a high school band director back to being a middle school band director. Anyway. Just a whole lot of personal stuff that has no bearing on what we're trying to do, so I don't want to--

MT: I wouldn't say that.

HH: Well, very little. At least...It is a reflection of some of the issues that folks have dealt with and maybe, to a certain extent, still have to deal with. The business about Esperanza, for instance; I had done what I needed to do and I was qualified to be a principal. Now, I applied and I got the run-around; and of course, somebody else ended up being principal who was not as qualified as I was. Then they got ready to open the new high school and I, of course, was interested in being the principal. Well, I couldn't get to be the principal, but they told me that--I say that the establishment said, "You will go there."

And I said, "I'm not going."

"Well, yes you are. You're going there as an assistant principal."

"Okay." Of course, that bothered me, too. You know?

So anyway, the only relevance that has is to kind of underscore some of the things I'm sure you already heard from some other people about the way things were.

MT: Were there any African American principals at the time that you applied at Esperanza or when you moved to Leonardtown?

HH: The answer--. The only--. What happened is all of those schools that were converted to elementary schools and there was an African American principal from a high school, then they stayed there until they were gone. And then, the answer is no. There were not. I remember that there was a principal's job [at] Mechanicsville Elementary School became available, for a principalship, and I was encouraged to apply. Well, I was not elementary school trained and I didn't see any sense in me getting involved in something where I was not--not only would I be destined to be a failure, but also I just could not run that program. I did not know elementary education. So, I didn't bother to participate. But, at the time I was interested in the Esperanza job, there were no--there were no black high school administrators in St. Mary's county.

MT: Actually--

HH: I don't think. There has been since then. Not a lot, but there has been some. I think there was at Great Mills for awhile, I believe.

MT: Before Linda Lymas?

HH: Yes. I believe. I can't think of the lady, young lady's name now. But, there weren't any. And when Leonardtown High School opened, there were none. There may have been--

MT: So they could have. I mean, that would have been an opportunity to? [chuckle]

HH: Well, I thought so. And now since I, you know, I certainly knew what I was doing. But anyway. They all did me a favor though.

MT: Yes.

HH: Because they made me go do something I probably wouldn't even have dreamed of doing.

MT: Or maybe you took advantage and made it an opportunity.

HH: Well, one way or the other.

MT: So is that when you--. Did you retire early then and start a business?

HH: I retired a--. I was almost 20 years in education. Almost, within a few months. Actually, I started, in 1980, started the Compliance Corporation. And, it was like about this time of year, I said, "I'm taking leave. I'm out of here and I'm gone and bye." Took a year's leave and I just didn't go back. And so, that was in 1980. '79, '80, right there.

MT: Okay. Well going back, obviously you didn't have much interaction with the other teachers at Great Mills because you were--right?

HH: That's right.

MT: But in the system in general, or at Carver, were you aware of any concerns among teachers - I guess especially African American teachers, but not necessarily just-- about where, about losing jobs? About moving to positions that, you know, were not what they wanted? Or, was there a general concern in, when they desegregated and obviously people were going to be moved around a little bit, were teachers concerned and did anybody, was anybody concerned about losing a job or anything like that?

HH: I don't think there was a lot of concern about losing jobs. There was some concern about where they might get moved and what kinds of classes they'd have to teach. You know. I know there some concern about that. Some of the people were--. And, the other business about how involved they would be and sponsoring some of the

student activities, that kind of thing. How all of that played out at Great Mills I really can't speak to 'cause I don't know since I was, you know, my time there was limited. I didn't have time to talk about whether somebody was happy or not with what they were doing.

MT: Well, actually maybe you can say something about this. I've heard that--. I don't know if this is specifically Great Mills, but it was connected to Great Mills that the credentials of the black teachers that came to Great Mills were better than a lot of the white teachers there. I don't know if it was just their credentials or they were, you know, better teachers for various reasons, and I assume it was their credentials, as well. And, that there was actually a program--money from the State, I think?--to bring the white teachers up to the same level. Did you ever hear anything about that?

HH: I did not, so I--. I can speak only about those people that I had experiences with who were black, and I do know that they were all--they were qualified. They were qualified. And as I said before, very dedicated. And, I'm not going to try to say whether or not the teachers at Great Mills were not qualified or not dedicated because I don't know that.

MT: Yeah. I just wondered if you'd heard about that issue. I heard that from someone who was on the faculty - a white person on the faculty at Great Mills. So, that was very interesting. I'll ask him more about that, too. Actually, I heard that from a couple of people.

HH: It wouldn't surprise me if you think about what I just mentioned about the principals at Esperanza. Remember I mentioned that I applied and certainly more qualified than the person that got it, but. So it doesn't surprise me.

