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[Transcriber's note: The interview begins in mid-sentence.]

Clarence Fort: —county improvement, that's when I saw him—

Stephen Lawson: Is that at Progress Village?

CF: Right, Progress Village. I have an article I wrote here, too, in the [*Tampa*] *Tribune*, editorial page. I brought it along. I don't know if it's any good, I just brought it along. Referring to Harry Truman.

SL: I don't think I saw—oh, Harry Truman, okay.

CF: Yeah. (laughs)

SL: Yeah, he denounced the lunch—

CF: Yes, he did, right.

SL: Do you want some milk, or—?

CF: Do you have a little cream or milk? I even have the original copy, too; my wife saved all that stuff. Yeah, that's the original there. (talking about coffee) That's good, that's good there.

Yeah, she saved that. She's very good at that.

SL: (inaudible).

CF: (laughs) Well, you know, at the time it really never occurred to me. You know, I

guess that's how people do things; they do things and they don't really realize what they're doing. Well, at some point they will.

SL: I'll go back and look at it. You don't remember what—

CF: August fifteenth, I think it was—no, that's the date she Xeroxed it. All she has is March 1960. It would be in that month.

SL: I tell you what; can I get this Xeroxed and send it to you?

CF: Yeah, yeah, you can get that, because, see, I have the original on that.

SL: Yeah, let me Xerox it, and give me your home address and I'll send it to you.

CF: Okay, all right. I have the original.

SL: I guess the best way to preserve those is one of those scrapbooks where you can put it in between the acetate and the page; otherwise the air is gonna kill all of it. I guess the *Tribune* must print on cheaper newsprint

CF: You can tell. (laughs)

SL: Either that or they have a tighter budget now; that's what's out there.

CF: You can tell that because it really disintegrated, almost, in the *Tribune*. *Tampa Times* has held up real well.

SL: I would think it has to do with the quality of the newsprint.

CF: Right.

SL: But you know, that's not gonna be long for the world, probably.

CF: (inaudible) (laughs) Think so, huh?

SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I tell you that's probably the same kind of news, earthquakes again —

CF: And the same thing happening now—

SL: Same thing.

CF: Well, I don't know. I guess something will work out, right?

SL: Well, things have changed—we'll talk a little bit about it, but obviously things have changed since that moment in March 1960.

CF: Oh, yes! That's right.

SL: They have changed.

CF: I've seen a lot of changes.

SL: Well, good. I want to talk to you about that. (inaudible) civil rights bill that they debated and eventually passed, the Senate was sleeping on cots because the Southerners were filibustering the bill (CF laughs) and they had to be prepared to come in case they tried a sneaky maneuver (inaudible) didn't have a quorum and they would abolish—they would adjourn the Senate.

Basically, what I'm trying to do is write about race relations, civil rights in particular, in Tampa between the sit-ins in sixty [1960] and through the race riot in sixty-seven [1967].

CF: Right.

SL: What I'm trying to do is see how civil rights issues were handled in Tampa, the parties involved, the kinds of decisions made, and several other different kinds of things, particularly business responses.

CF: Right, right.

SL: And with you in particular, I'd like to get the grassroots people. You know, I've talked to the Lowrys and the Saunderses and the mayor. I talked to Mayor [Julian] Lane and all those people. All I know is I haven't talked to some of the people who were actually involved on the grassroots level, as you were. So I'll probably talk to you more about the sit-ins more than anything else, but I'll ask you some other questions as we go along, and perhaps at the end if you have anything I haven't asked you that you feel that you know personally contributed towards it, you might just add it.

CF: All right, okay. I can do that.

SL: We can—this has a half hour on each side, so I'll be keeping the time on this so I don't have to keep looking at it.

The first question that I want to ask you is your background. Where you were born, when, education, how you got to Tampa.

CF: Well, first thing, I was born in Orange Heights, which is Alachua County, twelve miles east of Gainesville, in 1938, March of 1938. I attended grade school in Waldo for six years and then I went to Hawthorne High School, which was Shell High School in Hawthorne, through 1956 when I graduated from there. Upon graduating from there, I went to Orlando and worked a year there at Morrison Cafeteria as a waiter, and from there I went to Tyler Barber and Business College in Tyler, Texas, for a year. At the time I

thought I wanted to be a barber—well, I did want to be. There just wasn't many things you could be along in there, because of job opportunities and so forth. And my father were sick at the time, so I couldn't go to a full institution. I knew that then.

So after finishing barber college, I originally planned to go to St. Petersburg, where they place you in a job. I had a job with a barber in St. Petersburg, but I had an uncle livin' here in Tampa. So I stopped over here two weeks so I could get myself together in St. Pete and find a place. While I was here—my uncle knew a guy who was cutting hair here, who had cut his hair. This man's name is Melvin Stone; he had a barbershop on Twenty-Ninth Street. So I took my apprenticeship under him for eighteen months and I got my master's license. And then I worked under him for about—I guess three years we worked together, and this is how I got to Tampa and that's how I got started.

SL: So the barber is coming at the late 1950s.

CF: Right, at the late—I went to school in fifty-seven [1957] and I came out in fifty-eight [1958].

SL: Now, the barbershop, is it a segregated clientele? Is it an all black clientele?

CF: Yes, it's all black; it's all black.

SL: And it was in the black section of Tampa at that time.

CF: Yeah, it was a black neighborhood.

SL: When did you first get involved with the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and its Youth Council?

CF: One night my wife and I went to a meeting. And just how I got there or who invited me I don't know—I been tryin' to think of it all day—but we went to Youth Council—not a Youth Council, but a regular meeting—on Central Avenue and Central Life Insurance Company. And from this meeting, I think we were the only two young people there. I wasn't married at the time—we were dating—and they talked to us about forming a youth council then, and that's how it all got started. When I was in—some friends of mine who attended my church started talkin' with them, and we had two or three people together and we started from there.

SL: So in other words, there was not a youth council before you—

CF: If it was, I don't know about it in Tampa. There might have been, but it wasn't active, I'll say that.

SL: And the NAACP leaders here were asking you to form it.

CF: Right, right.

SL: Do you remember who was in charge of NAACP and asked you at the time?

CF: Well, the president—I know Robert Saunders was the field secretary, and the president's name was Charles.

SL: Devalt?

CF: I believe it was, right.

SL: 'Cause he was with Central Life and he was the president.

CF: Right, I think he was the president.

SL: And at his suggestion you did form the Youth Council?

CF: We did form the Youth Council.

SL: What year was that? Do you remember?

CF: This was in 1959, if I'm not mistaken. Fifty-nine [1959]

SL: What was the role of the Youth Council? What kind of things did the Youth Council do?

