

Interview with Mrs. Ruth Davis Sauls

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Interviewed by Dr. Rosalee Martin

RM: If you'll just get started, tell us who you are and what you're doing now.

RS: I am Ruth Davis Sauls, and I am a resident of Austin. I attended the old [L.C.] Anderson High School. I am now retired, and my duties, of course, are many still. I'm a church musician and I hold many positions related to music in church activities, conventions and congresses and those kinds of things. Aside from that, I work in the community through my sorority, and my hands stay pretty much full.

RM: Good. I invited you to come for this interview because we recognize how important the role that you played throughout your life as a teacher, but I want us to begin by--just talk to me about, what was school like for you in the fifties, for example, as a student in school at Anderson High? Talk about Anderson High.

RS: Anderson High School, of course, is a love of many of us. To think back, though, when we were at Anderson, well, starting Anderson in ninth grade was kind of a frightening experience because the upperclassmen, of course, you know, considered us little peons, and of course they kind of treated us like we were just beginners, which we were. But our experiences in Anderson were--I like to say they were very fruitful, rewarding in many cases, and, of course, they did help us get a sound education.

Our teachers were persons who were concerned about our well-being, not just academically but socially and emotionally, and our teachers were the kinds of persons who knew our parents. They would come to our homes, and of course we had to be careful how we conducted ourselves at school because they would report to our parents about us.

Back in the fifties, though, school was just an enjoyable place to be. Young people enjoyed being in school.

RM: Why do you think they enjoyed school? Was it because of extracurricular activity or was it because of the curriculum itself? Let's talk a little about the curriculum and extracurricular activities.

RS: Well, I would think it's probably a combination of the two. The extracurricular activities, of course, were real important to students, and, of course, they enjoyed the competition involved, and then, of course, the backing that the teachers gave students the concern that they had for them, that they participated in the various activities of the school, but they were more so concerned that they were sound academically.

RM: All the teachers were also African-American? Segregated school?

RS: It was a segregated school with all black teachers.

RM: And would you say that it was because they were black that they were so concerned? What were some other reasons these teachers might have been concerned?

RS: Well, this is all that we had to work with back then. Those were the only persons that we had for teachers, and, of course, as I stated earlier, they were just very, very concerned about students academically, socially, emotionally. I think back then teachers were just a little bit more dedicated to the profession, and thereby they had a little bit more compassion and concern for the students that they worked with.

RM: What did you major in? What did you like the most in school?

RS: In school? Well, I liked music, of course, and I liked physical education. I liked the other academic areas. English. I liked English, I guess because of the way that the instructors there, the teachers, taught English. They made it interesting to you. It wasn't like a chore. It wasn't like the students of today, this fear of TAAS [Texas Assessment of Academic Skills] and all of that kind of business. There was just an enjoyment experienced in learning the various —

RM: What was the relationship between school and church and other aspects of the community?

RS: Back in the fifties, there was a very close relationship between church and school because many of our teachers lived in our community and, of course, many of them were members of the churches in our community and participated very actively in the churches that they were members of. So there was just a real bond or a real connection between the faculty members and our church community.

RM: How did the parents participate? What kind of roles did they play in your education?

RS: My parents were very concerned that we went to school, stayed at school, and did well in school. My mother, of course, did finish high school, and she attended Tillotson College for a time. My daddy's education was not as much as my mother's. I think he probably did elementary school, because he had to go to work and help take care of the family, you know. But they were very concerned that we would do well, and they stayed on us. They didn't let up on us at all.

RM: How many children were there?

RS: Well, there were seven, seven children.

RM: And the oldest?

RS: The oldest was our brother Walter. We had a sister right after Walter, but she passed away when she was a baby, so we never knew her. And I was the next in line. Then on down through the rest of them.

RM: When you finished high school, you went on to college.

RS: Yes.

