

Jerome Heggins: My name is Jerome Heggins. A lot of folk call me Isaac.

Edward Norvell: I'm Edward Norvell. Didn't we meet in chorus?

JH: I'm I'm not sure if it was chorus. I'm thinking it may have been though. But I can recall a number of things that probably today would not be viewed as as so pretty actually. I can remember back Dr. Martin Luther King being shot. You know, where I was and what I was doing when that occurred. I can remember going to water fountains that were segregated you know. You had some people that were allowed to go to all white water fountains and then you had those of us that had to go to the colored at that time water fountains. Um we we were not allowed to go downstairs in movie theaters, that kind of thing. Um I remember those things quite vividly.

EN: It was hard enough to be in junior high school whether you're white or black you know. But um so anyway then it was announced that they're going to merge Price High School and what was then Boyden High School. And my parents um I will say they were never overtly racist I didn't hear the the n-word or anything like that in our household. They were considered to be you know White middle-class. They decided to send me to private school. They weren't happy about what was happening in the public schools. They sent me to a private school- Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia which is a very nice southern prep school and, and I said I'll stay for one year if I don't like it I'll come back and that was my promise to them. And this was 1968. A lot of things happened in 1968, including Martin Luther King was shot. And I was again- we were on a hill overlooking Washington DC and I'll never forget I was in study hall. And this guy came into study hall and announced to the group Dr Martin Luther King had been shot. And the rebel yell went up among the group, hurrah! Yay! And I looked around the room I said, I can't believe this. I said, I'm not coming... this is not where I belong. I'm not coming back to this place. The next night I looked out over Washington and their flames between the Washington Monument and the Capitol building. Washington was burning as was much of America was burning and so I said, I'm coming home. So I did and that's when I went to a fully integrated high school. It was then still called Boyden High School but eventually changed to Salisbury high school.

JH: I, I guess I had some experiences that were a little different than some because I also had an opportunity to go to a county school which was called North Rowan at that time. Prior to coming back to Price High School which was the.. North Rowan first of all was an integrated school but not completely integrated at the time. We, we were there but when we went there, we went because we chose to go there not because integration per se had actually taken place where you had to go there. Um after going to North Rowan I decided it was time for me to go back to an all-black school which was Price High School and I went back to Price High School. It was at price that we actually went into total integration my senior year of high school. But the times were were pretty interesting. I won't say they were all bad because there were some interest interesting things happening. You had people that were becoming more aware to some extent. People that were becoming more vocal about things. People that were more I would say accepting of things to some extent all during this period. You had all of these different variables and different things going on so it was pretty interesting period of time.

EN: There was a lot of groundwork that went into making that experience as great as it was for me but it was a life-changing experience for me. I wasn't really aware of all the planning that went into this but thank goodness we had a great principal Denton Miller. Denton Miller supported you when you were mistreated basically. A lot of planning went into things like mascots we changed the colors we were yellow and black and you all were..

JH: Black and red

EN: Black and red. So we brought those colors together and um and the cheerleaders we want to make sure.. I mean again, I was not in this planning but the committees did plan together I think in advance of the merger and um and said there's going to be representation on you know cheerleading squads and homecoming court and all that. And also the class class um presidents and you know the class officers and all that and, and it happened and it worked I think to a large extent.

JH: But that was because people were determined to make it work. We had people like Fred Evans. We has people like Denton Miller who I I wish to this day I knew where he actually was so I could say thank you to that man because it was people like that that made a difference and made sure that things happened as they should happen. If we were going through the kinds of things we were having to go through, imagine the community pressure the the administration pressure and everything else that these people were under and had to go through. We didn't want it to happen. I feel pretty certain that those folk that were over at Salisbury well at Boyden at that time didn't want it happen either. We felt like we were being put out of our own school and having to be forced to go to school someplace else which was a pretty interesting situation. So we weren't very happy about it but as I said I'm sure that there were others you know from the other side that we're not not very happy about it either. The conversations that were held were held around that that fact- that we weren't excited about it but it was going to happen and what could we do to make that transition better because that was the most important thing. That, that once the transition had happened we we all knew it was going to come what could we do to make sure it was a smooth transition or as smooth as possible and how we want to deal with it.

EN: It was about 50:50 close to 50:50 of Black and White and everybody said no, now who are these people you know they're coming in our school and you know this is kind of strange you know. And I've never really been around this many Black people before but then our sports team started taking off and started winning games and you know and before long we're going to these great parties at the river and I was meeting all these great people. And it just became cool. And then like our basketball team was undefeated! won the the regional championship. And we have people in there one was David Butler who later became an educator in Charlotte. Butler High School was named after him James Brown his brother was Price Brown a city policeman. He became an educator in Florida. I mean a lot of really good people were on those teams

JH: We were winning everything and you know we began partying together. We would go to the parties where they were. They would come to the parties you know, where we were. That kind of thing. So people started accepting the fact, hey you know they're all right. You know, they're okay. These people are all right. So it just meshed and gelled which was pretty interesting also. So I think sports contributed to it a great deal actually.

EN: Looking back to class of 70 it wasn't the intellectuals who came together it was a sports team! (laughter) I love it and I was never jock but you know you just got that sports are what really brought us together. And music too! I mean we loved Black music. And that was the music of the time you know and uh anyway

JH: (sings) what's going on

EN: That's right. Music is the healing force of the world. It is. It brings people together.

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