CF: Well, what we were doin' then was tryin' to help kids and find out and to encourage them to go to college and stuff like this, and we were also talkin' about, even then, the discrimination and the things that we couldn't do, you know. And out of this, this is how the idea came about about the sit-ins.

SL: Okay, I'll get to that in a second. How many young people were in the Youth Council at that point?

CF: I'll say at that point we had about ten, just about ten.

SL: What were the ages?

CF: Ages ranged from, I'll say, fifteen through eighteen.

SL: And you were about eighteen at the time?

CF: I was twenty-one.

SL: You were twenty-one, so you were a little older.

CF: Right.

SL: The others [were] in school; you were the only one who was not in school?

CF: I was the only one who wasn't in school, right, the only one. My wife was in junior college—well, my date then; we got married later. She was in her sophomore year at Gibbs Community College.

SL: And the others were high school students?

CF: High school students, right.

SL: Did you have regular meetings?

CF: We had meetings once a week.

SL: And what did you generally do at those meetings? Were they discussion meetings?

CF: Right, we discussed various things. We was aware of prejudice then, and segregation policies then. We were discussing them then.

SL: And how did the idea—if you can remember, if you can pinpoint it—how did the idea for the sit-in here in Tampa here at the lunch counters first come about?

CF: As a result of the one in North Carolina, Greensboro.

SL: So you were aware of the riot in Greensboro?

CF: Right, I was aware of that. How it really got started—the fellow I was workin' with, Melvin Stone, we decided one day to go down to the branch office, which was Robert Saunders, field secretary, and we told him them, Look, they are doin' this, why can't we do it in Tampa?

And at the time, he said, "We cannot venture out." Now, it has always been NAACP policy not to go into something like this. Now, they would back you up if you got into it, but they were a little afraid then, you know, to say, Hey, we're gonna be responsible if these kids go right out.

So we had to have a series of meetings, and after having a series of meetings and I started talkin' so strongly about it, the youth that we were with became so much involved in it, so it was almost impossible then to hold it back. So after they saw that we were gonna do it, we were really gonna do it, then they say, Well, we'll see what we can do; we'll back you up.

SL: So this is really happening over about a period of a month, cause the sit-ins were February in Greensboro.

CF: Right.

SL: And according to the reports here, obviously you began March first, a month after Greensboro starts.

CF: About a month after, right.

SL: So you were planning this for about a month, and the NAACP—Saunders is the first NAACP man you went to?

CF: Yeah, right. Well, he was the first one that we talked to for advice. Now, we had our youth adviser was there all the time.

SL: Now who was the youth adviser, do you remember?

CF: The same person that was over the regular branch, he was the same one.

SL: Devalt?

CF: Devalt, right.

SL: What kind of things went through your mind in the planning of this? Did you do the planning pretty much on your own that month?

CF: Right, right. We did this; we didn't know how we were gonna come out, now that's one. We didn't know this, but we mapped out our plans. What I did, I went around to the schools because we didn't have enough people, okay, so I went and talked with the president of the student council at Middleton [High School], which was one of the black high schools, and the president of the student council at Blake High School—the two black high schools—and meeting with these two guys, he let me meet with their council. I met right with their council and told them what we were planning to do, and from that they started to recruit people.

We tried to select people who was pretty level-headed, we thought, that could go in and present it themselves and represent it themselves in an orderly manner. And then, they in turn got with these people and they started coming to a meeting, and that's how we built up our council—I think it swelled to sixty people—and we mapped all our strategy out what we would do.

SL: Did you ever have any problem with the principals of Blake or Middleton? Did they cooperate? Did they know what you were doing?

CF: No, I wouldn't say they did. I don't think so. I wouldn't say they did. I just contacted the guys. I think I went out to the school and I did go by the office, but I asked to speak to the president of the Student Council. Now, probably the president of the Student Council told him—I'm sure he was closer to him than I was, and he probably had to do it.

SL: No one tried to stop you?

CF: No one tried to stop me, no.

SL: Now that you've recruited the Middleton and Blake students—

CF: Right.

SL: And having your meetings, what are your plans? What are you mapping out to do?

CF: Okay, we told them that we were gonna go down, and we set a date. We were gonna go down, and we had two groups. We split the groups up. I carried a group, and that other fellow with me, which was Melvin Stone—he wasn't a leader of the group, but he went along with the other group. Now, I think I got the president of Middleton's student council to lead the other group.

We sit at Woolworth's [Department Store], and I think they went on to W.T. Grant's [Department Store], if I'm not mistaken. We told them that we would sit there for fifteen minutes, but really we didn't know what to expect, because we didn't know what the stores were gonna do. We didn't know what the police were gonna do. We didn't know what were gonna happen.

SL: You hadn't contacted the police or the stores in advance?

CF: We hadn't contacted them at all. This is all secret; no one knew anything about it except these people, and they didn't know the date. In other words, like I told the guys, "I'll get back with you." We planned it all, but we kept the date right up until the last day.

SL: Had you read on your own anything that Martin Luther King had written at that time or any other people in the civil rights movement that would have given you any theoretical background for what you were trying to do, or was this just a spontaneous—?

CF: No, no. Spontaneous, right. I hadn't read anything on that at all.

SL: The only thing you knew [was] that at Greensboro some students had tried it—

CF: Right.

SL: and you were gonna do it here.

CF: Right.

SL: Did you tell—this is crucial for something I'm trying to find out. Did you tell in advance Reverend [A. Leon] Lowry that you were going downtown and try to integrate?

CF: He was there. Reverend Lowry knew. If I—let's see now, let me think on that now, if he knew.

SL: According to the articles, Reverend Lowry showed up downtown. I don't know whether he was called after it began or you had told him in advance, because he is there, and—

CF: I'll say this. Reverend Lowry knew we were gonna do it, but he didn't know when. I'll put it like this. I won't say that he knew when, but evidently they knew we were meeting. They knew that we were planning something like this—but like I say, we kept it a secret, and we didn't want anyone knowing because we didn't want it to get to the papers. In fact, the papers didn't know it; they didn't know in advance. So evidently he was standing by, because he wouldn't—he had a series of meetings, because he was the state president at the time, and he wouldn't leave town for that reason, 'cause he knew we were planning.

SL: But you had not told him specifically when you were gonna do it?

CF: No. I didn't tell him. Robert Saunders might have; he might have tipped him off, say, “Hey, I think they're gonna go down there, they're gonna start these sit-ins here in Tampa.”