RM: And you went to—

RS: I went to Los Angeles City College in Los Angeles, California, and I went there for two years. I left here thinking that I was kind of tired of having to go to church all the time, because our mother was the church musician and our dad was chairman of deacons, so we had to go to church all the time, and I had to go especially because I played with my mother, played the piano

and later organ. When I left high school I had the feeling that "I'm going to California, I want to go to California so I can get away from home and I won't ever have to go to church anymore."

Well, unfortunately, when I got there—fortunately when I got there, I started playing for a church that same week. I became musician at one of the prominent churches there in Los Angeles, Mt. S____ Baptist Church, and in the two years that I was there I missed church two Sundays. I was ill. And I've just been at it since, but I think it's probably because I placed value on my training and the religion.

RM: Where did you graduate from?

RS: I graduated from this institution, Huston-Tillotson College. I came back home to finish and got my degree here at Huston-Tillotson College. After finishing Huston-Tillotson, I later went on to get my master's degree at Southwest Texas State University.

RM: And I know that you retired as a teacher.

RS: Yes.

RM: You were talking about how the teachers of your past were so caring and concerned. Did that influence your decision to go into teaching?

RS: Yes, that did. I guess I maintained that attitude throughout my teaching career. I think I was a pretty good teacher, having been named Teacher of the Year twice by my peers. I've always had a love for people, for young people especially.

RM: Now, as a teacher you were in integrated situations, integrated schools.

RS: Yes.

RM: I want you to talk about what you saw as the differences and similarities to the segregated schools that you were raised in, with the integrated schools where you were teaching.

RS: All right. When I first started teaching, I was teaching in a segregated school for, oh, probably about four years. I was in the high school. I started teaching in high school, and the schools were still segregated. I was later asked by the superintendent of the school where I began teaching, which was in the Taylor Independent School District, Taylor, Texas, thirty-five miles from here, and I was called in one day by the superintendent and asked if I would mind going to one of the Spanish schools. They were beginning integration, that's what it was. So they kind of wanted to use me for, as we would say, a guinea pig.

I agreed, and of course, I went to Eastside Elementary School in Taylor, and I was the only black there for a couple of years, and then they added one or two more to the staff, to the faculty there. The experience was different because the students spoke Spanish. That was their primary language. At one point there, I don't know who instituted this, but the students were not allowed to speak Spanish in school, they had to speak English. I was just real empathetic with those students. My heart really went out for them, because this was their predominant language and many of them had difficulty with it. But it just took teachers who were patient and who were willing to give them the time that they needed to help them succeed in their various classes and pass them.

RM: Let's talk about your career here in Austin as an educator. There were integrated schools when you came to Austin, correct?

RS: Yes.

RM: Let's talk about the experience you had in terms of the resources and in terms of how you perceived students learning in integrated versus the segregated schools.

RS: Well, when I first came to Austin, I was hired here in Austin. I lived here all along. I commuted to Taylor. I was once again kind of used as more or less the guinea pig, and I began teaching at Robert E. Lee Elementary School. I was the first black that they hired there. Jack Carter was the principal at the time, and he hired me. I think before school began, though, we did get one more black teacher, so we were the first. There were two of us there in that integrated situation.

I don't feel that I had any problems or anything, not relating to my co-workers or anything, because we more or less just bonded. I was really accustomed to people. I've been around people quite a lot. So they gave me all the support that a person could want.

The parents were very, very supportive there. They wanted to know where I had come from. Well, I had been in California, of course, and often the parents would come and ask me where I was from. I think they listened to the way that you speak, they would listen to the way you would speak, and, of course, and if you spoke English pretty nicely, they thought you were from some other state or some other country.

But my experience there was rewarding to the point that when my supervisor here in AISD [Austin Independent School District] was ready to transfer me to another school, the parents wanted to go to the school board.

RM: To keep you there.

RS: To keep me there at Robert E. Lee because they felt that I had done such a good job with the students there. I think I did a pretty good job, too.

RM: You were the musician or the—

RS: Yes, I taught music, general music and choir.

