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Warren Jolly

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Black History Research Project of Tampa

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Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project
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Warren Jolly: Today, the attitude is hustle bustle, and that's bad. I learned something from all my coaches, for motivation coach Abe Brown would give you that extra push you needed to lift your spirits. And as far as picking up skills to play QB [quarterback], coach Ronnie Brown was inspirational. He was young. I could relate to him as a person. He influenced me into attending the college he had attended. Coach William Bethel. I looked to him for leadership, he was my neighbor, a fine person. He even taught me how to fish. We had a special relationship. Coach Reed and I had special relationship. I learned a lot from all my coaches. I even learned things from Coach Jim Williams; we had a special relationship. Competition gets you ahead and stay extra steps in developing yourself.

There is a severe problem of illiteracy affecting our people. The test is a monitoring tool used to help people. I think the black parent should teach his child everything he knows about everything. Kinda made us think that we, blacks, were ugly. We were conditioned, we were brainwashed, we didn't like ourselves. We didn't know who we were. We didn't have any black history. We didn't know where we came from. We knew nothing about ourselves so we were totally in a state of confusion about who we are and I think we identified who we are and then the black movements in the early sixties [1960s] came about and I think this is when people start saying, I'm black and I'm proud of it, and that's one of the best things for us to say: I like the color of my skin. Now we recognize that black people are just as or even more intelligent than anybody else.

I stated when I was about seven years old, I was work orientated and an industrious type person. I started off by selling papers, shining shoes, this kind of thing, but I think my first major job was working at the chicken market in the neighborhood in the Ybor City area and eventually I moved up to manager. I was no more than ten or eleven years old working on the weekend opening up the shop. This kind of thing, and during this time we

had live chicken we had to dress. Then we dressed everything from fish, chickens, turkeys, opossums, 'coons, ducks and geese. You name it, we cleaned it.

I got interested in sports at an early age, because I lived next door to my high school coach, Coach William Bethel. All my brothers had played football and I couldn't wait to grow up, get in high school and participate. I always liked to run when I was a kid; I used to race my neighbor to school. His dad would drive him to school. I would beat them because I would run through the project and the red lights would stop them. It was about a three mile run and would beat him every morning. I always liked to run and take care of my body.

During my teen period, I always had a job. I guess I'm putting emphasis on working, getting your own thing, being independent. You wouldn't have to rely on anybody to do anything, because I lost my father at an early age, and I came from a large family so I had to hustle. Either that, or wait on my mama to get me something, and she didn't have the money. I've always liked nice things, and so I've always worked, and working is good for you. It gives you a sense of responsibility.

In junior high school I played softball, ran track, weightlifting. I didn't like basketball, and I couldn't wait to get in high school. And so when I finally got in high school, I went to Middleton in the ninth grade. This was in 1962. This was the first ninth grade class. They had to double. It's like being a little fish in a pond, but being competitive.

I went on and I tried out for the Junior Varsity football team, and Coach Billy Reed was the coach. I made the team. I was a linebacker, I really didn't care what position I played I just wanted to play. They had a quarterbacking situation where Leroy Owens was first strain QB for varsity. He had gotten his arm broken, and Dave Bowden, which was the back-up QB, had gotten a pinch nerve in his neck. The JV [Junior Varsity] QB at that time was Moses Karry and they moved him up, so I switched to QB. To play QB for the JV and during my midway of the first season, my talents were recognized as being a stiff competitive and they moved me up from the JV to the Varsity and that was a lot of responsibility for a young to actually be calling the signals for some older guys. I was the back-up QB. I played a little my ninth grade year.

But my tenth grade year I went to practice with the attitude that QB job belonged to me. The summer before school started I was carrying around a football religiously because there's one thing I knew, that I could throw a football. The reason I could throw is because I practiced in my spare time. I would hang a tire up on the pole and throw the ball through it. So when school started, I made the first team. Some of my teammates: James Bivens, pro; Rob English; Lloyd Mumphord, pro, Dolphins and Colts; Dale Bell, space center, Kennedy; Charlie Lavrae, own Lain & Garden series in Colorado; Ernest Creole; all the guys that were good athletes. Ninety percent of them are very successful.