SL: Had you been in contact at all with Francisco Rodriguez [Junior], because he was the lawyer to provide legal counsel in case—

CF: No, no, I had not. Now, the senior branch might have contacted him, but I had not. I didn't have any dealings at all with him. I knew him. But I'm sure that once they knew we were gonna go down, they started mapping their strategy, what would happen if—in fact, they did. Yes, they did that, they mapped that strategy. We talked about that, what would happen if we was arrested and who would put up the bail and—

SL: You talked about that prior to the—

CF: Yeah, prior to that we did do that. But it was more or less a closed door meeting.

SL: Who did you talk to with? Who did you talk to with?

CF: Well, there was the president of the adult council, I think, Robert Saunders. He handled the most of it, because he was the field secretary. This was done in his office. It was not a regular meeting of the Youth Council (inaudible).

SL: So Saunders did know that you were going to go downtown?

CF: Well, I think he knew, or he had an idea, because he—well, he had to have an idea, because we had discussed some plans once.

SL: But you don't remember if Reverend Lowry was in on those, though?

CF: He wasn't in on it. No, he wasn't in on it.

SL: So, basically, Saunders was handling it and mapping out what would happen. What was supposed to happen if you'd gotten into trouble?

CF: (laughs) Well, we was really playin' it by ear, but Rodriguez, I imagine, he was—that's the reason he was down. He was in the area, too. You see that in the article there.

SL: Right.

CF: He would go to legal counsel, I imagine. He was actin' as legal counsel and try to get us out on bail.

SL: But you didn't encounter any—

CF: No.

SL: —any trouble?

CF: We didn't. No.

SL: What was the experience like doing this thing, for you?

CF: Well, I said I was a little nervous. But I had to be nervous. I guess every civil rights leader, whenever you're going into something you don't know what to expect. And after you have gone so far, it's too late to turn around, and you're more or less pushed into it whether you want to or not. But I guess I took the first seat. Well, I know I did. I won't say "I guess." And then the others start following in. And it was—well, really, it wasn't bad. The first thing happened, they started puttin'—they put signs up that the counters were closed. But it was a shaky experience.

SL: Did anyone harass you in there?

CF: No, not at the time, no. Not there. They closed the counters.

SL: Yeah, they closed it; you stayed in for about fifteen minutes—

CF: Right.

SL: —then you went out—

CF: Right.

SL: —and then you came back in.

CF: Right.

SL: Now, what was the purpose of that?

CF: Because when we left, they re-opened the counters. (laughs)

SL: Uh-huh.

CF: And we had planned this. I told the kids, "Hey, if they close it, we're gonna leave. And if they re-open it, we'll regroup," and we went back. So that's what happened. We went back when they opened the counters up. So at this particular time, they didn't re-open 'em. They roped us off, and they just closed the whole thing down.

SL: You were in Woolworth's? Your group was in Woolworth's?

CF: We was in Woolworth's, right.

SL: And another group was in—?

CF: W. T. Grant's, on the other corner.

SL: Right.

CF: That's what happened.

SL: You left, I guess, about six o'clock when the store closed.

CF: When it closed, right.

SL: What was your strategy next? What were you hoping to do from that point on?

CF: Well, we went back to the church. We were meeting at St. Paul [African Methodist Episcopal] Church, like I was telling you. We went back to the church and we told 'em—I told the two ladies that I would get with 'em the next day and decide who would go from there. Now, the next day—

SL: These are two leaders who you specifically—

CF: The two student council leaders.

SL: Okay.

CF: Because he was in control of the kids at the school.

SL: Do you remember their names?

CF: Yes.

SL: Can you tell me?

CF: George Edgecomb was student council leader at Middleton [High School]. I think you know he came to be a judge.

SL: Oh, was that the judge?

CF: Judge [George] Edgecomb, right, and Shafter Scott of Blake [High School].

SL: That's not the one who died, though, is it?

CF: Yes.

SL: Oh.

CF: That was him. He was a student council president. And Shafter Scott at Blake. Now, what he came on to do, I don't know. I don't know what happened to him in later years.

SL: So you talked after six o'clock, and you went to St. Paul and you talked to the leaders and you told 'em what, again?

CF: Right. I told 'em that I would get in touch with—that we probably would go again the next day. And we did go the next day.

SL: Now, at that meeting at the church, did the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] leadership join you there, people like Saunders and Reverend Lowry—

CF: Right.

SL: Did they appear there?

CF: Right. They all showed up then, because by then it had hit the news and everything else and—

SL: What were they telling you? Were they telling you the same thing or different things?

CF: No, it was basically the same. They didn't try to stop us. They just said, you know, more or less act in an orderly manner. You know. And be yourself and stay out of any verbal, you know, with members of the other race. Don't answer any questions. We had spokesmen set up to answer questions. I think I was the only one supposed to really speak. And if anyone wanted to know anything they were supposed to get up and come to me, or send a report to me.

SL: And you decided at that meeting that you would go back the next day?

CF: Right, go back the next day.

SL: And did you go back the next day?

CF: Right, we went back. Now, as a result of this, and after it hit the papers and the TV, another group sprang up. You probably heard about the other group.

SL: Joseph Dasher.

CF: Right, Joseph Dasher. Right. Okay, he and a group of his own—

SL: Now, what kind of group is this? They've never really described it in the paper.

CF: (laughs)

SL: Said that Dasher apparently had a juvenile arrest record.

CF: Well, evidently they wanted—well, we all were being discriminated against, you see. I can see his point, but I guess they only wanted to help out. That's my only way I can put it, they only wanted to help out.

SL: Who were they though; where does this group come from?

CF: Well, he got some people of his own. I guess he just went out in the street and say, "Hey, let's go sit down," you know, that's the only thing I can say.

SL: Were these students at Middleton and Blake, do you know?

CF: I can't recall. I don't know if they were students or they were just out of school; maybe just out of school who wasn't goin' to college.

SL: Did you know Dasher? Had you known him?

CF: I hadn't known him before; prior to that I hadn't met—in fact, I still haven't met him. (SL laughs) Really, really I haven't. I've heard about him, but—

SL: You went the next day, and tell me what happened, your experiences.

CF: Well, we held off; they didn't go the first day.

SL: No, they didn't, but you did.

CF: They went the second day.

SL: Right. And then what happened the second day?

CF: The same thing [that] happened the first day, we were refused to be served.

SL: You actually went in, your group actually did go in the second day.

CF: We did go in.

SL: The same story?

CF: The second day was the same procedure as the first day, and after the first day, the second day is when we had a mass meeting, if I can recall that night. And that is when we had to map our strategy what to do about the other group, because see, they wasn't organized and they were going through—I understand they had some trouble with people, and they were pushin' people around, see.

SL: Apparently there was some sort of incident in the Greyhound bus station.

CF: Right, there was.

SL: That wasn't—Leon Bellamy, who was the fellow involved here, was not in your group.