RM: I want you to just talk a little bit about segregation in other areas of your life when you were in Austin. What were some of your experiences in segregated Austin?

RS: Well, believe it or not, I basically have not had a whole lot of experiences with the segregation bit. Well, I do recall, however, when we would go to town to shop and that kind of thing, I do remember the "colored" and "white" water fountains and that kind of thing, or on the buses, sitting to the back or going to the back. The black people went to the back of the buses to sit, and the Anglos, etc., would sit to the front of the bus. But I didn't have any real, real, real bad, what I'd call bad experiences with it.

RM: Do you think it's because of your personality, your ability to get along, or do you think—

RS: I think it was something like that. I tried to carry myself well at all times in public or wherever, and I respect people that I'm working with or dealing with, and I expect from them the same respect that I give. That was one of the things I always taught my students, too. I'd tell my students that "When you're at school, you're my responsibility, and I'm going to treat you just like I would treat my own children. I would not do anything to you that I would not do to my own children." So I think that's probably one of the things that kind of helped me bond with the students and the students to bond with me.

RM: But you're also a parent of a student who experienced the crossover. She went to Anderson High, a segregated school, and she went to Reagan High [School], an integrated school, when they integrated.

RS: Yes.

RM: What were some of the experiences you had as parent working with your daughter?

RS: Well, I had my daughter and my son both went to Reagan. Well, my daughter, of course, was in the class that was the last class at Anderson. It was their senior year. They did not get to graduate from Anderson. They had to go various schools. So anyway, she went to Reagan High School. Of course, she, like all of the others, they were just very, very hurt over the situation and had very bad feelings about having to leave their alma mater to go to Reagan for their senior year. She was not really at that point concerned about participating in the activities there at the school. They were hurt. They were just hurt, and they didn't feel that they would be a part of things. So she did not participate in the little drill group over there as she had with the Jackettes at Anderson.

My son went. I think he went, what, the next year. Now, he did play in the band. He played in the band at Anderson and he did play in the band at Reagan when he was there. So they were pretty much like I am, and they got along. Like I said, "Try to carry yourself respectfully, and people will respect you." They didn't have problems, nothing real bad with their teachers.

The teachers accepted the students, I think, well, but some of the students did not accept them. At one point, the year after my son had gone there, there was a riot, and my son was one of the ones that got drug behind lockers by a group of the cowboys or something there—they called them cowboys—on the campus. He was actually stabbed with a pencil.

RM: This was at Reagan High?

RS: At Reagan, yes. I shall never forget the day that they called. I was at Robert E. Lee, and they called me from school to come right away. When I got there, there was just this ocean of people, all that I could see. Of course, I was so nervous, I was just shaking. When I got up—it was Patricia Brisbee [phonetic] who taught in AISD—got to my car and helped me get through the crowd. We got up there, the ambulance was there, putting my son in the ambulance. Then somebody took my car. It was just crazy. It just got real crazy. They told me to get in the ambulance and go on to the hospital with him. I didn't know what the condition was, but he had been stabbed with a pencil. It just missed his lung, so the doctor said.

I don't know what caused the riot to take place or anything. I know that he was not the kind of child who would have engaged in that on his own, but he was drug behind the lockers along with some other students, black students.

RM: What was the reaction of the administration, let's say the school board and the superintendent, during this time?

RS: Well, they worked to do what they could in trying to get the students to have a good working relationship with the students that were coming in from Anderson, but I guess when you really think about the fact that some of these kids have that segregationist mind just ingrained in them from so far back, when they were youngsters, maybe it was hard for them to adjust to having black people around. Some of it, I think they just took on from their peers and that kind of thing.

RM: Like mob behavior.

RS: Yes.

RM: As you think back on those periods of your life as a student and then as an educator and as a parent, what would you say would be the lessons you learned the most from those years?

