INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM SIMONS

INTERVIEWER: MIKE SMITH

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MIKE SMITH: Okay. We're ready to begin. So why don't you do what you did a moment ago, and introduce yourself to the camera?

WILLIAM SIMONS: I am William H. Simons, from Washington DC. I was formerly the president of the Washington Teachers Union for twenty-five years. I led the organization from a membership of less than 200, to the collective bargaining agent, for teachers in Washington DC. That occurred in 1967.

MS: I really want to start from the beginning on this, Mr. Simons, and I mean right from the beginning. If you could, could you explain your family roots, where you were born and raised, and a little bit about your parents and your family, growing up?

WS: My parents were from Columbia, South Carolina. They decided to move to Washington DC after the birth of their first two children, because they felt there were greater opportunities in Washington than in Columbia, South Carolina. I am the fifth child of eight children, I am the third son of the eight. Seven are living. We lost one sister along the way.

I was born in a house that had no indoor plumbing facilities, so you can imagine what was that like.

MS: What year were you born, Mr. Simons?

WS: 1924, June 1st. When I was four years old, we moved from that house at 50 L Street to 110 S(?) Street, Northwest, where I grew up as a child and stayed until I got married. And the only time I was away was the two and a half years that I was in the

service during World War II.

MS: What did your parents do for a living?

WS: My father started out as a messenger in the federal government, at the Veteran's Administration. He had a very difficult time trying to get promoted. He was offered the title of clerk at one time, but no additional pay. And he said, "I don't need the title if I'm not going to get any money." He finished his career with the Veteran's Administration, and really should have been classified as a master electrician, but he never received that title, nor did he receive that pay.

My mother was the first female graduate of Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina and could -- should have been a teacher. But of course, with the eight children, she never got into the teaching profession, and she really did day work, going out to various houses to clean up, and come home, but she took care of the family.

I went to the public schools of the District of Columbia. I started in the first grade at age five. I had a difficult time during the school years because the school records showed my birthday as June 1, 1923. And it wasn't until I got in college that I was finally able to correct that to June 1st, 1924.

But Mother taught all of us how to read and how to write. I remember the iron stove in the kitchen that had the words Acme Stove Company. And I guess that was my first lesson in learning

the alphabet, learning those letters and putting those words together.

Went through John F. Cook Elementary School, Shore(?) Jr. High School, and then Dunbar High School, where I graduated in 1940, after having just turned fifteen on June 1st of that year, in 1940. I had no desire to go to college. I was interested in getting what we called 1080, that's one of those Level I entry jobs with the federal government, at 1080, $1,080 a year.

But my mother said, "No, no. It's not going to be that way. You're going up to the teacher's college." At that time, it was only $5 a semester, so we could afford that. And well, after I got there, I learned to like it.

I had a difficult time in my senior year at high school because I was just about the youngest one in my class. And I can remember my senior year, the Christmas party, I got teething rings and baby rattles and nursing bottles as my Christmas presents. I couldn't get a date with any girl, because they told me they didn't go out with babies (Laughs).

But once I got into minor teacher's college, I guess something just struck me, and I began to take off, and getting good grades, and going right through until February of 1943. That's when I was called into active duty.

In August, 1942, a recruiter came to the college. Even over summer we all met at the college. And we were told that if we

stayed in school and kept our grades at a certain level we would be able to finish college before being called into active duty. That was August, '42. February '43, we were on our way to Fort Meade, in Maryland.

MS: I assume you were drafted.

WS: Well, really, I volunteered, because I'd signed up with the Army Reserve. I'd signed up with the Army Reserve, and therefore, I had one of those special numbers, 1-3, instead of, I think 3-3 was the normal number for the District of Columbia.

Went to Fort Meade in February. In June of '43, they shipped me to Camp Pickett, Virginia. I was assigned to a quartermaster company in that Camp Pickett. And one of the most interesting things that happened in Camp Pickett, I was assigned to go to some town in Virginia and pick up a soldier who had gone AWOL. They strapped a forty-five on my hip. I had never had a forty-five in my hand. I didn't know how to handle it. And the soldier was in the front -- or the back of the truck, and I'm sitting at the tail end of the truck, hoping and praying that he did not try to (Laughs) get away, because I wouldn't have known what to do. But at any rate, we got back safely, and that was that.

I was shipped to Camp Pickett in May. In June, the end of June, they said, "Well, you've got a two-week furlough." I said, "Wait a minute, what's happening?" "Well, when you get back, you're shipping out to England." So I took my furlough, and I went back,

and shipped over to England in June of '43.

We landed in Scotland, and took the train down into England. Stayed there, training, for a year.

MS: What unit were you attached to?

WS: The 262nd Quartermaster Battalion. I then was a sergeant. And when the rest of the battalion came over later, in July, that's when I was reunited with the battalion, and we went into training in preparation for something. I didn't know what at the time, but I later found out what it was all about. And on June 5th -- well, actually, before June 5th, we left our station in Teddington, England, and went down to Dover.

And on June 5th, we boarded the boat at Dover to go across the channel, still not knowing what was to happen. But we soon found out, as the morning of the 6th broke, we were in the middle of a channel, and the action had started. Made that safely, or at least landed on the shore safely.

We had a young captain who thought that he could outshine the infantry. The infantry would go a certain distance and they would stop to take a rest break. But he said, "No, come on. We're going to keep going. We're going to keep going."

MS: This is once you've landed.

WS: Once we had landed.

MS: And the forces are starting to break out.

WS: Right. But the infantry was stopping every so often to

take a break, but this captain just kept pushing us on until we got where we were supposed to be for that night, and that's where we bivouacked for the night.

The action on June the 6th is something that I will never forget. The bombing of the towers on September 11th was the closest thing that I've seen that reminded me of that day, June 6th, 1944.

MS: The bombing of the World Trade Center towers?

WS: The World Trade Towers, yes. We finally got to the place where we were supposed to encamp for, well, as long as we were supposed to be there. We were responsible -- that is, the battalion was responsible for loading convoy trucks shipping supplies up to the front lines.

And I can remember one day -- this was after General Patton had come in and started moving towards the German lines -- I didn't know what the problem was then, but they gave orders not to load any trucks for General Patton's troops until General Patton sent a brigadier general down with a convoy and said, "We need our supplies." And I suspect that had Patton gotten their supplies on time every time they requested it, we probably would have ended the war a little sooner, because he was really on the move.

We were located right next to an antiaircraft unit. And we used to go over and sit with them in the evening, just chatting. One evening, the Germans swooped down. They had the practice of

cutting off their engines, coming down, and just before they got to the ground, cutting back on their engines and turning on their machine guns.

That night we all left. The gunners left their guns, and we all retreated back to our foxholes, because we were not going to stay there that night. The next morning, daylight, we started digging the foxholes a little deeper, to see if we could avoid being (Inaudible).

I came through that experience without any serious injuries. Though one day when I was in the headquarters tent and typing, a bullet came through the tent and fell right back of my chair (Laughs). It was spent, and probably wouldn't have caused any damage, but --

MS: Nevertheless...

WS: That was about the closest I ever came to being injured during the war. I was promoted to Master Sgt. of the battalion. And of course, that was just like being an officer, only without the bother. So I had a pretty good time. Towards the end of the war, after the breakthrough at Bastogne, I had a jeep and a chauffeur. And I was able to move around in Belgium and in France, and looked up a number of classmates of mine who were in the areas.

They offered me a commission, and I told them, "No, thank you. I want to go home." I came home in November of '45. And February, the beginning of the second semester, 1946, I re-enrolled at the

teachers college, and went on to finish my degree.

MS: Before we leave your World War II experience, I have a couple of questions. One is, your resume says you won a Bronze Star. Could you speak about that a bit?

WS: Well, I don't know whether I did anything in particular to merit that. I don't know. And the same thing, we got Croix de Guerre. Well, that was a medal -- a French medal that was given to all of the soldiers who landed on that D-Day. So I really don't know what I did, but I did get the Bronze Star.

MS: Did the whole unit get Bronze Stars, or just you?

WS: I think there were about five of us that got them.

MS: Well, still... And I wondered, regarding your situation, if you had any experiences regarding race relations in the Army. Because I know the Army was segregated at that time.

WS: Oh, very.

MS: And was your whole unit African American?

WS: Oh, yes, yes. Very much.

MS: And when you say antiaircraft unit that a you spoke with, were they African American?

WS: They were African Americans. There were a few African Americans in antiaircraft units, a few in the engineering units, but mostly in quartermaster or other service battalions. Yes, there was very definitely racial animosity. We were all black soldiers, but we had all white officers, except for a petty

officer, who was black. But I really didn't have any difficulty with the officers, and didn't have too much difficulty with the troops.

I do remember being in the washroom one morning, and one white soldier came up to me and said, "Why are you combing your hair? It doesn't make any difference, does it?" And I said, "Yes, it does." And I took the comb and pushed it forward, and then took the comb and pushed it back, brushed it. And I said, "Yes, it does make a difference. Our hair does need to be combed in order for us to be neat." But other than that, no.

Of course, there was the -- well, going into town and running into girls who did ask, "Where's your tail?" Because they were told that the black soldiers had tails. Those kind of things, but other than that, I really did not run into very difficult racial relations, though I know that the animosity was there.

MS: Do you think this experience had any effect on going back to school and your vocation?

WS: The experience is something that I wish everybody could get, but not a warlike situation. Yes, the experience was very invaluable. It made an adult out of me. Because when I went in, I had just turned seventeen. And two years of that, two and a half years, really made a difference. And when I came back to school, I was determined that I was going to finish my degree.