CF: No, no, he was—right, he was not in my group.

SL: He was in the other group; he was in Dasher's group.

CF: He was in Dasher's group.

SL: But you did actually that second day sit in the same restaurant.

CF: Right, the same restaurant.

SL: Did your group happen to join together at any point during that time?

CF: No, we didn't; we just met back at the place. We would just march back; I think we had signs, and we'd march back to the church, and we met back there.

SL: Did the people in the restaurants put the closed signs back up at the lunch counter?

CF: Right—in fact, they even roped it off the second day.

SL: They roped it off?

CF: They roped it off, they roped everything off. They didn't make us move; they put the

ropes behind us.

SL: You actually sat down and they roped it off?

CF: We sat down and they roped the whole thing off behind us; they roped the whole area off, and he said, "The store is closed," or, "The lunch counter is closed." But we didn't leave—well, we did leave. We sat there a while until it was almost closing time, then we left.

SL: Then you went back to the mass rally at St. Paul's. Was Dasher's group there also?

CF: No, no, they never did meet with us.

SL: And what happened at that mass meeting?

CF: Now, at this meeting we came up with the strategy of wearing signs, so that our group would be recognized as the original group. In other words, I think we had blue and white cards [saying] "NAACP Youth Council." We did this to separate ourselves from that group. If I'm not mistaken, their group fizzled out. I think someone got to them and say, "Hey, if you want to get in, come join a group." I think this is what happened. But I don't think we had any more trouble out of them.

SL: How many in your particular group—at the height of the first two days, either one of the days, how many young people are there?

CF: I'd say we got up to fifty-five people.

SL: And most of those were Blake and Middleton students?

CF: Blake and Middleton students. In fact, I would say we might have had a few younger students from one of the junior high schools, like Booker T. Washington [Junior High School], but the majority of 'em were high school students.

At this time—this is what was so good about Tampa, the reason we didn't have any trouble: the police department. The second day, they found out about it and they called, 'cause I was doin' most of my—I guess I'll say negotiations—out of the branch office. I'd go over to Saunders's office, and they called over—United Press called over, because they wanted to know so they could have a camera and reporters—to see if we were goin', and the police department wanted to know, so they could send police protection.

Now, that's the key between other cities and Tampa: the police protection. Now, if they had done like some of the cities take it upon themselves and just enforced the law and say, Hey, you're not gonna demonstrate, but they didn't do that. They didn't let a soul get near us. The second day they walked down with us—in fact, they even directed the traffic. And they stood behind the lunch counters so no one could even get there. I think the chief of police was Neil Brown.

SL: Yeah, I think so.

CF: Very good man. And Julian Lane, of course he was—well, he started gettin' involved.

SL: I wanna get—yeah, I'm glad you told me that. I wanna get back to that meeting, because apparently at that mass meeting, because of the trouble that the Dasher group had caused, you decided to put off further sit-ins, is that right?

CF: For the time being, we did.

SL: For the time being?

CF: Right, right. Now what had happened, I think the mayor got wind of it and he started calling around, and I don't know if he appointed this Biracial Committee or not then, but I know he appointed one.

SL: He appointed it in fifty-nine, in late fifty-nine [1959], so it already existed.

CF: It was already there?

SL: It was already in existence—in fact, one of the members was Reverend Lowry.

CF: I've sit in on it too.

SL: Did ya?

CF: I've sit in on it too.

SL: When did you sit in on it?

CF: I started sitting in—the minute we had the sit-ins at the next meeting, I were there.

SL: Tell me about it.

CF: Okay. (laughs)

SL: Go!

CF: Okay—well, I'll take that back. It was the second meeting they had, 'cause the first meeting they didn't know what was going on, and they told us all—they say, Look, say we—let's invite the guy in, ya know?

SL: Who invited you, Reverend Lowry?

CF: Reverend Lowry invited me in, and—we can get to the social problem, but see what

had happened, this was a special meeting. Even though they had the Biracial Committee now, I don't know if this was a state thing or not. Are you sure this was a city—?

SL: There were two of them.

CF: I knew we had two, I don't think they had developed this—maybe they had.

SL: No, they weren't meetings, they weren't a very formalized thing yet, but there are—

CF: It began to get formal then.

SL: Yeah—

CF: Well, anyway, they invited all the managers, the downtown managers. I remember most of them. Coby Armstrong was over the Merchants Association; Cody Fowler was over First Federal; and Robert Thomas, he's a financial manager. Well, they invited all the managers in, and then we began to talk about what we could do to integrate 'em peacefully. That was the first step. Now, I think that what happened then, they got to Reverend Lowry and he told them, "Hey, if you would tell 'em to hold off, we will try and work something out. Let us have some meetings and see what we can do." I think this is what happened then.

SL: So you think the Biracial Committee and their willingness to talk with you was a very crucial point—

CF: It was. It was.

SL: —in getting you not to pursue it for the time being.

CF: Right.

SL: Okay, at these meetings that began and that you attended, once you called off your sit-ins, what was the discussions like? What were they telling you? What were you telling them?

CF: Well, they was telling us to give 'em time—and this was hard for me, because the youths had gotten stirred up then and they were ready, man. You know kids; they saw their pictures in the paper, on TV [television]. Hey, let's go! Well, I don't guess it really occurred to 'em them, what we were really doin'—majority of 'em it didn't, ya know, because it had been a policy so long that we had gone along with, you see, and it didn't really occur to 'em. But once it got started, they became enthused, see, so they didn't wanna wait, and—'cause, see, we went from there right to the theaters. We hadn't targeted theaters before.

SL: I wanna hold up a little bit—

CF: Okay. So, at my first meeting I told 'em, “Well, look—” They was beating around and say, “Hey, let us work somethin' out. We want to send up to North Carolina and see what they are doin'.” Well, they started to integrate. I think North Carolina started to integrate, I don't know if it took 'em two weeks or what. But they wanted to send around to different cities and get other plans and see how they were doin' it, and Tampa was gonna pattern themselves after that.

So, I told 'em, “Look, these kids, they don't wanna wait. They wanna do it, they wanna go now, and they are tired, you know.” And they were. They were pressing me, because I was about to lose control of 'em. They say, “Hey, we gonna go anyway,” so I say, “No, I tell you what. I'm sitting on the meeting and I think they're negotiatin' in good faith, ya know. Take it from me; I'll probably have something to tell you in a week or so.” So I think I went to about four or five of their meetings, and I saw that the progress was coming along good enough, and I was satisfied with it.

SL: Okay, now, in these meetings, what kind of discussions are these business leaders who you talked about having? What are they telling you? What kind of pressures are they putting on the merchants that you remember hearing?