RS: Well, let's see. Lessons learned. When I think back on my high school days—oh, I did forget to tell you, I, of course, was student musician from the time that I went to Anderson High School, and every year I had to play for various activities that we had, assemblies. I don't know why we couldn't keep a music teacher there for some reason. I recall that when it came time for graduation, I almost had to play for my own graduation. The principal, Mr. [W.B.] Campbell at the time, and some of the staff did get one of the teachers that did music a little bit to play for our graduation so that I could march. I, of course, led the line because I was one of the shortest people in the class. And the same thing happened at Kealing when I was in junior high school, I had to do a lot of playing then. I was kind of student musician there.

In so doing, it really gave me a greater love for the teaching profession. I think that just those experiences, just like some people tease me and tell me that, "You've been teaching school all your life," you know, because I was having to do these programs that I had to stay after school and practice with the different teachers that were having programs just like I was a hired music teacher.

So I think just being respectful of others and doing your job and doing it well is one of the things that I really acquired from the teachers that I had. Many of them were like perfectionists, and that was good. I think if you call the name of Lucille Frasier and Verna Otto, Raymond Timmons, R.V. Timmons, who was a coach, those people, they were concerned about children, period.

RM: As a teacher yourself, what were some of the memorable experiences you had then?

RS: During the time that I was teaching?

RM: Yes.

RS: Well, I've had many, many memorable experiences, times that I would take my choir to a contest and we could return to the campus with a superior or a one as the ratings, this was rewarding to me. The various programs that we would do, the responses that we would get from the public and from the parents, in particular, was rewarding. The one thing that I find really rewarding still, in my retirement, is the number of students that I meet or they see me and remember me, and they come to me from everywhere, in the malls, on the streets, in restaurants. Many of them I remember. One or two I've kind of forgotten, but they'll make me know them in some way. They're just astonished, I guess, that I'm still around. **[Laughter]**

RM: And you look so good.

RS: Yes.

RM: And as a parent, what are some of the memorable experiences you have had? You just mentioned about how your son was stabbed. Are there other memorable experiences you had as a parent as your children grew up and made that crossover?

RS: Well, the activities that they were engaged in prior to having to go to the other school. Those experiences, they all stand out in mind, you know, like the Jackettes, the drilling, the bands. Anderson always had good bands, back to the days of B.L. Joyce when I was in the band, yes. He was quite a band director. I remember those times from my children and their friends. Many of them we have not seen since we left Anderson.

But the one thing that's real, real rewarding is the fact that we're now having the combined reunion. So that's exciting. It was exciting last year to see students that you haven't seen since high school. There are just a lot of things that my youngsters enjoyed. As I said, I enjoyed school. They enjoyed being at Anderson because once again, I feel like even though the faculty was beginning to integrate and the student body was becoming somewhat integrated, those faculty members were, most times, caring. Every now and then you might run into someone who had not been accustomed to teaching black children, so they had problems. But I think by keeping myself visible, staying in contact with the school and not just going to the school, like some parents do, when the child's in trouble, made the relationship there between the teachers and myself good.

RM: Why do you think we're having so much difficulty with our kids now in school compared to then?

RS: Well, there are a number of reasons that we could name for what's happening now with students. I think what's happening in society, period, is something that needs to be looked at. Parents don't have control of their children, because you've got the courts, the law. They know that they can call the police if you yell at them. Then the parents have no control of the children at home, so, consequently, the children get out of hand. They come to school and they want to conduct themselves the same way that they do at home or talk to the teachers like they talk to their parents at home, and this, of course, is not acceptable behavior for school.

Then in society now, everybody's working, and you have these little— what do you call them— latchkey children, small kids going home with keys to let themselves in. This wasn't happening back when we were in school. Most of our parents, the mother was at home and the dad was at work. But everybody's working now. So some children are basically almost having to raise themselves, and this makes it hard for the children and for parents and teachers.

Children are working. They work so much earlier. When I was beginning high school, I wouldn't have thought of having a job then. But now, by the time these children are in high school, they're on jobs just like adults. Then when you look at the time that they spend at school, go on a job, what time do they have left for studying? So academically they're falling behind.