Now, one thing happened. When I came back in November, my

sister was at the University of Chicago. And she invited me to go back to Chicago with her for the month of January, since I could not go back to minor until February. And I went with her, stayed in one of the dorm houses with students, visited a number of classes at the University of Chicago. And really, I said to myself over and over again, "Golly, if I had known this, I would have been away from home in school," because I saw how students were able to make it who didn't have very much money. But at any rate, I came back, determined to get my degree.

I got my degree in June of '47. And I was appointed as a teacher at Banneker Junior High School, in social studies, seventh, eighth and ninth grades, where I remained for fifteen years. I joined the union my second year of teaching. And of course, the union was not very strong then. At that time, no organization had collective bargaining rights for teachers.

MS: And this was the AFT at that time?

WS: This was the American Federation of Teachers, yes. But I was also a member of the National Education Association. And for a number of years I would go to the NEA convention in June, and then come back and go to the AFT convention in August. But I was the one that made the motion that got the NEA on record, at least recognizing the Civil Rights -- or rather, the -- yeah, Civil Rights case -- school desegregation case, which was passed by the Supreme Court in 1954. And this was 1961, when the NEA finally

recognized that.

MS: Brown versus the Board of Education.

WS: Right, had been enacted. No, it took no action whatsoever, to do anything about their segregated units, or anything else. The next year -- this was 1961 in Atlantic City. I went to the NEA convention in 1962 in Denver. A group of us, black and white, had been working together over the years, trying to get that done; that is, the recognition of the Supreme Court decision by the association.

And in '62, we decided, well, let's see if we can push some more things through to really make this organization representative of all of the teachers that are members. And then I was told that "You're going too fast." I said, "What do you mean, going too fast?" "Well, you just have to take things slow."

MS: Who told you this?

WS: Well, these were leaders of the NEA, black leaders, I must say, as well as white leaders. So I said, "Well, I guess this will be my last NEA convention, because I've been going too slow for too long. It's time for action to be taken."

MS: And this is what year, again?

WS: 1962. So I had taken out a life membership in the NEA, and I resigned. I told them I no longer wished to be associate with the organization. And that's when I began to become very active with the American Federation of Teachers.

MS: Could you tell me, up to this point -- you're out of the NEA in '62, and you're about to embark on an ambitious career in AFT. Now, up to this point, there's a couple pieces of information we might like to know more about. Could you describe the school that you taught in for these many years? Was it a segregated school or desegregated?

WS: No.

MS: Could you tell us a bit about your situation there, and if you could start with that?

WS: Banneker Junior High School was the newest junior high school in the city.

MS: Washington DC.

WS: Washington DC. And it was the number one junior high school in Washington DC. Every teacher wanted to teach at Banneker. I was lucky in getting it as my first assignment. Well, as a matter of fact, my first and only assignment. It was a completely segregated school. But we had some good students. And I'm proud to say that Eleanor Holmes Norton, the congressional representative for the District of Columbia, was one of my first students at the school. And she's always remembered that.

A little aside: At my retirement she gave a presentation. And she said, "The most difficult thing for me has been, over the years, is to call my teacher by his first name, Bill, when I'd been calling him Mr. Simons all of these years."

But at any rate, we had some very good students that came out of Banneker Jr. High School. And I often run into them. And what I used to tell the male students especially, but the females also, I said, "You are at this awkward age. You don't know whether you still want to be cuddled up by mama or you want to break and go out on your own. I recognize that. But I'll tell you what, if you do two things for me, stay in school, and keep your name off the police blotter, and sooner or later, that which is in you is going to come out, and you're going to say, 'Hey,' and go."

So I was at Banneker for fifteen years. I had some run-ins with the principal. And this I must put on the record: At that time, I guess -- let's see, I started in '47 -- I guess about '49 or '50 -- I had joined the union my second year -- the building rep was pressing the principal for duty-free lunch periods for the teachers. We didn't have a duty-free lunch period. The principal was calling in teachers one by one, asking, "Were you part of the union? Were you behind this move to get a duty-free lunch period?" And of course, she called me in. And that was the first and last time that I denied that I was a member of a union. (Laughs)

But at any rate, other than that I had a good time teaching. I loved it. I can remember one class that I started teaching the stock market to. And we would follow -- we were following Chrysler Corporation. And you know, those students, all of them, came in one day and they said, "Mr. Simons, each of us has a $5 bill. We

want to buy a share of stock in Chrysler Corporation." I said, "No, no. You can't do that." But evidently, I had struck a note with them, in my teaching, that they were that much interested in doing it.

One other incident: My mother died in 1959. The election for the United Giver's(?) Fund -- she died in August -- always took place around October or November. I gave a check for $1. The principal called me in and said, "Mr. Simons, this isn't acceptable." I said, "Ms. Walker, my mother has been ill over the past two years. And I have been contributing along with my brothers sisters to her medical bills, and I just don't have anymore that I can spare this year." "Well, that's not good enough." I said, "Well, get --

TAPE ONE/THREE, SIDE A ENDS

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TAPE ONE/THREE, SIDE B BEGINS:

WS: -- she gave me my check, and I tore it up right in front of her and said, "Well, thank you," and walked out. But nothing happened. Excuse me.

MS: Was the administration at the school white or black?

WS: Oh, black. We had separate --

MS: Everything.

WS: -- everything. And we found out, when integration did take place, and teachers began to go into the white schools, we

found out what a difference there was in equipment, books and supplies.

MS: When did desegregation start in the Washington district?

WS: The year -- let's see, (Inaudible) was '54 -- in '55, yeah, the next school year after that (Inaudible) --

MS: Uh-huh, after the (Inaudible).

WS: The system tried to get around it by creating what they called the track system. And even though the students were in white schools, they were usually assigned to the fourth track, which was the lowest track. All schools had that. One student, I remember, who made the honor roll at Banneker and also did very well in high school, but she could not get into the honors track in high school, regardless of her grades, because she didn't start the ninth grade in the honors track.

Then in 1963, I was then -- no, 1964, I was then the financial secretary for the union. And they asked me to be president. Oh, by the way, let me say about the union in Washington DC, there were three separate locals of the American Federation of Teachers. There was Local Six, the white teachers; Local 27, the black teachers' union; and oddly enough, Local 856 was an integrated local of attendance officers.

In 1953, Carl Megel, who was then president of the American Federation of Teachers, said he wanted one local in Washington DC. As a matter of fact, the AFT decreed that for all locals, there

would be one local in each jurisdiction. And the three locals in DC merged, and were given a new charter, as Local Six.

MS: This was 1964.

WS: Right - '53, actually.

MS: Oh, '53. All right. To there was Local Six, in 1953.

WS: Right.

MS: Kind of stepping back a bit, you were starting to speak about 1963, '64, when you started to become very active in the union. Now, prior to that time, during most of the '50s, and a bit of the early '60s and late '40s, when you were teaching, what was the union like at that time, in terms of spirit, and how would you characterize its power and its activities?

WS: The union was very small. You can imagine that after integration, many of the white teachers and even some of the black teachers dropped out. And the membership was at one time -- when they merged, they had a membership of about 1,000.

MS: And how many teachers -- do you know what percentage that would represent of the teachers?

WS: Well, at that time, there were about 6,500 teachers in the district, and you had about 1,000 as members of the union. Of course, nearly all were members of the Association, because in many instances, the principals at schools would take the dues money for the Association out of the school fund in September, and then the teachers had to pay it back over the course of the year, so that

they could be announced as a 100 percent school.

I was active with the union, as I said. I was also active with the NEA. As a matter of fact, I was appointed parliamentarian at one time. I was financial secretary at another time, and corresponding secretary. So I was active with the union. But of course, it had no power at all. No organization had any collective bargaining rights for teachers.

In 1964, I was first elected president of Local Six. I was still teaching. In the years '64, '65, I was teaching in the day and running the union office at night. And I realized that I was not doing either one effectively. And now teacher was a student then. Whenever she sees me -- this has been over the last several years -- she says, "Mr. Simons, I can remember, you spent more time with the union than you did in your geography class." (Laughs) And I said, "Well, you're right. I have to admit that that is right."

Well, in 1965, the American Federation of Teachers said that, "We will subsidize you if you will take full-time president." Well, it was something that I had to agonize over, because by that time the membership had dropped down to about 250, the local, of course, could not sustain any president. And dues at that time were only $12 a year. I agonized over it. I talked with my wife about it, and a number of people. And she finally said, "Well, Bill, if that is what you want to do, we'll make it somehow." So in December of 1965, I left the classroom and became the full-time president of

the Teacher's Union. And I never looked back, because being out in the street for that one year taught me the lessons of how you make it in this society.

And I realized it. I said, "I'll never be without a job, knowing that I know how. And that's what I used to tell the teachers over and over again: "If you want to make changes, you've got to get out into the community and be an activist in the community. Whether you live in that community or not, you can still be an activist with the parents of your students." And I said, "That is the only way that you're going to make changes. You're not going to make any changes within the four walls of your classroom. Changes come from without."

But at any rate, I became president. And one of the first things that I was confronted with was the need for money for the local, something which the AFT was not willing to finance at that point. And I took out a mortgage on my house to get money to do that. I paid that off. But that's the way I felt about the organization.