CF: Well, they was more or less the mediators, I'll put it like that, and they were, I guess, in between the two. They were trying to get them to see that it was wrong, and they agreed, say, Look, if we can—this was their argument—if we can send off and get the plans and see how they're doin' it in other cities and try to initiate it here, would you be willin' to go along with it? They wouldn't give us a definite answer then, but they said, Let us read 'em over, and then we'll get back with our national companies or our chain and then see what they say. We'll meet back here and then we'll discuss it further.

This went on for a month, two months, this went on—

SL: Okay, this went on, and were you under pressure as this went on?

CF: I was still under pressure, right.

SL: How were you able to convince the young—?

CF: I was just tellin' 'em, I just told 'em, “Look, you just have to have faith in me, ya know, and it's gonna come about.” In the meantime, we were still having mass meetings, and at these mass meetings Reverend Lowry would get up and he could reassure 'em what I was tellin' 'em, that it is just something. The people were so nice—the police department, the mayor and all—and we're tryin' to work it out so, hey, why don't we go along with it. We've waited this long, and let's do it peacefully, ya know.

SL: So Reverend Lowry is an important bridge—

CF: Right, he was, he was.

SL: What about Bob Saunders at that time? He was not as involved in the Biracial Committee as Lowry was. Was Saunders—?

CF: Well, he was working directly with Lowry, and Lowry was really the key right there. Whatever he said, we have to—well, see, the Youth Council, now don't get me wrong, is directly under the branch council there, so we can't really go over their head.

SL: What about the older members of the NAACP and the parents? (thumping noise) (murmurs) Okay. What about the older members of the NAACP branch, and perhaps some of the parents of the Blake and Middleton students? Are you getting any trouble at these meetings from—?

CF: We were. They were showin' up, but they all had jobs, and they was afraid of their jobs, really. Now the older members, they went along with it. A lot of 'em didn't wanna be recognized, a lot of the parents—in fact, I think you saw the article where one parent pulled his son off the counter there—but we had some good speakers and inspirin' speeches. You know, a good speech can really make people—

SL: Like Reverend Lowry did.

CF: Right, right and told them what we were doin', and I think he more or less reassured 'em that we wasn't gonna be in any trouble, [that] any harm was gonna be done because of the way the police department helped, and the mayor, and he told 'em all about this, so they went along with it.

SL: Now the actual lunch counters do get integrated in September, about the middle of September. There are groups of people, men and women, who go in to the counters. How was this brought about? How was this—?

CF: Okay, I'll tell you this. Well, this happened after they got the reports in, how it was goin' along in the other cities. We didn't follow suit like they did it. But what we decided to do: the merchants said, instead of havin' everyone just open the lunch counters and say, Hey, it's integrated, everyone's welcome, come eat, we decided to let two people go to each store. We set a target date, and we decided on this date two people would go and sit at the counters on—I think we had ten stores in the whole area of Tampa, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. And we were instructed then if anything happened, you see someone trying to make trouble, ask for your check, pay your check, get up and leave, whether you had eaten or not. This is what we were instructed to do. Make no statements, just leave.

So that's how we started to work it out. We selected people. The people were more or less screened, and we tried to go along with adults; there wasn't too many young people involved in this test—in fact, I don't think there was any. Probably—I guess I was about the youngest person there, because at the time we had another group. The name of that group was Young Adults for Progressive Action, which James Hammond was over, and his group were more or less picked to do the testin'.

SL: I see.

CF: Because they were older, see.

SL: Older, and they were already in professions: businessmen, teachers, and all this.

CF: Right, so now I did sit-in—well, I did go along. I went along, but I think I was the only one out of the whole Youth Council.

SL: Which restaurant did you go into?

CF: I went in to Woolworth, my old favorite restaurant.

SL: Woolworth?

CF: Woolworth—no, it was Walgreens [Drug Store].

SL: Walgreens.

CF: Walgreens. I went into Walgreens.

SL: Was it a man and a woman went in, or was it—?

CF: They tried to put it as a man and a woman, but I went in with a man. I was scheduled to go in with a man, but what happened to me, the guy didn't show up. Now, I had an incident on mine. The guy didn't show up. We were scheduled for ten o'clock and I waited. I kept watchin' my watch, he didn't show up. So to keep it from being a failure, I say, "Well, I'll go myself." So I went. I guess I sat down about ten after ten, and—well, see, the store managers was backing us all the way. They knew it was gonna happen, but they were the only one knew it.

SL: You went in by yourself.

CF: I was by myself. Now that was pretty—that was a frightening experience there, because I'll tell ya, I was too nervous to even eat.

SL: Really?

CF: I didn't wanna eat, really, but you know—I was too nervous to even eat. And I sit down and ordered—I think it was grits and eggs; it was in the morning—bacon, coffee. Just as I started to butter my toast, two white guys came up, and they said, Look what we have here, a nigger at the lunch counter. You know, and this other guy say—and they stood behind me, right behind me. I'm sitting there, other people were there. Two or three got up and left, but I'll say at least ten remained, ya know.

So they said, Let's get him; we're not gonna let him eat here. They said, Let's get him.

So at this time, I called the waitress and say, "Would you give me my bill? Let me pay you." So I paid her. I never touched the food. I started to butter my toast, and I paid her and I got up and I began to walk out of store.

And as I began to leave out of the store, they were behind me. I walked around and I met the manager and he said, "What's the trouble?"

I said, "Well, they're givin' me some trouble." See, I knew him [the manager], because I was in on the meetings then.

He told them then, "Look, we not gonna have any trouble here. We're not gonna have any trouble in my store. We're gonna let these people eat here and I don't want any trouble. Give me any trouble, I'm gonna call the police."

So he told me then, "Don't leave the store." So I just walked around, and they followed me all over the store, and he say, "Well, I'll call the police."

So as I was walking around the store I met the same guy, he came out to see what was goin' on—this barber I was workin for, Melvin Stone—so he say, "Hey, what's goin' on?" He didn't even know what was happenin'; he didn't know the guys were behind me.

I said, "There's two guys following me, they wanna beat me up for sitting here."

He said, "Let's get out of here!"

I said, "No, I can't leave; if I go outside they probably will attack me." So we walked around and I saw two policemen walk in the door, and that's when I walked out. And the policemen grabbed them then.

SL: So the manager had called the police.

CF: Right, he had called the police, and the police then grabbed them and told them then to get out of the downtown area if they didn't want any trouble.

SL: So this manager, like the other managers, was fully cooperative?

CF: Right, they was fully cooperative, right.

SL: And from that moment on you had the opportunity to eat—

CF: Oh, this went on, I guess, for about a week before they really opened it up. We were still testing. I think we went for at least four days like this.