MT: Now, I'm interested that, I mean, that you chose not to, I guess, do any kind of protest, privately or publicly, about when they hired the other band teacher at Great Mills or about the Esperanza situation and the hiring there. Do you want to say anything about why you chose not to pursue any kind of action?

HH: Well, I did. I did complain.

MT: Okay.

HH: I didn't formally, you know, do a formal protest or, you know, file any kind of a grievance or that kind of thing, but I did complain. I did complain because I thought it was unfair. I still think it's unfair, as far as that goes but--. [chuckle]

MT: It sounds like it, but you didn't pursue any kind of--?

HH: No, I did not. No.

MT: Do you want to say anything about why you didn't? You don't have to.

HH: Well, I thought it was a--. I thought it was, you know, it was a fruitless effort. It would be a waste of my energy, at that time. I mean, things were completely, a lot different than they are now. So it would have been a waste of my energy because of the established person was in charge. And so, anyway.

MT: Okay. Well, I hope that the students, through the people I've interviewed and some of the reading they've done, realize that, you know, there were things lost and things gained. And, it wasn't all just gained, anyway, in terms of--

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 1]

[Start side 2, Tape 1 of 1]

MT: ...this desegregation process, for anybody. Students? Teachers? The community at large?

HH: Well, I think gained, of course, is what I'd like really to focus on. And, gained is that the opportunities for people to understand how they needed to, to really relate with each other; the opportunity for students who had previously had to make due to with less than [white students]--were able to get, you know--and they got to experience some things that they probably would not have gotten to experience had they continue to be segregated. Expose to opportunities that would not have existed probably.

MT: Can you think of any examples?

HH: Well, I guess, for instance, some of the labs, spaces were better supplied. And, the other thing, of course, is since we all lived together, we all need to learn to live together; and you can't learn to live together if don't live together. And so--. And, I know that many of the folks during that time developed some lifelong, lasting friendships that crossed over all kinds of, you know, ethnic, religious boundaries. Previously, they didn't exist, you know. At least, for most people here. There were other people who came to the county. We had had certain experiences. So, I think those were some real pluses.

The only--. The negative is: I don't know that that was the beginning of the decline of the discipline and the control of discipline, I should say, in the school system. As I said before, I have my own hypotheses, I should say, about--. They're not proven, of course - about some of the things that took place that might have caused a, cause of this fluxion, I guess. And, it's not so much as controlling of

people's minds as it is to acceptable behavior for a--for an educational environment.

People, some folks I think, were allowed to get away with things they would normally not have gotten away with because teachers were a little bit reluctant to, you know, exert themselves as they would probably have done otherwise.

MT: Which teachers were--. I mean, was there a racial issue there?

HH: Well, I'm not sure. As I said, this is all just my thinking.

MT: I'd love to hear it.

HH: And, my thinking--and it's nothing proven, but I felt like, for instance, that there's certain feelings where--. Well, I'll just spit it out.

MT: Great.

HH: For instance, black teachers, I think, might have been reluctant to discipline, to apply discipline to occasion 'cause, I mean, that's--. Back then, you know, we're talking, you know. And, I think that maybe some of same thing on the other side. As a result, behaviors that would previously have been unacceptable, probably in both environments - certainly in the black schools - didn't receive the attention that they needed. This is my perspective. Okay?

Then, you also probably end up--. You had the circumstances where some of those students who could be behavior problems were able to figure if they said certain things when they got home--okay?--that they'd, that all of the sudden, the focus is changed from their behavior to who--

MT: Said what.

HH: --who had the--they had the problem with. I hope you understand what I'm saying, I hope.

MT: I think I do, but I don't know if everybody--You could be more specific. [chuckle]

HH: Well, I'll give you an example. This is--. I'm still--I'm at Carver. Okay? And I had one day this guy comes in, takes his coat off and announced that he's here to whip my--okay? Well, obviously, I'm young and I'm not real--

MT: This was a parent.

HH: Yes, this was a parent. Okay? Caucasian. Okay? As it turned out, his daughter had done something she shouldn't have done. And I'm assistant principal, so I prepared discipline. Discipline wasn't pry and paddle. No, no. Weren't no paddling. I don't even remember what it was that I did. It was something I did or caused her to do that I felt like would be correct her behavior, which didn't, of course--didn't sit too well with her, so she proceeded to go home and tell her dad whatever she told him, which obviously was not the truth.

So, he came prepared to beat me up. Okay? As it turned out, after he figured out that, well, number one, I wasn't just going to stand up and take a beating. But, maybe we ought to talk about what happened. Okay? And, we did. We calmed down and we sat down and we talked about what happened. Okay? And, his daughter, of course, told him what she knew would get him excited so that he would forget about what she had done.