Carl Megel said that he believed that Washington could obtain recognition for the teachers. And we embarked upon our campaign in early 1966. The AFT, of course, financed the campaign, as well as the AFL-CIO, the Industrial Union Department. Nick Zonorich (phonetic), gave the union space in the Industrial Union Department, in the AFL-CIO building. His daughter happened to be a

teacher in the system (Laughs). And really, I was so proud when we won the election. I could go back to Mr. Zonorich (phonetic), and say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you, because it was your help that helped us get over the hump." The NEA tried to convince the Board of Education -- it said that it had 5,000 signatures demanding that they be the collective bargaining agent, but they would never bring out those 5,000 signature cards to turn over to the Board of Education.

Now, during the course of our campaign, John F. Kennedy issued his Executive Order, 10988, which provided for a limited collective bargaining for federal employees. And it was made applicable to all of the District employees, with the exception of the police, firefighters and the teachers. We petitioned the Board of Education to adopt the Executive Order. But oh how glad I am that they did not, because the Executive Order was very limited in what could be negotiated by the workers with the agency.

Well, we petitioned the Board of Education to hold an election to let the teachers determine, first of all, if they wanted a single organization to represent them, and secondly, which organization would it be. And on April 27th, 1967, the election was held. And the Washington Teachers Union won the election by a three to two margin, and we were on our way. We had a membership then of about 700 of a 6,500 teachers. But then, of course, now, we're going, we have the dues check-off, the agency fee, so we

covered the whole ball of wax.

In 1968 --

MS: Maybe we'll pause there just for a second. So how are we doing on time? I can't (Inaudible) --

(INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING)

MS: Okay. So we've gotten you into the presidency. We've run through your first campaign, or organizing campaign, rather, and the AFT is now the official bargaining agent. And you were going to start in '68, right?

WS: Well, let me go back to '67, if I --

MS: Okay, sure. No, no, no. We've got plenty of time here. Then also, just for what it's worth -- the camera is not running now -- but for what it's worth, Mr. Simons, I'd like you to maybe tell us a bit more about the experience of organizing for the election. You had just spoken a moment ago about your philosophy, and the results of going into the community for organizing. And I'm wondering if you could elaborate a bit, and speak about the experience of organizing the teachers, what kind of questions did they ask, what kind of resistance or enthusiasm you might have met by the teachers, and just maybe elaborate on that organizing campaign a bit.

WS: It was a very difficult campaign, as you can imagine. Teachers had been forced to pay dues to the National Education Association over the years. And as I think I mentioned earlier,

many principals would take the money out of the school fund, pay 100 percent for the faculty, and then have the teachers repay that over the course of the year, so that the school fund would be right.

We put a stop to that, because at one school, a teacher reported to me that the principal said there are two teacher organizations, the National Education Association, with its local affiliate, the District of Columbia Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers, and the Washington Teacher's Union. We've always been 100 percent NEA/DCEA, and to my knowledge, there has never been a member of the union in my building. And this teacher came back and told me that. And I went directly to the superintendent with that quote. And he issued a bulletin to principals to cease and desist. Also, (Inaudible) an order from the superintendent to permit the union to hold meetings after school time, or during the lunch period when teachers were not on duty.

So little by little, we were able to reach the teachers. And one thing that really helped in the organizing campaign was the fact that the bus company, Capitol Transit Company, put a sign on the back of the buses: "Drivers wanted. High school education needed. Starting salary of $6,500." And when the teachers saw those signs on buses, they were saying, "Wait a minute. We have to go at least four years and get a college degree, and our starting

salary is only $4,700. Why is that so?" I said, "Well, it's simple. They have a union that bargains for them. You can do the same thing, if you join the Washington Teachers Union."

We had many incidents, but we were able to overcome them. Many of the teachers would join the union, but they'd say, "Please don't let it be known that I am a union member, because I would suffer repercussions in my building." But in spite of that, when it came to the secret ballot election, we won it by a three to two margin. That was in April.

We arranged a meeting with the superintendent in May. He was very reluctant to meet with us because he was afraid that we were going to come in and run him out of his office. And I told him, "No. You are the superintendent of schools. We are employees of the school system. We simply are interested in making some changes in the way the system operates so that the teachers can be more effective in their classroom. That's our only objective."

Well, he soon left the system because he was involved in a dispute over the track system. I don't know whether you've ever heard of the name Julius Hobson, who was an activist in the Washington DC area. He had brought suit against the superintendent and the Board of Education, for the track system. The track system was one in which the system tried to maintain segregation by setting up four tracks. And most of the black students, regardless of their capabilities, ended up in the fourth track.

MS: Could you explain the tracks slightly?

WS: Well, you had the honors track, and then you had the academic track. The third track was the general track, for the so-called average student, and then the fourth track for the slow learners. They even had what they called a pre-kindergarten track, children who were not ready for the kindergarten, even though they were five years old. And they put them in the pre-kindergarten. And we traced the number for the student, and they remained in the fourth track all the way the educational experience.

Our first meeting with the Board of Education took place at a school. And the Board set up a table, and they put a microphone over on the side.

MS: Do you recall the date?

WS: Oh, let's see, this was sometime, I think in June of '67. It was after the meeting with the superintendent. And they expected me to go to the mike and speak to them as if I was were speaking to them at a regular board meeting. And I said, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a new day. We will speak to you when you arrange a set of tables so that we can sit across from you and talk to you face-to-face." Well, you can imagine what consternation took place after that. But they did set up those tables, and we did have that initial meeting.

And the Board hired a negotiator, which was perhaps the best thing for us. We were able to show to the negotiator what the

practices had been. And the negotiator turned around to the Board team(?) and said, "Well, is that correct?" And they would say, "Yes." He said, "Well, you stop that right now. You put this clause in the contract (Inaudible)." And that's the way it happened all the way through. And we had to have a sit-in, an all-night sit-in at the Board of Education in December. And they thought we were absolutely crazy, but (Laughs) we did it.

And also, the Board refused to meet with us. We said we wanted to meet with the Board of Education. And they said, "No way." It was snowing that night. We sent a telegram to Lyndon Johnson, who president at the time. About 10:30 that night, the Board of Education marched in, one by one. And well, we knew we weren't going to get anything settled. Just the fact that we were able to get them out on a snowy night to come down and sit at the table.

MS: Now, this was the negotiations for the first contract after the election?

WS: Right.

MS: And you mentioned a negotiator for the teachers. Was this assigned by the--

WS: No. For the Board of Education.

MS: For the Board of Education.

WS: Yes.

MS: And were you doing the negotiations for the teachers?

WS: I was doing the negotiations for the teachers with the help of the field representative from the AFT.

MS: And who might that be?

WS: At that time it was James Mundee (phonetic), who was the Director of Organization for the American Federation of Teachers, because I had never had any experience as a negotiator at all. However, I was able to make my points and make them stick, because we had all of the facts at hand.

At any rate, we got the contract signed in January of '68. And we went on from there. At that time, the Congress of the United States had to pass a law in order for teachers to get a salary increase. The District could not grant salary increases, so we couldn't negotiate money in the contract. The teachers had not had a pay raise for five years. And we got the bright idea that we had gone long enough. So March 7th, 1968, that's less than a year after we had been recognized as a collective bargaining agent, we decided to take a day off from school and go down to Capitol Hill and lobby for a pay bill. The teachers just simply signed up to be absent that day. We had about 2,500 teachers who met with us on Capitol Hill. The school system didn't know what to do, so they just simply declared a holiday. Nobody lost leave, nobody lost money.

We spent the day on the Hill. Most of the members of Congress were sympathetic, but there were many who said, "We will not talk to you. You come down here after your school day is over, and we

will talk with you." And there was a Congressman from South Carolina, ~~Mindell Rivers~~ Mendel Rivers (phonetic). We went into his office. And he was raging "Boo, boo, boo, boo, boo." Somebody said, "Leave. Wait until he gets his morning nip, and then come back, and you'll find him a different man." And we did. (Laughs) We found a totally different person altogether.

At any rate, we spent the day on Capitol Hill. And as I said, no teacher was disciplined for that. The union could have been busted, had the Board of Education really been on its toes, because we had the no-strike clause in the contract. But we said we weren't striking, we were simply exercising our amendment on the constitution, to petition Congress for a redress of a grievance. Now, our grievance was that we hadn't gotten a pay raise.

Well, at any rate, the upshot of that is, we got an 18 percent pay raise passed by Congress after that action.

MS: Substantial.

WS: Yes.

MS: This concludes our interview for tape one. So we'll start on another tape here momentarily.

TAPE ONE/THREE, SIDE B ENDS

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TAPE TWO/THREE, SIDE A BEGINS:

MS: We're starting tape two with Mr. William Simons. And when we ended tape one, you had just had your first contract

negotiations, and had marched with a number of teachers on Capitol Hill, and ended up with an 18 percent raise, and a very successful experience. I know by your written record that during this same period, you were involved with the Metro AFL/CIO, and as well, you became a vice president for the AFT. So I wonder if you could speak a little bit about going beyond your local presidency to your other labor activities.

WS: I became a vice president of the AFT in 1965. At the convention in Los Angeles, there was a vacancy on the AFT Council. They asked me to run for it, and I did.

MS: Who is "they"?

WS: I guess the members of the Progressive Caucus of the AFT. I'm trying to think, let's see, Carl Megel was still president at that time. And a group from Chicago and New York -- I guess I was the newest thing on the block, at the moment, having just had a -- well, had gotten the momentum going towards a collective bargaining in DC, and they felt that this might be a push to have a successful election. But at any rate, I was elected vice president then.

MS: When you were elected vice president, were there other African American vice presidents in AFT?