SL: In reading the news accounts, it said that people were served generally from about

ten-thirty to eleven-thirty and then something like about three-thirty to five [o'clock]. Before, it seemed to me, the lunch hour, the heavy lunch hour and before the evening dinner.

CF: Right, right, that's what we did.

SL: Was that part of your strategy, to avoid any contact with the huge crowds?

CF: That's what it was, that's what it was. We wanted to get in there and make it as less conspicuous as possible, see, that's what we were tryin' to do; less fanfare and the least amount of people.

SL: So after about three or four days of testing it, you were satisfied that the merchants were gonna cooperate.

CF: Right, right.

SL: It was the merchants and these—

CF: Right, right they were satisfied; this was all a part of the plan. Let's see how it does, how it works out, and then we'll just open up.

SL: Okay, now that these lunch counters are opened, where do you go from there?

CF: Then we went to the theaters.

SL: Right away?

CF: (laughs) Right away.

SL: Nineteen-sixty [1960]?

CF: Right away, right, right; it was 1960, if I recall, 'cause I led that.

SL: Tell me about it.

CF: We went to the theaters. We couldn't stand there and block the window, so I think I had about twenty people there. Now, when we walk up to the ticket window, the lady had to tell each one of us, "Due to our policy, we cannot let you attend." So after she tell us that, that person would leave and go back, and we would send another one in about thirty seconds and she had to tell us that over and over. We stayed there for about an hour and a half with her tellin' us that, and I think she actually quit. I think she gave up and told the manager, you know, "I'm quitting;" if I'm not mistaken, that's what happened. But we couldn't, 'cause, see, we couldn't block the entrance because other people were coming in the theater, so we'd wait till they bought their ticket, then we'd send someone else up and then she had to tell every one of us—before we would leave, she had to tell us that.

SL: Was this the same Youth Council group?

CF: Same Youth Council group. Same Youth Council. So, I think as a result of the lunch counters, them integratin' the lunch counters, they just went along with it, and we just started goin' in there.

SL: This is the movies you're talkin' about?

CF: Right.

SL: Now let me ask you this: there's an article in the newspaper, but from 1963, about students picketing the Florida State [University] movie theaters.

CF: Sixty-three [1963].

SL: That's in sixty-three [1963], and apparently they were still segregated until sixty-three [1963]. And then demonstrations were called at the urging of both the mayor and Reverend Lowry, and then they negotiated and apparently integrated.

CF: This is something that—now, the lady told me the other day. This morning I talked with one and she thought it was sixty-three [1963], but in my time—see, I was in the service then. I eventually left Tampa.

SL: When did you leave Tampa?

CF: I got married in December of sixty [1960], and I went into the service in January that following year, for six months. I went in on the reserve program there.

SL: All right.

CF: And I wasn't active any more in the Youth Council, and we did all of this, as I can recall, before then.

SL: But you're sure you actually got into these movie theatres on an integrated basis?

CF: We wasn't getting in, but we was picketing there.

SL: Oh, but you didn't actually get in.

CF: No, we didn't get in then, no. This could have happened in sixty-three [1963], but I'm sure—if I'm not mistaken, we did do this in sixty [1960], after the lunch counters.

SL: But obviously with no result.

CF: No results, no; we didn't have any results.

SL: Did Reverend Lowry at that time come to you and, you know, say either, “Don't do this,” or, “Do this—”

CF: Well, see, at the time of the lunch counter integration, it was beginnin' to subside then, and it wasn't as strong a desire. So we wasn't really workin' on any one target area then, and the young adults were beginning to come into focus. In fact, I think at that time they were beginning to work on other areas then, so we more or less let that go to them, because all these kids that I was with then, a lot of them begin to branch out and they handled that. But my group did—I know this is a fact—picket the theaters; we did this.

SL: This you'd date, probably, in the later part of 1960?

CF: Right, right; it had to be.

SL: After September and before December.

CF: Right, it had to be because sixty-three [1963]—well, I was married then. In fact, I had a couple kids. I had a kid then, and I wasn't even active in there, but I do remember picketin' the theaters.

SL: How large a group did you have?

CF: About twenty people, just about twenty.

SL: You did it for one day?

CF: I think we went several days, if I'm not mistaken.

SL: Okay, no one from the mayor's committee approached you?

CF: Not me. No, not me.

SL: Trying to settle the thing, I mean.

CF: No—well, see, they were still working on it. That Biracial Committee never stopped, because they was working on everything at the time, but their main objective at the time were the sit-ins. But I imagine they did discuss this.

SL: Why did you stop picketing the theaters?

CF: It could have been the result of this. I can't remember, really.

SL: The result of what?

CF: Of Reverend Lowry. Maybe this is what happened, that they was gonna work on—

maybe this is what happened, because see, after we did integrate the lunch counters, like I said, the movement kinda fizzled out, see, and there wasn't as much a demand, and—

SL: Why do you think it fizzled out?

CF: Well—

SL: 'Cause it was successful?

CF: Right, we was successful.

SL: But there were a lot of other things—

CF: Well, see, the thing about it—like I said, this other group was doin' so much then.

SL: Oh, I see.

CF: They took the ball, really; they took the ball. Right, they took the ball, 'cause, see, I was just really workin' with young people then. But like I say, they were adults and ya know, they had more insight on it then. So we more or less let them handle it.

Now one thing we did before that—well, I don't say the Youth Council did it; this guy Melvin Stone and I. Reverend Lowry made a speech one night, and I think this was in sixty [1960], I believe, sixty, sixty-one [1961]—yeah, it had to be before I went into service. They were on a strike, Tampa Bus Lines were on a strike, and he made a speech one Sunday night. I think we had a mass meeting and he said, "You are out now, you have to get your own way to work and look like we could have some representation with the bus company like some black drivers." But that's all he said; he said it like that.

Well, the next morning, this fellow Melvin Stone and I went out to the branch office and told Saunders, "Look, say we want to draft a letter and send it to Frank Ahedo—" who was over the transportation department—"about the bus company, and tell him that we want some black drivers." So Saunders say, "Oh, well," so we drafted the letter, we drafted the letter and sent 'em a copy. In fact, we started distributing copies over the neighborhood, and we say, Hey, you're walkin' now, so when the bus companies come back off of strike, we gonna boycott the busses because we don't have any black drivers.

SL: You were threatening a bus boycott.

CF: Right, threatening a bus boycott, that's what we did.

SL: But the strike itself wasn't over black—

CF: It wasn't over—no, it was over—it was money negotiations; it wasn't over blacks. So this is what happened as a result of that letter. Within two days we had a letter back, and a phone call from Frank Ahedo, and told us that he would let us pick out four men and

screen 'em and send 'em to him. And as a result of that, that's how we ended—

SL: Is this after the sit-ins had occurred?