RM: Do you think integration helped more than it hurt education?

RS: Well, I guess I have mixed feelings about that. Many times I have felt, I have honestly felt, that integration has hurt in a number of ways. Then, of course, you can flip the coin and look at the other side of it and see that integration has helped. So it's kind of like a fifty-fifty thing.

RM: In what ways did it help, and in what ways did it hurt?

RS: We found out later on, did you know, that we were not using the same books that the other schools were using, the textbooks that we had. You hear a lot about the textbooks having been secondhand and all that kind of thing. That really didn't bother us. We were issued books by the teachers, and surely in the covers we'd see names. We didn't know if they were names from students who were at Austin High [School] or—you know.

RM: Or names from Anderson High.

RS: Yes. That was our textbook. Students then, I don't think, didn't question a lot of things that they question now.

RM: In what ways did integration help?

RS: You know, for the funding and this kind of thing. Now that I've done my teaching stints and that kind of thing—

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

RS: —of course, when I think back, no, we didn't have maybe as much as the students had at Austin High or McCallum [High School] or some of the other schools. But with the integration, well, we have access to more of those kinds of things.

RM: For resources, in terms of materials?

RS: Right. Right. Oh, yes.

RM: In terms of personnel, would you say the segregated schools provided students better-quality education with the personnel, the teachers?

RS: I tend to want to think—once again, as I said, my feelings are kind of divided on some of these things. When I look at it sometimes I feel like that students were better off when they had teachers who understood their culture better and could cope with it, because even in my teaching experience, teaching with people of other races, many of them don't understand the black culture, and some just really can't handle things that take place and this kind of thing. I know of a few that have just walked out of the classroom because it was difficult, it was just difficult for them. But basically I feel like it has its pros and its cons.

RM: Was your daughter bused to Reagan, or did you have to take her there?

RS: They didn't ride the bus. Well, at one point they rode for a while, but they didn't like riding the bus, so it got to the point where I would take them.

RM: As you're looking today, we'll bring you back to today, 2001, and you look back at the many experiences that you've had, what recommendations, advice, would you give to educators in terms of what is necessary to provide quality education for our students?

RS: First of all, I think that if you're going to be involved in education, that you really need to have your mind made up that this is what you want to do and really become committed to doing a good job of teaching children. Then, too, when you're teaching children, you have to look at all of your children as children. In other words, you have to become—what do they say—colorblind. You don't see color. Now, I never had a problem with—I didn't have a real problem with that because the children was just children to me. You know, back then you could hug the children and that kind of thing. So if I had twenty-five or thirty kids in one class and all twenty-five or thirty kids walked in the door and wanted to hug me, the younger kids, but even so, the older ones, you know, they love that stroking, I would hug every kid that walked in that door so they feel a closeness to you. But I think you really have to have a love for education.

RM: Now you can't demonstrate that love like you did.

RS: No, no, no, no, no, you can't.

RM: How could they actually show kids that they care?

RS: Well, by maybe communicating with them a little bit more. One thing I'd always tell my students is, "Now, in my class, if you are not understanding something I'm teaching, don't be afraid to let me know that you're not understanding, so that I can take some extra time with you and try to get you to the point where you understand what's being taught or whatever the situation is at that time." And when kids feel that they have this freedom to communicate with the teacher and they don't feel like, "If I let the teacher know that I'm not understanding this that she's taught, she might cut down on my grades," that kind of thing, this fear, you try to keep that fear factor out and let them feel that you are really concerned and you want them, really want them to learn and you want them to understand what's being taught. Then I think they feel freer.

Many times they will, most of us will, and quite often they don't understand what's being taught, and maybe you have to find another method for getting a point across. But I think the teacher should not be intimidated by the fact that a student doesn't understand what's being taught. They might need another method for teaching, getting that concept across or whatever the case may be.