Well, it turned out that he and I got to be really good friends. Okay? And, I knew and she knew that all I had to do was call her dad if she was doing something she shouldn't have done and that would be the end of it. I mean, as far as I was concerned, he'd take care of it. But, I mean, so there were instances where I'm sure that students, both black and white, took advantage of the fact that they had been

disciplined by someone who was different than they. And depending on the parents and, you know, what they had in their heads, as to whether that was acceptable.

If you remember I told you where if I used to--if I call a parent--. Students never wanted you to call parents. Never! Do anything you want to do, but don't call my parents. So if you call a parent, there wasn't no question about whether or not what you're saying is true. There wasn't no question about it. The question is about: Was not what you did about it--the teacher, but what am I going to do about it when the student gets home. Okay?

Now, I can't speak to that in terms of Great Mills 'cause I...I have a feeling--I have a feeling that they probably had some similar experiences in terms of being able to call parents, etc. But then when you got this mix and people trying to figure out, where do I fit in this scheme of things? What of my behaviors are acceptable, you know, so that I don't get in trouble so to speak? You know, not the kind of trouble you get in now with lawsuits and all that other stuff, but to keep, make sure that situations like, could have occurred had not gone on--calmed down and we sat down and talked. That kind of thing.

MT: That's very interesting. Did you ever have, you know, since you were assistant principal for awhile in different situations, did you ever have any other problems with white parents where, you know, that was kind of an situation maybe involved there?

HH: Oh, I don't think. Not to that extent. No. Not to that extent. And, the thing is, I mean, that's still in the 60's when the discipline problems were minuscule as compared to, you know, to things that are going on now. But, so, that was, you know, a sort of an interesting experience I should say.

MT: Yeah. I'll tell you about another sort incident from another perspective, but we don't have to put it on tape. Is there anything else that you can think of that you have to say about your experience with the desegregation process in the schools or about Great Mills?

HH: Well, I don't know. I think, all in all, the desegregation process went rather smoothly, all in all. I mean, yes there were some problems. There still are some problems, but they're not necessarily related to, you know, the desegregation. But, I think all in all, it went rather smoothly. I don't recall any, you know, any protests on one side or the other about--. You know, the people just went about and did what they had to do and had, dealt with their own, whatever issues they had on a personal basis.

MT: Were you aware of the fights and bomb threats and things at Great Mills?

HH: Yes. I was aware of some of that. Yes, I was aware of some of that.

MT: But that was relatively smooth as far as--?

HH: That's why I said relatively smooth. Not completely, just relatively smooth.

MT: What about--. Did you know anything about those--there were more public incidents, confronted incidents in the early 70's at Great Mills that were in *The Enterprise* where the NAACP got involved in the Spring of '71. Were you aware of any of that?

HH: I was aware of some of that, yeah, mainly because--. Well, I was just aware of it because it was the news. I was not involved in any way, and I don't know--. I don't know enough about to--whether it was--. I would not attribute that to desegregation. I would not. I know that there were issues that seemed to be between blacks and

whites, but I don't know that, you know, enough about it to really, to comment on that.

MT: Okay. I have one more question. This would be in the hypothetical realm, as well, I'm sure. Why do you think that the schools in St. Mary's county didn't desegregate until 1967, which is, you know, 13 years after the *Brown vs the Board of Education* decision?

HH: 'Cause they weren't made to do it. They were--. At that point, that was it. They had no choice. And, the leadership before then probably wasn't too interested in it, doing that. And the other part, of course, is the, I guess, the local folks were not necessarily interested.

MT: Just sort of satisfied with the status quo or--?

HH: Well, yeah. Well, some people were satisfied with the status quo. Most people were, you know, were strong, you know. It's not broke. We don't need to fix it kind of thing, you know. At least, I mean, and that's just my belief. I think that they Navy Base had a--certainly had something to do with the change of mind set about that, and that became a very important part of the economy of the county. And, it was kind of difficult to, anyway, to have a Base located in a place where there was segregation for all kinds of reason. So anyway, that's - that would be my take on why.

MT: Okay. And, what--. Did you say what brought you? Why you came in 1960?

HH: Why did I come?

MT: Yeah. Did you say why you came?

HH: Well, I came here to start an instrumental music program.

MT: The job. Right?

HH: For a job. To teach.

MT: Okay. Anything else you'd like to say?

HH: No, I said it all. [chuckle] I said it all. I don't know what you're going to find useful about what I said, but I appreciate your giving me an opportunity to vent.

MT: Oh, that's wonderful!

[End Side 2, Tape 1 of 1]