WS: Yes, there were. There was Dick Parish (~~phonetic~~) from New York; Rosa McGee (~~phonetic~~) from Chattanooga, Tennessee. Yes, there were other African American vice presidents at the time.

MS: And when you had successful collective bargaining for

Local Six, the Washington DC teachers, I understand this was one of the first times collective bargaining was in place for teachers nationally, that was a very early--

WS: It was very early --

MS: Could you, yeah, tell me how it fits into the--

WS: Well, New York had its collective bargaining election, I believe, in 1960. And of course, that gave impetus to the collective bargaining among teachers across the country. There were a number of other elections; I can't recall them at this time. But then, of course, DC, being in the nation's capitol, and also being the home of the National Education Association, we defeated them decisively, and that really gave impetus to the movement for AFT.

I was vice president of the AFT, and didn't have any particular problems until 1972. When they asked me to run for vice president in 1965, they said, as any groups seeking to have political control, they wanted to know how many votes was I bringing with me. And I told them, "Let me get this straight from the very outset. The only vote that I can control is my vote. Now, I will certainly make it clear to the members of my delegation how I feel, but then it's up to them to decide how they are going to vote. Ninety-five percent of them will support me without any problem, but I am not going to say that I can deliver you 100 percent of the votes from Local Six. And they said, okay, it wasn't any problem.

Then in 1972 --

MS: If I may interrupt, this was a philosophy, your personal philosophy that you just stated, this is what you took into the job when you started in 1965, you explained to them right off the bat how you're going to handle yourself.

WS: Right. In 1972, one of the national representatives, Ken Meeson (phonetic), decided to challenge Dave Selden for the presidency of the AFT. He came pretty close to defeating Dave Selden. As a matter of fact, it went to a roll call vote, because the question was whether or not Dave Selden actually got a majority of the votes cast. There were more votes for AFT vice presidents than there were for the presidency. So the question was: Do you take the total vote that was cast for the president and the vice president to combine them, to determine whether or not Selden got a majority of the votes? Well, that question was put to a referendum, and it lost.

On that roll call vote, of course, you had to identify your vote. Let me go back -- at that time, the AFT had a secret ballot for the election of its officers. But on a roll call vote, you've got to identify how you voted. Well, I voted with Meeson (phonetic) on that vote. And of course, that did not sit well with the people on the council of the AFT. I had been chairman of the Human Rights Committee of the AFT prior to '72, and had also been on the Executive Committee of the council, prior to 1972. But of

course, after the election, I was removed from those two committees, or as chair of those two committees.

In 1974, Al Shanker decided to challenge Dave Selden for the presidency. One of the issues was the fact that Dave Selden refused to become a vice president of the AFL/CIO -- well, he just did not want to become a vice president. He didn't feel that the teachers needed to be represented on the council. Of course, Shanker felt just the opposite.

Strangely enough, I had aligned myself with Dave Selden in that election of '74.

MS: You were still a vice president?

WS: I was still a vice president, from '72 to '74. I had to run again in '74. I was running on a ticket with Dave Selden. And of course, I lost. Well, of course, it didn't really matter that much to me, because I was going to do what I was going to do with Local Six, at any rate. So the fact that I was not on the council, well, really didn't upset me.

Well, in 1978, I believe it was, the convention in Toronto -- no, no. If I may go back again. It was 1976, the convention in Miami, Shanker asked me, would I run again on his slate. I said, "Well, you have to come to a caucus of my delegates and explain to them why you feel I should be re-elected to the council," which he did. And the caucus said, "Yeah, go ahead and run. We'll support you." And which I did, and I got back on the council once again.

Now, let's see, in 1978, I believe it was, at the convention in New York, after the election, at the post convention council meeting, someone brought up the question as to why is it that we let Bill Simons get away with what he's doing. And I was doing the same thing that I did before. When they asked in their caucus, "How many votes are you bringing with you?" I said, "I told you from the very get-go that the only vote that I can guarantee you is mine." And they wanted to know, well, how can he get away with this? I said, "Look, if that's the way you feel, you can take this job and shove it." Unfortunately, or fortunately, whichever way you want to put it, I had to stop at the men's room. So by the time I came out of the men's room, Bob Healy (~~phonetic~~) from Chicago had been running down the corridor looking for me. And he grabbed me and said, "Bill, come on back. You don't need to" -- so reluctantly, I went back, and stayed on the council until I lost the presidency of the local in 1985.

In the meanwhile, one of the things that I started to push for was having the teachers become a part of teacher evaluation. And I said, "We will never be a profession unless we set up standards by teachers, and have them enforced by teachers." I said, "No, it's not a back scratching operation, where you scratch my back and I'll scratch your back, and we both put down 'excellent.'" I said, "No, that is not the point. But we are talking about professionalism." I said, "Doctors do it, lawyers do it. Why can't teachers do it?"

And in the contract for that year, we got in a provision -- it wasn't a complete teacher focused evaluation, but at least we got the teachers involved in the evaluation process. And the AFT really gave me down the country and said, "You got to be out of your mind. How are you going to have teachers putting other teachers out of their jobs?" and so forth and so on. Well, lo and behold, that began to become the focus. Toledo really put in a program where teachers are really a part of the evaluation system.

MS: Were you one of the first or the first to raise this issue in the AFT at large?

WS: I believe that I was.

MS: The first.

WS: I believe so. I won't be absolutely sure. But I did raise it, and of course, I caught hell from Shanker about it. But then, two years later, he began to espouse the same thing. And I told him, he said, "Touche," that, "Yes, you were right." And a number of things that I tried to do which upset the equilibrium of many of them, but I said that "I'm looking at it as trying to make the teaching profession a true profession. And in order to do that, we've got to change the way that we've been doing things, and develop some kind of cooperative and collaborative operations, so that everybody is involved on the same plane."

Let me digress for a moment. The NEA had not given up hope for recapturing, or capturing the teachers in Washington DC. On

three different occasions, they had hired people who had been on my executive committee as representatives for the Association, trying to stir up an election. They managed to get enough signatures to have an election, but they lost each time.

MS: They tried it several times.

WS: Yes.

MS: When you say they hired members of your executive council, the executive council for Local Six, I guess if you could explain it a little more. Are these AFT members who were getting paid from the NEA?

WS: These were AFT members getting paid from NEA. They were, well, my enemies. I guess that's the best way that I can put it. People had turned against me. And one fellow in particular, I had helped to get a fellowship for him to get his masters degree, and he did me in. But as I said, all of the attempts failed.

But then a vice president of the NEA asked me to go to lunch. I did. George Jones was his name. He was Eastern Region Director. And in essence, he said to me, "Bill Simons, we want Local Six so bad, that you can write your contract for life." (Laughs) "And the only thing you have to do is bring Local Six over into the NEA." And I said "George, I appreciate your offer, but I cannot do that." I said, "Number one, I would be going against my own principals to do something like that. And number two, in the end you would have no confidence in me, because you

would always be wondering, when is he going to sell out to the next highest bidder?

MS: One thing we haven't talked about that I would appreciate if you could elaborate upon at this moment is, are these differences. You know, you have certain principals that fit most closely with the philosophy of the AFT versus the NEA. I wonder if you could elaborate on that a bit.

WS: When I started teaching, of course, I didn't know anything about either organization, and I was asked to join the NEA. And I was also asked to join the AFT, which I joined both. As I said earlier, I had taken out a life membership in the NEA. Well, I don't believe in just simply joining an organization, paying my money, and that's the end of it. I became active with the NEA as well as the AFT.

And it wasn't until 1961 that I began to really discern the differences between the two organizations, in terms of their educational philosophy. The AFT was run by teachers, though at the time, the AFT did have principals in the organization. But the NEA was totally administrative dominated, no question about it. In 1960 was when we first got the resolution on the floor that the NEA would recognize the Supreme Court decision of 1954. We got it passed, but somebody moved for reconsideration. And on the reconsideration, it was defeated.

And it was in 1961 that this group that I'd mentioned earlier

had gotten together. We were going to make sure that we covered all bases. We would cover all microphones. And when we get the issue on the floor, we're going to make sure that somebody doesn't come along with the procedure motion. So we did that.

But then in 1962, in Denver, when I was told that we were trying to move too fast, too quickly, the NEA had really taken no steps to integrate its locals, and when it did, what happened was that all of the officials of the colored locals of the NEA were simply pushed aside and moved out of office. And I realized that there was something wrong, and that it's time for me to go. That is not to say that the AFT was 100 percent perfect, by any stretch of the imagination, but it was more approachable and more amenable in doing things than the National Education Association. I guess that's --

MS: That sort of sums that up.

WS: Right.

MS: Okay. Back to the AFT a bit, and then I would like to speak about your work with the Metro AFL/CIO. But back to the AFT. Now, you were, as vice president, chairman of the Human Rights Committee?

WS: Right.

MS: And then I also understand that you organized the black caucus. I wondered if you could speak about those two issues, and maybe any others, just what type of activities you engaged in with

the AFT, as the vice president, any initiatives you may have started, etc.

WS: Well, the AFT was ninety-nine and 100 percent better than the association. It still had its drawbacks, and it was still not really dealing with some of the major issues of the black members of the organization. We decided that something had to be done in order to correct this. And this was what the 1968 -- the first time the AFT had met in Washington, a group of us -- I guess Dick Parrish would be called the leader of the group. He was an AFT vice president out of Local Two, in New York. From Detroit, you had a number of people, Ed Sumpkins (phonetic) being one, Martha Richards being another, and Celine (phonetic) -- what was her last name? Anyway, we decided that maybe we ought to form a black caucus, which we did.