I have something else to say in regard to physical health. If a person is physically healthy, he or she would be able to do a lot of things and won't be tired and sluggish. I'm thirty-two years old right now. I jog five miles every day when I jog. I feel like I'm on a natural

high. I recommend anybody to stay in shape. When I was in high school we didn't have sniffers, pill popping, pot smoking, drinking, et cetera. There was no evidence of glue sniffing, pill popping, pot smoking. It was an all black high school. It was one big happy family. The problems were family type of problems. The teachers were more involved because of the family-like atmosphere. If a teacher saw a student skipping classes, she would counsel the student or make a personal visit and tell your parents, "I saw your child skipping school today," and they would follow it up.

Now today—and I'm not knocking integration, but the teachers are not that involved. Everything is business. They see a kid smoking pot and they wouldn't do anything to him. We had a coach name Abe Brown, Middleton; Jim Williams, Blake; Coach Bethel; Ronnie Brown—[they all] chastised you right then. They did not tolerate you feeling on women, cursing women, wearing your shirt out. People were proud to see us.

But it is today's youth who don't have supervision. We did; that's the key problem. Young people don't love discipline. Discipline to me is not leading scouring. Discipline is teaching. They love to show the right way, they love attention and they will do anything to get attention, negative things and positive things and that's the problem. You don't have that close family type situation where your school is set up, where blacks were involved in helping blacks out. Today, the attitude is hustle bustle and that's bad.

I learned something from all my coaches, for motivation. Coach Abe Brown would give you that extra push you needed to lift your spirits. And as far as picking up skills to play QB, Coach Ronnie Brown was inspirational. He was young. I could relate to him as a person. He influenced me into attending the college he had attended. Coach William Bethel—I looked to him for leadership; he was my neighbor, a fine person. He even taught me how to fish. We had a special relationship. Coach Reed and I had a special relationship. I learned a lot from all my coaches. I even learned things from Coach Jim Williams; we had a special relationship.

My high point—in 1963, our team was as ragged as a mango seed. We had injuries from a to z in almost every position. James Bivens was out. He got his leg broke. Nobody expected us to win. A lot of responsibility fell upon me. We did a survey of the team. What we were weak and what we were strong in. Previous year, I was all city at QB and receiving and we utilized our strong point to offset our weak points. A long of pressure was thrown on me because if I didn't function right, the team did not function right.

That was my high point. My low point was when we played Blake. We played ten games, and Blake won eight and lost one when we played Blake in 1963. Blake was healthy, and we were crippled with injuries. They were just waiting for us. They had our plays down pat, but being the competitor I was, I scored the only touchdown. The game was scouted by the college that I would attend. So even though I didn't have a good day, I had a good day, considering. I was good friends of several of the players at Blake. Blake was on the west and Middleton was on the east, and we had a great rivalry.

My senior year, we rode with Blake on the way to a baseball tournament. We left town as

one; even though we were rivals, we were going to take care of business. It was a unity thing, a common bond representing Tampa; we were different and we were very mannerable. If anybody tried to disrupt this unity, both schools would have helped each other. The same thing happened when I went to college. There were eighteen dudes from Tampa and surrounding areas, and all of the Tampa guys made the team. I'm talking about guys like Ernest Corney, Wilbert William, William Wilds, these type guys. After college I was offered jobs in little towns. Georgia is a good place to visit but I was concerned about coming back to town. I love Tampa and I have seen it change.

Advice to younger kids would be to stay away from psychology and sociology. Right now I am employed as an employment counselor. They have stated, "Continue learning to be blacksmiths when there are no horses." My advice would be as good as you can in any endeavor. Because you know your weaknesses. Because when you are in college, you are competing against the best in the United States. They recruit the best so you have to be in better condition. Example: in class, if you have a report, use more than one source so you have a broader scope of the subject. Competition gets you ahead and stay extra steps in developing yourself. The advantage that blacks have entering white universities is exposure, more money to attract black talent. Major universities operate with the law.