CF: That's was after the sit-ins, yeah.

SL: So sometime between March and before the restaurants were finally—the lunch counters—were finally integrated, or was it after the lunch counters?

CF: I would say it was after, I really—

SL: Okay, I can check.

CF: Right, it probably was after that; you probably—

SL: So you think the letter that you sent—

CF: I know it did.

SL: —threatening the bus boycott.

CF: I know it did.

SL: Were you prepared to bus boycott?

CF: No! (both laugh) No. No way.

SL: So in other words, you hadn't worked anything out.

CF: No we hadn't worked anything out, but we just felt that that letter was a good idea, and it really worked.

SL: It worked; they hired black drivers.

CF: They did hire 'em. They hired four. In the meantime, this Young Adults group had started to picket. There was a big supermarket on the corner—

SL: B & D [Supermarket].

CF: B & D. And as a result of that they hired some cashiers there, and I think a meat cutter, and it just started then. But now, as a result of the sit-ins, then other jobs started. I think it was General Tel [General Telephone Company]—

SL: That's a little later.

CF: Right, right.

SL: Let me ask you this. At this point, at this juncture, it's something that may seem obvious to you, but why were you involved? Why Clarence Fort in 1960? There were a lot of other twenty-one-year-old barbers around, I guess—

CF: Well, I guess I just went to that meeting that night. I went to that meeting and it was just so happened—well, I don't know. I guess I was a leader in high school; I was a leader, ya know, I just took things in hand. We started talkin', and after this came out in the paper in North Carolina I say, "Hey, why not Tampa?" You see? And that's, I guess, that's just—something on the spur of the moment thing, ya know, and that's what happened.

SL: Did you ever see a sort of a grand design for what was going to happen? You know, you only got the few lunch counters integrated, and of course that left a lot of restaurants and still the movies that had to be integrated. And that's still a lot of things left. What was your hope for Tampa at that time?

CF: We really didn't—I really didn't have that. I just couldn't see, you know. My position—well, you can't see that, but in a black position at the time, it just wasn't—you just didn't think on those lines, you know. Maybe—I'm not a Martin Luther King. I didn't have dreams like he had, like, "Hey, I can envision this." I didn't have that.

But at the time, the only thing I could see was an injustice to me, and say, "Hey, we're spending our money here, and hey, we can't sit and eat. Other people sit and eat, but we're spending as much money—or more money, you know, especially on holidays and things." And that was really the only thing that was really in my mind. And then it began to relate to me about how we studied democracy in high school and all of this, and I say, "Hey, you know—hey, that's—we been studying a lie all these years, and this is wrong." But I really didn't envision integrated hotels and all of this; this was really—I don't guess I had enough time, because like I said, I had to go in the service in late December.

SL: You went into service for six months.

CF: Six months, right.

SL: Did you come back to Tampa after that?

CF: Right, right. Well, see, I had gotten married. I got married December 31 of sixty [1960], and I went in the service twenty-one days later. I stayed six months and I came back to Tampa and I worked with this guy and cut hair, and then eventually I got my own shop on Twenty-Second Street. Well, once I got married. I was really too busy. I was more or less tied up in the service and—

SL: You were no longer involved with the NAACP?

CF: Not like I were before, not like I were before. I didn't have a leadership role then—in

fact, I don't even think I was the president. No, I don't think I was president of Youth Council anymore then.

SL: A girl by the name of—at that time—Gwendolyn Tim—

CF: She took over, I think.

SL: She was the Youth Council—

CF: Right, Gwendolyn Tim.

SL: Remember her?

CF: Right.

SL: Is she still here in Tampa?

CF: I think she's a counselor at South Florida; she works out there.

SL: Is that right?

CF: Yeah!

SL: Right under my nose.

CF: She was a counselor at South Florida.

SL: What's her name now, do you know? Is she married, or—

CF: I don't know. Now, I could get her name.

SL: I'd appreciate it.

CF: I could get her name. Before I leave, I'll call.

SL: So you were merely an observer over the next couple of years.

CF: More or less, yeah.

SL: That movie theater picketing, you didn't get involved in that. Interestingly, there was a Charles Stanford, who became the Youth Council advisor in about sixty-three [1963]. He took a couple of kids, including Gwendolyn Tim, to Morrison's Cafeteria, your old employer, and Morrison's was very resistant to allowing any integration in its restaurants. In fact, it wouldn't do it until the Civil Rights Act forced it to do it. Were you involved at all in any of that?

CF: No, no. I remember that, now, but I wasn't involved in that.

SL: I did see your name in looking over the Biracial Commission—now, not the committee; this was now the commission that was formed. I did see an application of some sort that you had made to the Biracial Commission around 1965, sixty-six [1966]. Uh, perhaps part of a job program or something of that nature? Do you remember that?

CF: I was in on the—General Tel had a—I don't know if this is the one you are talkin' about, but they had something like a seminar for about a week or two weeks where they brought people in to talk to us. They were thinkin' about hiring operators and so forth.

SL: Right.

CF: I went there for two weeks; it was held at First Federal Building.

SL: Right.

CF: That's likely what it was, it could have been. Right.

SL: You participated in the General Telephone—

CF: Right, right. I were there. I was the only male, in fact, in the whole thing; the rest of 'em was women.

SL: Did you get a job with them as a result of this?

CF: No, no, I didn't. I didn't even go with them at all. I continued to cut hair. I didn't go with them.

SL: So you cut hair, and then eventually—

CF: Eventually I went to—I worked at Sears and Roebuck for a while, part-time as a custodian there, and from there I went to General Cable Cooperation. General Cable? Yes. I worked there a while, and then I went to Tampa Transit Lines as a driver, worked there a year, and from there I went to Trailways [Bus System].

SL: Now, Tampa Transit was that company that you had written a letter to.

CF: Right, that I had written the letter to. (laughs) I don't know if they still had it, but I'm sure he didn't know it was me. (laughs)

SL: How did you feel about that letter? Here's what—what year was Tampa Transit Line that you went to work for?

CF: In nineteen—this was sixty-seven [1967]. Sixty-seven [1967], seven years later.

SL: Seven years later. How did it feel? Do you have any reflections that you remember?

CF: No, not really; no, not really at all. In fact, I don't think there was too many people even know I was involved in the whole thing then.

SL: On a personal level, what do you think the civil rights struggle, part of which you were involved in directly, meant to you as a black man in Tampa?