RM: Are there any final things you'd like to say about the period we talked about in terms of pre-integration, integration, and the present as relates to school, church, or even your community? We didn't talk very much about community or community activities or business in the community. Any final words?

RS: Well, finally, I would like to wrap it up, I guess, by saying that my experiences back in the fifties were what I would really like to just consider stepping stones for me into the period that we are in now. By my having a special love for children and a love for what I taught, which is music, of course, general music and choir, it's made me feel good about the teaching profession.

I've thought one or two times about going back since I retired, but I'm involved in so many other things now. I'm going to school tomorrow to help. I go back periodically and help the music teachers out at the various schools when they need help. Some of the schools don't have access to pianists or the like, and I'm going to play for graduation for one of the little schools, one of the elementary school here this week. So I'm still involved. I'm not just sitting at home twiddling my thumbs.

RM: I know one time you were involved with Austin Citywide Youth?

RS: Yes. I had that Austin Citywide Youth Chorus, which was made up of—well, we started off all black kids, but before the group really stopped functioning, we had a few Anglos. We had become integrated somewhat. These were young people who were in junior high and high school. We've had as many as 200 children in our chorus at one time.

RM: And many are doing well [unclear].

RS: Oh, yes, they are. We had a reunion about three years ago now, a citywide reunion, and we're planning to have another one, hopefully, next year. Our youngsters really are proud of what they're doing.

RM: I really appreciate your coming in and taking this time out with us and sharing your experiences with us. They're so rich.

RS: Well, thank you.

RM: And what a relief it is to know in Austin that we have wonderful persons who are out there doing what they talk about, and you're one of those persons.

RS: Thank you. Thank you.

RM: Of course, it's special because you go my church.

RS: Right.

RM: [Unclear] goes to church. It's not just business.

RS: Thank you. I enjoy it.

RM: Thank you very much.

RS: I enjoyed it.

[Inaudible background conversation and tape recorder turned off.]

RM: Ms. Sauls, would you just tell me what are your impressions or your thoughts about education today, specifically as it relates to TAAS tests and education just overall? What's happening to our schools?

RS: Well, I think that the TAAS, the TAAS test alone is creating problems in our schools. It's creating problems for the teachers. It's creating problems for the students. Everybody's just so TAAS-oriented that, in many situations, nothing is being taught but that TAAS test, and this is not good. It has gotten to the point where jobs, your job, is going to be contingent upon how well the students do in your school. I think this is so unfair, so unfair to the total group of teachers or to the school, period. But I'm finding out that principals are being pressured by their superiors. The principals are, of course, giving teachers a hard time about TAAS. The teachers are giving the students a rough time about TAAS. Everything is TAAS. And I don't think this kind of environment is conducive to learning, good learning experiences.

RM: When you were in school at Anderson, at Kealing or Anderson, did they have standardized exams?

RS: Yes. We had tests, but it didn't depend on your passing. You know, if you failed that test, you had to repeat a grade or the teachers would be fired or any of that kind of stuff. We had tests, and of course, teachers put emphasis on your doing well in the test, but you tested things that basically you were taught.

RM: So you were actually, as students, then taught to be lifelong learners.

RS: Right.

RM: You were taught how to learn and how to use that learning in life, as opposed to just taught to take a test, then maybe you'll forget it.

RS: Right. Absolutely. But I hope the situation's going to get better, but I've really been disturbed about it.

RM: What do you think we can do? If administration came or superintendent came or even the governor of Texas or the legislators came to you and said, "We're in a crisis situation as it relates to education," what would your suggestions be to turn it around?

RS: Well, I think that those people that are making those rules, like the legislators and those kind of people, they need to be in the classrooms more. They need to experience what's taking place in the classrooms. You know, it's easy to just sit up in an office and put stuff down on the paper because it sounds good to you or it looks like this might work. You need to get out there in the field and really visit around, visit those classes, be with those students some and see what they're being taught and how they respond to this, that, and the other. But until this kind of thing happens, we're just going to have this stuff that's handed down from those people who are in authority.