Everybody can't go to a white university. I rather see the good athlete going to the black university than white. Integration eliminated the closeness and the personification that you receive at an all black school. All athletes were monitored to make sure that we wouldn't lose nobody. If we had an athlete who was cutting, the coach would intervene and solve the problem. Integration has not met this criteria. There is a severe problem of illiteracy affecting our people. The test is a monitoring tool used to help people.

I think the black parent should teach his child everything he knows about everything. Example: I have two boys out at the automotive center. My oldest son asked me for money for the vending machine. Cakes and stuff. He read the date on the cake and it showed that the cake was two days over, so my oldest son asked me what should he do about it. He asked if the cake was still good. I told him it could be, it could not be. It was up to him to eat it. Okay, so he carried it to the cashier for refund. She tried to tell him it was good, but he would not accept it and would not eat it. Okay. This, I feel, gave him the experience of decision making—although this may have been a bit small—but he still shows that he can make decisions and stick to them.

I left out a very important person in my life. That was my father. He was the most unusual man I've ever met in my life. And I'm not saying it because he's my father. I'd like to tell you about him. I have eight brothers and two sisters. My father was a cement finisher, so when I was a little boy I would always go to work with him. He would always say, "Yes, sir; yes, ma'am," to white folks, his boss man, et cetera. He was a big man. Six feet tall, 220 pounds, solid muscles and he didn't drink or curse. He was a good disciplinarian. He was a man who got respect. I never could understand why he would say "Yes, sir," and "Ma'am" to white folks.

The confusing thing, he would insist on us children giving him respect. I asked him one day—I was twelve or maybe thirteen and it was during the summer. I had gone to work with him, and he told me that it was the role he had to play to get work. He wasn't afraid. He needed the work to take care of his family. This was during the period there were quite a few black contractors and you could get black ball. He would make around 600 or 700 dollars a week, and that was good money then.

One Friday, I went to work with my father. The guy owed my father 700 dollars, and the guy said, "James."

My father said, "Yes, sir."

"I don't have all your money. I only have 400 dollars of it. You'll get the rest later when I can."

So my father looked at the guy, and said, "I want my money. I worked for it. I finished the job on time. I even worked in the rain. I got a lot of respect, but I want my money. Man, if you don't give me my money, I'll take my knife out and put about two in your head, and then break it off and leave it to the hands of the Lord."

I felt so proud when my father did that that night. That taught me a lesson. Even though he said, "Yes, sir," and "Yes, ma'am" and exhibit this kind of respect, I think most people see it as a weak man. And he wasn't, because I felt proud that my daddy stood up for his rights. That stuck with me. Not being violent, but stand up for your rights and don't let people walk all over you 'cause you are black.

My father was very influential in my life. He was the type of guy the whole neighborhood respected. We need more men like that. During that time different parents catch you doing something wrong, they'll talk to your parents to get punishment. I think more good men came out of that era than now, because people cared about you. I think we need more of a community that is tight: one that is friendly, one that cares, et cetera. We don't have that nowadays, but I wish. The neighborhoods were, back then, were you could leave for a few days and everybody would take care of your house and everything.

The black community is so divided, I've found. For example, the political arena—if we get Andrews¹, the Harveys² may not like it, or vice-versa. Finding a candidate that everybody want is the problem. I think people should look at as less of the two evils. Politics is a very evil situation, anyway. I would feel much better with a qualified black man, whether I liked him or not. I like politics. It's challenging. One day, I'm gonna be the mayor of Tampa.

Fred Beaton: Why do you think it took so long to elect a black official?

WJ: When did we elect one? Well, Reverend [A. Leon] Lowry. Tampa has very unusual

¹ C. Blythe Andrews and family, the owners of the *Florida Sentinel Bulletin*.