MS: What year was this?

WS: This was 1968. One of the first things that we were able to do was to press upon David Selden, who was then president, to recognize the black caucus, and also to provide expenses for the black caucus to come to Washington DC to meet with them to discuss some issues, which he did, for which he got blasted by other members of the AFT. But nevertheless, we had a strong thing going. But one of the things that we did when the convention met in San Francisco, we organized a group to visit Angela Davis when she was being held in San Quentin. And we did. Dick Parrish -- all of us

couldn't go, of course, to visit her, but Dick Parrish did go to visit her in San Quentin. And of course, that didn't sit well with a number of the AFT members.

Well, we pushed and were able to make a number of changes in the organization, getting the AFT to change its position on certain things. One thing we were not able to do is to get it to change its position of the Vietnam War. But for a while, it was a pretty potent group within the AFT.

MS: What was the reaction of rank and file AFT members to the black caucus -- and I mean black and white AFT members?

WS: Well, there were any number of black members who would have no part of the black caucus.

MS: What was their rationale?

WS: We were trying to push too far too fast, the same rationale (Laughs) that usually comes with people who don't want to get involved in confrontation politics. And of course, there were a number of white members who felt the same way, but there were a number of white members who were supportive of our efforts, and we could always count on them. The action(?) caucus, what was its name? Blank(?) Action Caucus -- I can't think of the name. It's a senior moment. At any rate, I joined that when I was kicked out of the progressive party, and became chairman of that caucus. That caucus was very supportive of the activities of the black caucus. And for the Metropolitan Washington Council, of course, I had been

elected as the delegate, I guess going back to 1960, before I became president of the local. And of course, as president, I was automatically a delegate. I became secretary of the council and held that position for umpteen years (Laughs), and was very active in many of the things that they did.

One of the things -- maybe this is ahead of the story, but we had had our strike in 1972, which I'll talk about a little later. In '74, we were having contractual difficulties with the Board of Education, and we'd taken a strike vote. I met with the Executive Council of the Metropolitan Washington Council. Bob Peterson was president of the council at the time. And what we did that Friday evening -- the strike was scheduled for a Monday -- Bob Peterson called the mayor, Mayor Walter Washington, and asked for a meeting. Walter said he could not meet with us on Saturday, but he would meet with us on Sunday. When he met with us on Sunday, we asked him to appoint an arbitrator to help us with our contractual disputes. He did so. He did then call the then president of the Board of Education, Virginia Morris, and had her come down to the district building and sign the agreement (Laughs). After that, the Board of Education voted that no member of the Board of Education would ever take part in any negotiations with the union (Laughs). But we'd gotten what we wanted, and we were able to avert the strike.

So the council was very effective in that situation, and has

been effective in other situations in helping the union --

TAPE TWO/THREE, SIDE A ENDS

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TAPE TWO/THREE, SIDE B BEGINS:

WS: -- avoid a crisis. So I was very active with the Metropolitan Council, until 1985. Even though -- well, then I came back to the Council in 1987, when I was re-elected as president of the local. And I served on the council until 1991, when I retired from the union.

MS: There's probably some more to be said about the AFL/CIO. But before we get to that, I'd like to step back a bit and go back to your local. You had a big strike in '72. And I wondered if you could tell us about the impact of that strike, and the experience.

WS: The strike of 1972 was one that never should have been. At our building representative meeting before the opening of school, it was at Airlie House in Virginia, which is a conference meeting center. And we held our building representative conferences before the opening of school to get prepared for the coming school year. The idea began to float around was that, well, yes, we're a union, we've got a contract. But we're really not a union, because we've never had a strike. And I said, "Well, look, we've got a contract, which has about thirteen more months to run. And we've got a no strike clause in the contract." If you remember, we were successful in 1968 in our walkout one-day strike. We tried

to do the same thing in 1969, but the Board of Education had gotten a little more sophisticated then, and the numbers dropped. We did have our march on the capitol, but it was much smaller, only about 500 teachers, and they all took a day of leave to do that.

And I said, "Now, if we go out on strike now, the chances are that we could lose our contract and also lose our representation right." "Oh, we can do that. We can strike, and we can still keep it." And that was the (Inaudible). And when we got back to the opening of school in September -- the conference was in August -- conditions were bad. And the Board of Education had not hired sufficient teachers to cover the large class sizes that we had. Books and supplies were not available. And there were a number of issues. However, we had never -- that is, the union had never sat down at the table and made a list of demands.

We decided that that Monday, I believe it was the 17th of September, we were going out on strike, come hell or high water. Luckily (Laughs) we had a enough to go out to make the strike effective. I didn't get any sleep (Laughs), and had the rally. And I actually was almost asleep on my feet at the rally. One member rushed up on the stage, I don't know what he had in mind, but at any rate, they mobbed him. And as one reporter said that, "Bill Simons didn't have control of the strike until that moment. But somehow or another he woke up and took charge of from then on." Well, we were able to come out of that strike unscathed.

Now, one of the things that helped us was that one of the reporters did a story, Pencils for Allison. He had interviewed a fifth grade student who told the reporter how her teacher takes her money just about every day to buy pencils and paper so that we can do our work. And he called that Pencils for Allison. And really, that hit the heart in the community, and people began to say, "Well, maybe they do have a point (Inaudible) after(?) all(?)." And one of the things that I had been able to do was to build up strong community relationships, so that I could go anywhere in any part of the city and could meet with a group of community residents, and explain to them, you know, what was going on. I did that during times of peace as well as in times of crisis, so that we never had any effort on the part of the community to come in to try to keep the schools open.

We met around the clock. During that strike, of course, which was illegal -- we knew that -- we were lucky in this sense: The judge that was assigned to the case had just been sworn in the week before. He happened to be the night judge that particular night, and he was given the case. His sister was an active union member at her school. His wife was building representative at her school. And of course, he used to tell me afterwards, "Bill Simons, you put me in a hell of a position, between a rock and a hard place. I got my sister hollering at me, and I got my wife hollering at me."

But at any rate, I was sentenced for contempt of court. And he had called up the marshals to take me to incarcerate me. But then, at the last moment, he stayed the order, and ordered us to go back into negotiations, and to stay in the room until we have (Inaudible) an agreement, which we did. And he told me later, "You know darn well there wasn't any way under the sun that I was going to have you incarcerated if I wanted to live in my house." (Laughs). But sometime after the strike was over -- and we did make significant gains. We got about fifty new teachers hired. We got additional monies for supplies and textbooks.

One day, sometime after that, about four or five months, oh, he fined the union $25,000. He called me over. My attorney and I went to his chambers. We didn't know what he wanted. But it was something totally unrelated to the strike, what-have-you. He was talking about some business venture he wanted to know if I could interest the union in. And while there, I said, "Judge Campbell(?), we ought to be able to find some constructive use for this $25,000 that you have fined the union. A constructive use that would benefit the students of the DC Public Schools, rather than to have that money go right to the US Treasurer, because that's where fines went from the district in those days. He said, "Well, what do you have in mind?" And I said, "Well, maybe some kind of a scholarship program." And he said, "Well, maybe you have an idea here. I'll check with the chief judge to see if that might be

possible. The chief judge at that time was Judge Harold Green, who made his fame in breaking up AT&T when he became a federal judge. Judge Green said, "I see no reason why not."

So we set up a trust with that $25,000 to provide scholarships for graduating seniors from the high schools. The Board of Education appoints a member, I appoint a member -- or rather, the union appoints a member, and the city appoints a member. Started out with the $25,000. Several judges on the court at the time when they fine a person for contempt of court, ordered that that contempt fine be paid into the Washington Teacher's Scholarship Fund. That fund, by the way, is the only one of its kind in the country.

Now, the strike of '79 --

MS: If I could, before --

WS: I simply want to say that the judge handling that strike said that she was interested in what Judge Campbell had done with the first file(?). She read all about it, and she permitted the $103,000 that we were fined in '79 to go into the scholarship fund. We started out giving two scholarships of $2,500 each. This past June, we gave four scholarships of $20,000 each.

MS: Substantial, substantial. I wanted to step back a bit before we leave the strike of '72, and make sure that we understand what the situation was. But you said a teacher had jumped on the stage and been mobbed, and then it was written that you intervened

at this time. Could you explain a little more of what that was all about? I mean--

WS: Well, no. As I said, I had not gotten any sleep. And I was probably half asleep at the mike, on the stage. But that incident aroused me, and from that moment on, I was able to take control of the situation. That was about a Wednesday of the week, and we settled the strike on that following Sunday morning. And well, as I said, before, we really had no valid reasons for striking. We had not made up any demands for striking. We made those up -- let's see, we started on a Monday. The strike started on a Monday. We went through that first week. This was Wednesday of the second week of the strike. It was not until that Friday that we finally sat down and made up a list of demands and took it over to the Board of Education, and met with them all night long.

And Saturday morning, I thought we reached a tentative agreement. And I said, "Well, it looks like we have something that we can vote on." And several members quickly informed me, "You didn't call a strike, you can't call it off. We called it, and we'll decide when it's over." Well, as I said, I was sort of in and out of it. But that moment got me back to where I should have been, and I was able to take control of the situation, and got a successful conclusion to the strike.

MS: As you describe it, it sounds like -- tell me if I'm correct -- the grassroots strike. The membership--

WS: Yeah, it was a grassroots --

MS: -- more so than the officers--

WS: Oh, yeah.

MS: -- wanted this strike.