CF: Well, I'll say it was the first step towards gettin' equality. And it give you a little pride, you know; we didn't have any pride at all, there's nothin' you can do. But the basic thing, I would say, was the job opportunities, and this is really what began to open things up for blacks, you see, because at the time you could—a black could go to college. Man, it just—you were goin' really—unless you were a teacher in a black school, or a lawyer, maybe, a few of those, doctors—there wasn't anything you could do when you got out of college. What could you do? There was no jobs; you come out and you couldn't do anything unless it was all in the black market, like I said, the schools or something.

I think General Tel made the first step, and this, I guess, was the greatest asset when the job was over. And I have to give them credit; they really went all out for it. And then—I don't know who else fell in line, but I think General Tel has done more for blacks in Tampa than any other corporation. I know they have.

SL: You say you have some children?

CF: I have two.

SL: Do they—how old are they?

CF: My daughter's sixteen, and my son is fourteen.

SL: Okay now, is your daughter—she has no recollection. She doesn't remember anything being different.

CF: No.

SL: She always remembers goin' in and sittin' at a lunch counter if she wants to.

CF: She doesn't believe it, she doesn't believe it. In fact, we—I tell her now, you know, she says, “I don't believe you guys were that stupid. You had to be crazy!” But see it—

SL: Crazy in what way? (inaudible)

CF: Spend your money, right, accepting that. Well, like I said, it was a way of life. I told her it was a way of life, you know, and we really didn't realize, I guess, that we should have been doing this, even though we studied it in school. “All men are created equal,” the preamble to the Constitution, all of that. I guess you accepted it, you know. If you

were a black, you accepted it until, I guess, these guys [in Greensboro] did something about it. I'd really like to know how they came out; I didn't read the whole story. I did read it in an article of *Ebony* magazine—

SL: I think one is a lawyer now.

CF: Right. Not necessarily how they came out, but how they came up with the idea. Right, I'd really like to know that.

SL: I think it was fairly spontaneous, the same way you did, only they thought of it first.

CF: Yeah, right, okay.

SL: 'Cause they were college students and in a different element; you don't have a black college here in Tampa.

CF: Yeah, right.

SL: In Tallahassee, where you did, they were a little more active.

CF: Oh, man, they raised sand in Tallahassee.

SL: Here you have to work basically with high school students, who were still under their parents' name.

CF: Right

SL: And that's why, I suppose, someone who is independent like yourself, already a young man in business—

CF: Tallahassee was just the reverse. See, the police department wasn't like Tampa, and they took it upon themselves to enforce the law, and they had trouble, man. If I'm not mistaken, they had the water hoses and everything else in Tallahassee.

SL: You never had any of that in Tampa.

CF: No, no. That's why I say Tampa, to me, is the most liberal city I've seen. And let's face it, from the minute it started, the mayor jumped right on it. I mean, he could have been a mayor that say, "Hey, we're not gonna have it," or it could have been the police chief say, "We're not gonna have it," but I guess the mayor controls the chief. But they didn't do that. They just came right in and say, "Hey, we don't want the trouble here, and they protected us." But I'm afraid to think what would have happened if it had been the other way around. I don't know if I would be here, you know. (laughs) But it was just that atmosphere here.

SL: And you think the role of the Biracial Committee in convincing the merchants and

the businessmen, both black and white on that committee.

CF: Definitely; that was the key.

SL: Reverend Lowry in particular.

CF: Right, that was the key; that was the key

SL: Do you think your children are gonna have more opportunity than you had in 1960 when you were twenty-one years old?

CF: Oh, man, I know that. My daughter, I thought she was gonna be—I don't know if she will be a leader, but she's very outspoken, ya know. And I don't know, I guess this is something natural that—she attend Tampa Catholic [High School]. She been there three years, she's a junior there, and it's not bad but she feels this pressure, things she feels she can't do, or they're steppin' on her toes, ya know. And she speaks out against it, where my son is just the opposite, he doesn't say anything. Course, he's just in ninth grade out there, but he likes sports and he's just quiet. He do what he can do to help out, but they definitely—I can see the difference, you know.

SL: You were here, I guess, living in Tampa in 1967, when the Central Avenue riots broke out. Now, for a city that had such good race relations and had a good police force, as you said, one of the major complaints was police brutality in the ghetto. Why the riots in sixty-seven [1967]? What went wrong?

CF: I really don't know. I'm gonna be honest with you, I don't even know what it came up about, really. Some kid, some guy, no—

SL: Was it someone fleeing a cop and shot—

CF: Oh, yeah, shot in the back.

SL: Supposedly had robbed a camera store.

CF: Right, and he was crossin' a fence or somethin' and shot.

SL: Right, and there was some controversy.

CF: I don't know, I really don't know. I guess people are begin to change. The main thing, I guess, is you watch television and then—well, at the time, see, it wasn't too many TVs, either, and they didn't see all this stuff in the paper and on the news. I think that's one of the main things which really motivate people, really. You see something someone else is doin' and—if I hadn't ever read it in the paper, probably we wouldn't have had sit-ins.

SL: What did you read? What paper was it, the *Bulletin*, the [*Florida*] *Sentinel Bulletin*? Or was it the *Tampa Times*?

CF: I think it was the *Tribune*; it had to be the *Tribune*. Now, that was national news.

SL: Sure.

CF: That was national news.

SL: Tell me about Progress Village. Progress Village was originally set up in the late fifties [1950s], I suppose, through interracial efforts of Bob Thomas, Cody Fowler, Blythe Andrews, Perry Harvey, I imagine, to get better housing opportunities for blacks, take them out of the inner-city and put them—

CF: That was the purpose of it: take them out of the ghettos, put em—

SL: How long have you been there?

CF: I been there—oh, seventeen years?

SL: Seventeen years?

CF: Seventeen years.

SL: Since about 1961?

CF: Right. In fact, the day we got married I moved in my own house.

SL: Is it private homes?

CF: Yeah, private homes, right. In fact, I stopped by there before we got married, right after the demonstrations. I start plannin' then, my wife and I, to get married, and we was engaged a year while she was still in junior college. I bought my home in October of sixty [1960], and we moved in it that night December thirty-first—the night we were married—sixty. Been there ever since then.

SL: Progress Village is, I think, all black, isn't it?

CF: It's a few other couples there, they might be interracial, they're probably—right, I think they're interracial, but it's all mostly black.

SL: Do you ever have any sense that you struggled so much for integration and yet, you know, you're living in—

CF: A segregated society? No, no; not really. Not really.

SL: Do you think that Progress Village has worked for, let's say, middle-class blacks? Do you think it's a good avenue to live?

CF: Well, it's a place you could call your own, you know. Yeah, it's not bad, it could be better; for middle class it could be better.

end of interview