² Perry Harvey Senior and Junior, both presidents of the longshoremen's union.

makeup. Is comprised of the majority than minorities, and what I mean by that—you have blacks, we have Spanish, which outnumber whites, so we have two minorities outnumbering what is normally the majority, which is white people. And then that is a situation, it is a chaotic situation where we really can't get any momentums on one because you get two minorities and they—

Let's take the black minorities. They are fighting among themselves, and there is no unity because they are more concerned about what this person has and what his family did and what his daddy did than what this person has and what his family did and what his daddy did than what this person has to offer, and it is a sad situation. Now we are just coming off another situation, and I think we're getting educated to the point for us to realize that this is happening to us.

You take when I was in high school, junior high school. Every time I cut on the TV, I saw a beautiful white lady selling Prell shampoo, et cetera. Every time I go to the movie, I saw a beautiful white woman as sex symbols. Everywhere, white women.

[Editor's note: Much of the following paragraph appears earlier in the transcript as well.]

Kinda made us think that we blacks were ugly. We were conditioned, we were brainwashed, we didn't like ourselves. We didn't know who we were. We didn't have any black history. We didn't know where we came from. We knew nothing about ourselves, so we were totally in a state of confusion about who we are. I think we identified who we are, and then the black movements in the early sixties [1960s] came about, and I think this is when people start saying, "I'm black and I'm proud of it." And that's one of the best things for us to say, "I like the color of my skin."

The black movement came out, we start liking the color of our skins and we start processing our hair and start wearing it natural like it really is, and other guys would get processes. All these chemicals trying to get white folks hair. Even buying French poodles and riding around in their cars and stuff. I think it was a phase we had to go through, and I'm glad we went through it. We should've gone through it earlier, but we went through it. Now we recognize that black people are just as or even more intelligent than anybody else.

I think the whole mode of the country has changed from a very violent point to a love, understanding type situation. Sometimes, I go to the neighborhood bars that are known to be cutthroat and raunchy and this type thing, and I go through sometime and holler at the local folks, my friends. The attitude that they have, ghetto people. I think the cutting and arguing is trivial to some degree. I think it's a little more unity. What could be the economical situation that make people be closer but I think the whole mode is changed. We finally recognized that we are somebody and we should be proud of our roots and our heritage, and I think this is going to have some influence on political situation where we will stop being a bunch of crabs in a basket that pull each other down when one of us reach the top. I think this mood is going to change, and it's going to take young people like ourselves to change the situation completely. I think it will change, and I think we'll

get some blacks in the public office.

FB: What do you think the chances are if Alton White runs for mayor?

WJ: I think they would be pretty good. A lot of people don't know Alton. Not like I know him. I've observed his work. Number one. He is very intelligent and qualified, and he knows the work needs of the city government to deal with certain—a lot of problems, and a lot of people don't know this. The present mayor, Mayor [Bill] Poe, put a lot of responsibilities on Alton. He just doesn't have the type job where he goes, take his shoes off and sit at his desk and loosen his tie. This man works.

Alton also jogs every morning. The last I talked to him he had gotten to about three miles a day—and a matter of fact, I have to call him and tell him I'm up to five. He jogs, keeps his body in condition, he's a humanitarian, loves people but he's the type of guy that does things to help people and they don't know it. He is responsible for that park in West Tampa. He doesn't go around boasting about it, but he was responsible. He knew funds were available for that type situation. He has enough contact in Washington to find out beforehand what funds are available, and he developed. That's one of his pet peeves—projects—and I think Riverfront is a nice project. It is a beautiful facility. It's a beautiful project.

I've seen that man do things for people on a low key basis, 'cause that's the type of man he is. We need him. If we lost him and did not put him in office, then town would be set back a few years. Like one step forward and two steps backwards—well, it will be one step forward and about ten backwards if we don't get him in there.

He's a very good man and a fine athlete. I think we need to start being more black-conscious and getting black officials into key offices and I think this time is approaching more rapidly and will be. Mississippi is ahead of us as far as in that respect. Mulberry, Lakeland has a black mayor or had a black mayor, and it will catch on. Next few years. Next few months. I think we're ready now.

end of interview