WS: That's right. As I said, it started -- someone said, "Well, we're not a union until we strike. And we won't feel that we are a union until we have a strike. Why not just begin the school year with a strike?" And I tried to talk them out of it, but I was not able to. So we had a strike vote at a meeting, where they voted almost unanimously. There were several who said, "No," but they were shouted down. And then we have a strike, and we had our strike. And that was the first strike of public workers in the District of Columbia.

(INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING)

MS: When we finished speaking the last time and went to lunch, you had just explained a bit about your role in the 1972 strike and the course of events. And then I know there was another important strike in the '70s, and that was in 1979. I wonder if you could tell us about that.

WS: In 1979, we were in negotiations. We had a new superintendent. He seemingly was determined to break the union.

MS: Now, who was this?

WS: This was Vincent Reed. And the funny thing about it is when he was named superintendent in September of '78, he came to the

union office to meet with me and my assistant, Glenwood Williamson (phonetic). We had known Vincent over the years. He had been a high school principal, he had been an assistant superintendent for the secondary schools, and he'd also been the personnel superintendent. And we had had very good relationships with him in those positions.

But when he became superintendent, he suddenly changed all of that, in spite of the meeting that we had, which he assured us that he was going to continue to strengthen the relationship that he had with union. But it didn't turn out that way. He wanted to weaken the grievance procedure. He wanted to do away with the School Chapter Advisory Committee.

The School Chapter Advisory was a group of union members elected at each school. The purpose was to meet with the principal at least once a month to discuss school policies and to work out solutions to problems that existed. They had been working well over the years. The School Chapter Advisory Committee was initiated in our first negotiations. Nothing that we could do would make him change his mind. He just seemed to be hell bent on trying to destroy the union. So we got into position where we had issues for a strike, took the strike vote, which was just about unanimous. And in March of 1979, we hit the bricks. This time, we had big issues, and I was completely in charge from day one, without my hesitations whatsoever.

MS: Could you explain the issues?

WS: Well, the issues -- we wanted to preserve the contract, at least the provisions in the contract that had been since our very first contract, in order to make sure that the teachers would be protected. The heart of the contract is the grievance procedure. And if that is weakened, you simply might as well throw out the rest of the contract. He wanted to do away with binding arbitration in the grievance procedure. And of course, a union never gives up binding arbitration in a grievance procedure.

We were out for, oh, just about three weeks. The last week of the strike it was a Sunday. We had a meeting scheduled for Sunday afternoon at a church where we had been meeting regularly. This was during the eleventh(?) period. And we were all scheduled to go for the meeting when the minister realized that our meeting at 12:00 noon would not be over in time for his 4:00 o'clock afternoon service at the church. And he said, "I'm sorry, but you've got to do something else." We scouted around, and we were able to get the ballroom of the Sheraton Washington Hotel. But then the question was: How do you notify the teachers on a Sunday that the location of the meeting had been changed?

My good relations with the media paid off. I called the Associated Press and UPI, and asked them would they please put out an announcement that the meeting had been changed from the Metropolitan AME(?) Church to the Sheraton Washington Hotel, and

the time would be 4:00 o'clock, instead of the 2:00 o'clock meeting that we had initially scheduled. We also had union members down at the church, telling the people who came there where to go. When you have a sudden switch like that, I was looking for the worst. If we got 300, 400 people, I would be satisfied. But there were nearly 2,500 teachers that showed up for the meeting.

The only regret that I have now is that they voted not to let the media in to cover that meeting, which was a mistake. But it worked out well. At any rate, after the preliminaries, I put the question to them: Shall we go back Monday, as the mayor had asked us to do, or shall we continue to hit the bricks? To(?) a(?) teacher, they voted that we stay out.

Earlier on that Sunday morning, the mayor, Marion Berry, had asked to meet with the Executive Committee. And I said, "Sure." He came over and made his pitch that he promised that if we went back to work on Monday that he would insure that things would remain in place until we could get a new contract negotiated. I said to the mayor, "We appreciate your offer. You have been very helpful to us. However, I am afraid that if the teachers go back in the classroom and the children get off the street, you are going to turn your attention to some of the problems that you have neglected because of the strike, and we will be left swinging in the wind." We said, "No." He said, "Okay, well, if that's your answer."

So that Monday morning, we were back on the bricks again. The

union attorneys were in court. And the judge who was handling the case asked for a report over the weekend. They presented the matter to the judge. They had told the judge previously that it was the membership and not the union leadership that was prolonging the strike. The judge said to them, "Don't come in here with that tale again. From what I understand at the meeting yesterday, the leader of the union was completely in charge of the situation, and I don't want to hear any more about it."

But at any rate, she ordered that we go into negotiations. And the mayor took a part in it. He was not involved in the negotiations. But we finally reached a tentative agreement on Wednesday of that week. It was presented to the membership on Thursday, and they ratified it, and we were back in the classroom.

MS: And this was in April '79?

WS: Well, let's see -- no. It ended in March. It started, let's see, around March 17th, and I guess this was about the 28th of March that we went back into the classroom, and then resumed negotiations, finished out the school year, and finally got a contract for the beginning of a new school year, which preserved the integrity of the union.

TAPE TWO/THREE, SIDE B ENDS

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TAPE THREE/THREE, SIDE A BEGINS:

MS: This is November 8th, 2001, at the Reuther Library. We're

doing our second day of taping with Mr. William Simons. I'd like to start off by asking you about a momentous event you participated in, and that was the election of Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Could you tell us about the experience?

WS: That, to me, I guess I could classify it as perhaps my greatest experience, in terms of dealing with an entirely new situation that was completely alien to me. This was my first trip to South Africa. I had been in involved in the campaign to free Nelson Mandela over the years with CBTU. When I was asked would I like to be a part of the delegation, I had some reservations. Many of my friends said, "You've got to be out of your mind." My wife was reticent, but finally she said, "If that's what you want to do, it's like anything else, I can't keep you from doing it." So off I went to South Africa.

MS: Could you ask you, who asked you to do participate?

WS: Bill Lucy asked me if I wanted to join the delegation. And I finally gave him the yes answer, and everything was put in motion. I was extremely grateful, because I had an uncle, for whom I'm named, who was a YMCA worker and a missionary. And on one of his trips to Africa, he went to South Africa with the group. At first he was denied permission to get off the boat in Cape Town. The other YMCA personnel prevailed, and they got him off the boat.

And they had decided -- that is, the group had decided to go to a theater performance, and once again, he was denied permission

to go into the theater, but they prevailed. And he broke down the barrier, at least for that one occasion, in his going into the theater and sitting with the group. Well, this gave me an opportunity to continue his work. He died in Africa, and had visited, oh, any number of countries.

To see the mood of the people as election day was approaching was just something unbelievable. The government had made provisions to make sure that the people had an idea of what it was that they were going to do. And each landholder was mandated to carry on a series of lessons about voting. They developed a series of charts showing the different stages of voting. It was realized that many of the people could not read or write, so that by each candidate they had a picture. And you look at the picture, and that gave you the clue as to whom to vote. South Africa declared a national holiday -- in fact, there was two days of voting.

The first day was for all of the shut-ins, and for people who were disabled. They went to the polls one day, and then the regular population went on the second day. People stood in line all day long in the hot sunlight, no shade, no toilet facilities available in many instances. But there was no quarreling, no fighting, blacks, whites, standing in line together.

In one particular instance, they had a voting station down in what I would call a compound, that is, an area that was made up of shacks. Many of the white people went down there to vote because

the lines were not as long down there as they were in town. Though the people who lived down there said, "Well, now that you've come down here to vote, are you going to move down here with us?" (Laughs) as a joke.

But I helped many of them to cast their ballots. I did not tell anyone how to vote, but I showed them what they needed to do. There were many of them who had never held a pencil, and really did not know how to use a pencil. So I had to show them how to use a pencil and where to place the mark on the ballot.

I guess the most exciting incident that occurred during the voting was the fact that there was one pregnant lady in line who started in labor while in line. But she said to the child in her stomach, "You're going to have to wait until I vote." And she managed to get through. The guards(?) just(?) had an ambulance waiting for her, and took her to the hospital as soon as she voted. And we heard before we left that the mother and baby were doing fine.

I was able to visit some of the schools in South Africa.

MS: Before we go to the schools, would you mind, just to clarify -- so your role as an observer, did you have just one station, or did you go to several voting stations?

WS: Went to several voting stations in Johannesburg. Oh, I might say that the prisoners were given an opportunity to vote. And we went to one prison. The room, oh, I would say, twelve by

fourteen, lined with mats on the floor. And each person who had been incarcerated had his space on the floor. That's all that they had. It was really, you know, a tearful sight to see so many young black males incarcerated. Many of them were there because they had not been given a hearing my a magistrate. So if they were picked up, they were kept until such time they had a hearing and a disposition was made. But even in the prison, they had campaign literature tacked on the walls. And they were very much interested in the campaign. And all of them got a chance to vote. They even made special provisions so that if they missed someone they would come back and make sure that at least every individual who was incarcerated had the opportunity to vote.

I visited a number of schools. Even though these schools were crude buildings with dirt floors, you could tell that learning was taking place because they had bulletin boards, as they have in any school that you visit, and you could see the work of the students on the bulletin board. And that gave you an idea of just what was going on.

And even though you have a high rate of illiteracy in South Africa, those who were able to get some schooling could speak three languages, English, Africaneer(?), and their tribal language. You see a number of young men and women who have college degrees going to work. They had to walk to work because the transportation was horrendous, no public transportation at all. They did have the

jitney buses that move along the highway at certain times during the day, but most of them walked back and forth to work every day.