RM: Do you think the tests are racially biased?

RS: Now, I couldn't give you an honest answer on that because I really —

RM: culturally biased?

RS: I would think in some instances it could be, depending upon the geographic area that you live in, what part of the country are you living in in the United States. There are so many different variables, and maybe in one area kids have had exposure to certain things. Down here in Texas, our students may not have had that exposure. This shows up on the test. So consequently, they can't answer correctly in most cases.

RM: Why do you think that minority schools have the lowest TAAS scores? Because that's what's being said, and that's probably true.

RS: I feel that one reason for this is because in the black schools, those persons that you find who have been hired for staff, teaching faculty, so often are just beginning teachers. They are not your master teachers. Just look now at AISD. If AISD were to just really make a good poll of its retired teachers and could get some of those retired teachers back into the classroom, I really think that the situation would basically become better. But when you have teachers who are

inexperienced, first of all, they're trying to get the feel of teaching, period, you know, in the classroom setting. And then they've got to worry with trying to do that and do it right and then worry about teaching that TAAS. So, consequently, the students are still at the bottom of the totem pole.

I don't like to think about what might have happened before I started going to high school too much. I don't know a whole lot about it, but it's been said over and over again that the students in the black schools were behind the students in the Anglo schools or the other schools. If this be the case, then how in the world could you expect the black child then to take a test and come out equal if their teaching or training has been what has been called inferior? How in the world can it come out in balance with the other students who had superior or master teachers all along?

RM: When you talk about master teachers, you're talking about those who've been in the field for a long time.

RS: Yes.

RM: Who really have mastered the art of teaching as well as to appreciate the differences of the children they're working with.

RS: Yes. That's what I consider a master teacher.

RM: I thank you for your reflections and your thoughts.

RS: And I surely hope that something would be done about some of my thoughts. I think I'm at a point now where I want to become more vocal because I can freely say—

RM: And not be afraid of being fired.

RS: Yes, and not be afraid of losing my job. I can remember times when we couldn't even say that we were members of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and that kind of thing.

RM: Really?

RS: Yes. You couldn't make that known.

RM: Really?

RS: Oh, yes.

RM: [Unclear].

RS: And I think you can be respectfully vocal and get your point across.

RM: We appreciate your doing this.

David Herringer: I was going to ask one question. Do you think there are just plain too many tests?

RS: You mean the kids have been given too many tests, period?

DH: [Unclear].

RS: Well, yes. Yes, and I've thought this recently, in keeping up with the newspapers and things, with the various tests and things that are given students, sometimes I tend to think that they are, they're just giving too many tests. But, as we said earlier, they need to focus on other areas. Teaching, there's a lot more to teaching than just teaching that TAAS test, and if they focus on some other areas—I really think the children are pressured and stressed. When you go out and hear young people talking about how stressed they are, I mean, we've got these youngsters now that are more stressed than a lot of adults, and it's a lot because of that test, because of that test. They fear that, you know, "If I don't pass this test, I probably won't get to graduate." Children are pressured. They're just in a real pressure cooker nowadays. Hopefully it's going to change and they can really enjoy education.

I can recall how we used to just get up in the mornings wanting to get to school. I also recall how, before I retired, I used to get up in the mornings, go to school, and even back in the days when it was segregated, I wanted to get there because I knew that some students were going to be waiting for me. They waited to get into my room. And even with integration I had the same kinds of things happen. Students wanted to be there because they knew that I wanted to be there and I wanted the best.

RM: And that is so important. Students know when you really care for their overall well-being.

RS: Oh, yes. And I wanted the best for them. So I was willing to put in—I didn't care how much time it took to perfect—

RM: We know about that, right?

RS: You know about that from church. **[Laughter]**

RM: Thank you so much. I do have a release form you need to sign.

RS: All right.

[End of interview]