Did manage to go to a television station and meet the person who was called the "Oprah Winfrey of South Africa." And she carried on a program very similar to Oprah Winfrey.

MS: The schools you've just mentioned, in the neighborhoods, where were they?

WS: They were in the neighborhoods.

MS: Of Johannesburg?

WS: Of Johannesburg, yes. Where the black people lived, were forced to live, they had a school. It was not much of a building, as such, but it was a school. And as I said, you could see that there was some learning activities going on in the school.

But I really enjoyed that experience. And certainly, if the people in the United States would take their voting as seriously as the people in South Africa, we would have a much larger turnout than we do now.

MS: Yeah. Well, that's a great experience. The next subject I'd like to move to, unless there's anything else to be said about your South Africa experience, is your political activity. You've alluded to it and mentioned a few items over the course of the last couple hours of interview, but if you could maybe elaborate on just your experience in the political arena, sort of as separate -- well, as part and parcel, but as a separate position from your

union activities.

WS: There was not much political activity in Washington DC until 1964. That was the first time that the residents of Washington DC could vote in a presidential election. We did not have an elected mayor. We did not have an elected city council, nor did we have an elected school board. On election day, a few years prior to 1964, the union used to stage demonstrations down on the capitol ground, saying, "What does election day mean to us in Washington DC?" And we would get quite a number of people who would join us on that.

I got involved in politics with the election of 1968, when I ran as a delegate for Bobby Kennedy, and also ran for a position on the DC Democratic State Committee. I was successful in both, but of course, as you know, Bobby Kennedy was assassinated before the convention. I was a delegate to that convention in Chicago. And that has perhaps gone down in history as the most famous democratic convention that ever was held. It was really a scary situation, but I managed to survive that.

I, of course, followed through, and was a delegate to all of the Democratic National Conventions from 1968 through 2000. I was also a member of the Democratic State Committee for that length of time. In 1994, I became the Democratic National Committeeman for the District of Columbia, a position for which I ran in 1996, and was re-elected, and served four additional years as the

committeeman for the Democratic National Committee. And of course, I was a participant in the Democratic National Committee meetings. Also in 1996, I was elected to the Executive Committee of the Democratic National Committee.

And during my work in politics, the local had always been active in the political arena. When the district was given the opportunity to vote for school board members, we became very active in the school board elections. And in each election we had a slate of candidates whom we backed. Then when we finally got a mayoral and city council election, we participated in those elections, selecting a candidate for each of the positions -- or for most of the positions. Not only did we endorse candidates, but we had a local COPE committee, that's Committee on Political Education, that actively got out in the streets and went door-to-door to insure a victory for the candidates that we supported.

After the 2000 convention, I decided that it was time for me to put that aside. I did not run for election for the National Committeeman in 2000, nor did I run for the State Committee. But I'm still active in the political arena as an individual, and will always be until I am no longer able.

MS: Maybe - the '68 convention, of course, is of something of interest to historians, and to a lot of folks, because it was so bombastic and violent, and such a -- like you say, a one-of-a-kind type of convention. I wonder if you could elaborate on that, on

your role in the convention, and your impressions of how things played out.

WS: Well, that was my first convention, so I was a neophyte. And naturally, I really just simply followed the leadership of the head of the local party, who was Channing Phillips, at the time. He, by the way, was nominated, the first black to be nominated for President of the United States. I had been asked to give the nominating speech, but then at the last minute, it was suggested that John Conyers do it, and I reluctantly turned it over to John Conyers.

I didn't get out into the streets very much, so that I did not witness any of the violent action. I only saw it on TV and heard about it. What I do remember is that they had stringent checkpoints. It was held in the stockyards of Chicago, and it looked as though you were running through a gauntlet, because just about every fifty feet you had to stop and show your identification before you could go any further.

But what I read and what I saw on television, the violence really was horrific.

MS: Okay. I think we've covered sort of major phases and activities of your career, which have been many, and abundant. I'd like you to speak a little bit, in philosophical terms, about a couple issues, so that we can understand the experience behind your actions and your choices. But you know, if someone asked you:

What do you believe your role in the labor movement has been over the last forty, fifty years?

WS: I would say that I've been an activist in the labor movement. My father taught me early in life that if you join an organization, don't just pay your dues, but get out into the heart of the organization and see what you can do to make any changes if you can. He was a member of, oh, any number of organizations in the city of Washington. Yes, I followed that philosophy throughout my career. Any organization that I joined, I wanted to be an active participant in the organization, not simply a dues-paying member.

I had no knowledge of the labor movement before I became active in the American Federation of Teachers. I had, of course, as a student of history, read about the labor movement. And even though the labor movement certainly did not help minorities as it should have, I nevertheless felt that it was a vehicle for making change in the community and in the country. I looked for every opportunity that I could get to see what changes I could help to bring about. I know that as an individual there's very little that you can do; however, if you mobilize other individuals and you work with other individuals who have the same objective in mind, you can get things done.

I, for example, was a part of the integration movement in the District of Columbia, and merging the three separate unions that

existed at the time, the Union for White Teachers, the Union for Black Teachers, and the Integrated Union of Attendance Officers. That came about without too much difficulty. The integration came about without too much difficulty, though the membership declined tremendously as a result of that. Nevertheless, I felt that we now had a vehicle that could be used to bring about changes, not only in the school system, but also in the community.

I would constantly tell teachers that in order to make changes in your classroom, you're going to have to get involved in community activities and let the community become a part of effecting change in your classroom.

If you look at the labor movement, I'm frequently asked about, well, yes, unions have done a good bit, but unions are still lagging. And I say to people, "This is a part of the American legacy that we have to overcome. If you go back to the days of slavery, it was the slave who was the artisan, who did most of the work in building." And that, of course, was why the poor whites were against the blacks, because the blacks had the opportunity to learn skills and use skills, even though they weren't paid for their skills. As it was recently brought out that the slaves laid the foundation and built United States Capitol, but nobody ever talks about that.

But after the slaves were freed, then, of course, they stopped working, because nobody would hire them. And that's when the whites

began to come in and fill those spots that the blacks once had. And of course, when they formed unions, they excluded the blacks from union membership. And as I say, that is a part of the legacy that we still have to overcome. And I'm glad to say that progress is being made today, and you find that membership in unions is growing because of the enrollment of blacks into the labor movement at a much greater number than whites at this time.

Well, even though you had the segregation been the union movement, I still felt that the union movement was the best vehicle to bring about changes in the society, and I still feel that way today. And that's why I am still active, though retired, in helping to bring about the changes. And one of the things that I was able to do as a member of the Washington Convention Center Board of Directors was to get the convention center to get the general contractor, who has the job of building the convention center, to establish a pre-apprenticeship program that would take in young men -- well, not necessarily all young men, but there are some in the program who are forty, forty-five years old, and they wanted a change of occupation -- and they go through the pre-apprenticeship program. If successful, they become apprentices, join unions, and move on. So far, we have been able to put some fifty-seven persons into the apprenticeship program, and they are now union members, going on to complete their apprenticeship and become journeymen. So I think that there's still hope, and I am going to continue to do

whatever I can, wherever and whenever I can to promote the labor movement, and to make sure that the labor movement addresses the problems that it faces.

I'm pleased to say that there have been tremendous changes in the labor movement. If you look at the leadership of locals, even international unions, you find that there are now many more minorities and women in official positions. You look at the Executive Council of the AFL/CIO, and you can see a tremendous difference. For years there was only A. Philip Randolph as a representative of the minorities on the council. But now you've got Bill Lucy -- oh, any number. I can't recall the names, but any number. Leon Lynch (phonetic), the lady from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers -- ACTU is on there. But you have, I guess. about fifteen or sixteen members on the Executive Council, whereas only a few years before you had only one.

So I believe in the labor movement, and will continue to work in the labor movement, because I think that it offers a vehicle to bring about the needs changes, if we're really going to make this country a great country.

MS: Do you have a person or persons within the labor movement that you consider to be -- to have influenced you greatly? Or is there someone who, you know, helped shape your personal ideology?

WS: I would say that Dick Parrish, who was a member of Local Two in New York, and also an AFT vice president, certainly gave me

guidance and assistance. And then there's another fellow, Eric Roth (phonetic), who at one time was president of a Colorado Federation of Labor. He lost his job when he defied the AFL/CIO in endorsing McGovern in the 1972 election. And of course, that is a no-no. State federations and local union groups, that is, the bodies, the central labor councils are not to contravene policies of the Executive Council of the AFL/CIO. But Eric Roth (phonetic) personally gave me tremendous guidance and assistance as I was going up in the labor movement.

And of course, later, after I got to know Bill Lucy, certainly he has been an inspiration to me.

MS: This may be a hard question to answer, but I'd like to try: What would you consider, if you could narrow it down, of your many accomplishments, the single accomplishment that pleased you the most, that you thought did the best for Local Six -- or perhaps the labor movement at large?

WS: Obtaining - helping Local Six to get the collective bargaining rights for teachers in the District of Columbia, I consider my greatest accomplishment. And I told the TV reporter that night, that to me, this is and will be the greatest day of my life. Of course, my wife said when I got home, "What do you mean, the greatest day of your life? I thought that happened when we got married." But I would say, being able to get the collective bargaining rights for the teachers would be my greatest

accomplishment, because that opened the doors wide for the improvement of teaching in the District of Columbia.

MS: The greatest accomplishment of your professional life. We could put that on the record for you, (Laughs) in case your wife watches this.

WS: (Laughs).

MS: Would what you consider your greatest disappointment in your labor career? I don't think you've had many, but there might be something you wish that could have been accomplished.

WS: I would say this: I did have visions of the possibility (Laughs) of being president of the American Federation of Teachers. And I believe that had I really pursued it that I might have had a darn good chance of achieving that; that is, before the changes were made that were made by Albert Shanker in eliminating the secret ballot for election of the president; and also, giving total voting power to a local, which I said was one man, one vote. But one local had all of the votes, and that was Local Two.

Before that change was made, you had a delegation based on the number of members that you had in a local. But if you had thirty-five delegates to the convention, you had thirty-five votes at the convention. Now, if you had, I'll say, 5,000 members, and you have thirty-five delegates, you have 5,000 votes at the convention, so that the larger locals controlled the situation, an there's no hope for anybody.

MS: You say you contemplated it, and I would assume that you talked about it with some of your close associates, did you have a particular year where you actually tried to put a grassroots organization together?

WS: I guess it was the year in -- the year that -- what was that, 1972, the convention in Pittsburgh, when Ken Meeson (phonetic) ran against Dave Selden, I guess it was around that time that I had begun to explore. And the feeling was very good, but then I got cold feet (Laughs), and just said, "Well, no, I won't try to take on that monstrosity."

MS: Okay. I guess another thing that I'd like to ask you a bit about: You, like many of the labor leaders that I've had the pleasure of knowing, are allegedly retired. I've yet to see any labor leader retire and completely drop out of the picture. So I know you're involved with some activities. You've already mentioned -- please mention any you'd like, but you've mentioned you've been active, right, with the AFT and the Democratic Party right along. Perhaps you could talk about other things that you're pursuing in your retirement.

WS: When I gave up my position as president of the Washington Teacher's Union, I had no intentions of simply coming home and sitting on the sofa and looking at television. That is not my kind of life. Though I tried to find things that I could do that would, number one, not necessitate so much traveling, but would be

beneficial to the community, and to help me keep focused on the things that I was interested in.

I was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Washington Convention Center Authority. We are in the process of building a new convention center. It's well on its way and should be completed by March of 2003. That keeps me busy. And as I mentioned earlier, one of the things, I'm the labor -- I should add to that I'm the labor representative on the board of the center. And as I mentioned earlier, one of the programs that I have been able to do was the pre-apprenticeship program, giving the people of Washington an opportunity to learn trades and to become members of a union. So I serve on the Development Committee and the Operations Committee of the board. The board meets once a month, and then of course, the committee meetings.

I'm also the treasurer for the Association of African American Life and History. That was organization founded by Carter G. Woodson in 1912. Carter G. Woodson is the father of Black History. He was tired of seeing the black people left out of the story of history, and he began to do his research and began to write and publish his books, because no publishing company at the time would publish books of minorities. So not only did he found the Association, he also founded the Associated Publishing Company, which published not only his books, but also many books of black writers during that period of time.

Right now, we're trying to get the home of Carter G. Woodson -- that's 1538 Ninth Street Northwest, in Washington DC -- to be declared a national historic site. It is already --

TAPE THREE/THREE, SIDE A ENDS

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TAPE THREE/THREE, SIDE B BEGINS: (overlaps from side A)

WS: So not only did he found the Association, he also founded the Associated Publishing Company, which published not only his books, but also many books of black writers during that period of time.

Right now, we're trying to get the home of Carter G. Woodson, that's 1538 Ninth Street Northwest, in Washington DC, to be declared a national historic site. It is already a national historic landmark, but we want it to become a site, and a part of the National Park Service, so that we can rehabilitate the home to show people, not only in Washington DC, but from around the country and around the world, where this great man did his work. Also, we're interested in establishing a museum and a study center so that some of his works can be shown and can be used to reference work by people interested in discovering what Carter G. Woodson stood for.

And lately, in September of this year, the mayor asked me to serve on the DC Retirement Board. That's the board that is responsible for the pensions for the teachers, police and firefighters. So those are my three major activities right now.

And between the three, I'm never home. But as I said, I work on my own schedule, and I work at my own pace. But I just simply cannot sit at home and do nothing.

MS: Speaking of your home, could you tell us a little bit about your immediate family, your wife and your children?

WS: I married Elaine (phonetic) Davis Simons December 19th, 1948. So we will be celebrating our fifty-third anniversary this coming December, next month. We have two daughters, Cheryl Patrice (phonetic), who is now in Philadelphia. She's gone through a variety of work, but has now settled into a writer of business articles and information. She graduated from New York University in film making. After she graduated, she said, "Well, if I'm really interested in film making, I need to learn the business side of it." And without informing either Elaine or me, she enrolled in Wharton School of Business, and was successful in getting her MBA.

The younger daughter, Wilma, graduated from Georgetown University. She got her BS in psychology. When she finished, she said, "You know, there's no really good job opportunities for a BS in psychology." And she said, "I'm not ready to go to graduate school at this time. I'm going to get a job," Which she did. She got a job with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the architectural firm. She worked there for about four years. And one day she decided that she wanted to live in Atlanta, Georgia. She managed to get an interview with an architectural firm in Atlanta. She went down

there. The interview didn't work out as she thought it would, but while there, she got an interview with Proctor & Gamble. And before she got back home, Proctor & Gamble had called and asked her to come back for a second interview. She went back. She got a job at Proctor & Gamble, and moved to at Atlanta, not knowing anyone, not having any place to stay. But she got a room in a Holiday Inn for a month before she got an apartment. She's been with Proctor & Gamble, Georgia Pacific, and is now with Coca-Cola, and has no intention of coming back to Washington DC except to visit.

Neither one is married, so we have no grandchildren. But as I told them, I said, "That is your problem. That's not mine. I finished my job of raising children. So if you choose not to get married, then that's something you have to live with. I don't have anything to do with it it."

MS: I have two final questions. One, is there anything you'd like to add, questions I haven't asked, or any other subjects you'd like to address before we run out of tape?

WS: No, I don't think that there's anything that I haven't covered sufficiently. I suspect that when I see the transcript (Laughs), it will make me recall a number of things that I should have added. Well, a couple of incidents during negotiations for contracts for the teachers. I can remember one night, the administration's team was trying to intimate that all the union was interesting in doing was to protect incompetent teachers.

MS: When was that?

WS: Oh, that was in early negotiations.

MS: '60s?

WS: It was the second -- into the '60s, early '70s. And that night, I became so infuriated that I picked up one of the chairs in the Board of Education board room, and threw it down the aisle. But at least that got their attention, and they got off that subject, and we moved on to something else, and got the contract wrapped up.

Another occasion, we were in a school building, which was selected for our negotiation site. And once again, they were harping on some question, I don't remember what it was, but I got up out of my seat and walked over to the windowsill, and I hit the windowsill with my first, and it sort of jumped up and broke out one of the window panes. Well, fortunately, I didn't get cut. But then, again, it got their attention, and they moved off that point of harangue (Laughs).

MS: I am told that this is a rare occasion for you, that you don't lose your--

WS: No.

MS: -- that you're a patient man who does not lose his cool too often.

WS: That's right. That is correct. And I suppose that having that reputation and having built it up, when I did do crazy things,

that (Laughs) it startled them so, they didn't know what to do.

Oh, and then there's one final thing in negotiations: One evening we went to dinner, and we were supposed to come back about 7:00 o'clock. At dinner, I told my team, I said, "We're going to do this. After we get settled and I make a few comments, we are not going to say another word." We kept the board in the room from about 7:00 o'clock until 10:30. Not a word was said. I told them, "If you've got something that you want to let me know about, get out your notebook, write a note, and just pass it on down to me," which they did.

Finally, at about 10:30, the chief negotiator for the board said, "Mr. Simons, we've been sitting here for three and a half hours and nothing has been accomplished, nothing has been said." So I said, "Well, don't you know how to get up and go home?" (Laughs) So I guess it's things of that nature (Laughs) that I could add. I those there are any number of incidents like that that I could recall that made life so pleasant (Laughs) in the course of negotiations.

MS: Let me ask my final question, then, because we're just about out of tape. If I was a fifteen year-old student sitting in front of you right now, and you wanted to give me some essential advice on life -- so I'm asking you a final question in your role as teacher, where you started out -- what would you tell me?

WS: I would tell you the same thing that I told my students

when I was in the classroom: Number one, stay in school; and number two, keep your name off the police blotter. Keep doing the things that you like to do that are beneficial to you, not necessarily along the lines of education, but things that make you grow. And sooner or later, something is going to come out from within that tells you, hey, I want to do so-and-so with my life, and you're going to follow that, and you're going to turn out to be all right. And I've found that a majority of my students did do that. I meet them occasionally, and some of them tell me, "I remember what you told me in Room 306. You told me to stay in school and keep my name off the police blotter, and follow the directions of my parents, and keep out of trouble." And I said, "Oh?" And he said, "Yeah." (Inaudible) I will always remember that.

I would tell a student today that your opportunities are far greater than the opportunities that I had when I was your age. I could not dream of becoming a computer technician because then there were no computers. I could not really dream of going as a mathematician or an as engineer, or any of the other things, other opportunities that are available to you today, because they were not -- the opportunities were not there when I was a young man.

So even though things are not completely right as they should be, the opportunities are greater. Stick with whatever it is that you want to do, and you will have a productive life.

MS: Okay. That concludes our interview. We're just about out

of tape. And I thank you very much.

WS: Well, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this.

TAPE THREE/THREE, SIDE B ENDS

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