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[Transcriber's Note: Interview starts mid-sentence.]

Reverend G. J. Oates: —Lakeland, Florida, many years ago. Well, I try to tell other—I been tellin' you when I was born? Well, I was born July the 18th, 1901. My father was a minister. He wasn't at that time, but—he might have been, I don't know, he might have been a young minister—but he went up in the ministry and had arrived in the ministry. I guess he had an inspiration to go places. And he was one the very fine ministers of Florida, even (inaudible) half of my sister who is going to teach this year in (inaudible) for about twenty-five, twenty-six—twenty-five or -six years.

But I was reared all over Florida, following my father. And I went to (inaudible) school, started school and he had a little place (inaudible) did go to school in Dunellon, Florida. And the—we called the grammar department; now I'm in the lower grade to about the fourth, fifth grade. And we went to Jacksonville, and we went to (inaudible) high school. And about the 8th grade—and finished from Edward Waters College and King High School, and went to Clark College in Atlanta and Gammon Theological Seminary. After finishing, I came back to St. Augustine, where I'd been called to the ministry when I—

(An unidentified woman in another room asks him a question.)

GO: Ma'am? No, ma'am. That— Are you married?

Woman: No.

GO: Now, you come to interview me?

Shirley Smith: (laughs)

GO: Huh?

SS: Yes.

Woman: I don't care if she is.

GO: All right. And I went to St. Augustine, where I met the young lady that I'm married to now. Now, I'm gonna give you the history of my life. Now, you see, I'm bein' interrupted.

Woman: Just say you're married and that's all you have to say.

GO: I'm married to Mrs. Alyce Ruffilia Slappy.

Woman: I told you I don't want to be in it, hear that?

GO: And to us was born one son. See that picture? I've got a picture over there. (looking at photograph) That picture there?

Fred Beaton: Right.

GO: (inaudible) And he's a graduate of Howard University in Washington. And the ministry. And the fortunate thing about my life, I do pride, with great interest. I was called—or accepted the call—to the ministry in St. Augustine, Florida, St. Paul AME [African Methodist Episcopal] Church¹, served as local minister there and was ordained, licensed, at that church. Ordained deacon. In the Methodist Church you have steps by which you—an ordained deacon at that church, that gave me the rights to baptize and assist in giving communion. I accepted two or three churches, preparatory to eldership. And I went around to these various churches throughout Jacksonville, and the conference returned to St. Augustine, where I was ordained Elder.

Isn't that something? Married there. Started preaching there, received my first license there, ordained Deacon in that church and ordained Elder, in that same—That's a piece of history. Went away from that church and stay about twenty years and returned to that church as a pastor of that church. That's real history. And having served around the church here, giving yeoman service, many converts have come to the church by my persuasions. I think I've had a very fulfilled ministry.

I've always liked to deal with the things—civic things—because I took civics in school. And the civic things, in developing our people, other than through the church. Now, the church is a basic. The church is the boat in which we ride, as it were, in experiences. God is the river. So without the river there'd be nothin' to us. Without the boat there would be nothin' to us. So we have moved forward with that concept.

The church is a wonderful institution. I find so many times where our young people—and

¹ The St. Augustine St. Paul AME. There is also a church with the same name in Tampa.

I have to say young people, because all of us gotta start young and progress—and they go to school and they finish and probably they enter out into fullness of life. And I read so, off times they even sometimes get married. I read this past week—this person was born a certain place, attended a certain school and received certain honors, identified with this sorority or fraternity, but no church life. And without God we can do nothin'. He wouldn't have been able to get any of those things had it not be for God preservin' his life.

So God is a basic in every life. And I have been, as I might say, one who had been deeply dedicated to religious life. And coming to here, to—(speaks to unidentified person) Comin from here, I saw the need of the young people and people reaching out in the political life. And I didn't go in because I just had a great yearning to be a political-minded and a czar, but I saw that the young people were afraid—they're afraid combat with the white people yet they receive the same fundamentals. The same academic training. And education is a matter of juggling, juggling letters, words, sentences, paragraphs—see what I mean? Juggling. And the one who learns how to jugglin' with the greatest finesse is the greater educated.

And so, I found the young people here goin' to school, but nobody attempts to go out to better themselves. So I went out, more or less, to show 'em that I was not afraid. And, having done so, I stood tall in the political arena and in the political arena. And worked hard for [Nick] Nuccio, Mayor Nuccio of this city. And he appointed me to the Housing Authority. He wanted a commission on housing in the city of Tampa. The first black appointed to any policy-making body in the southeastern part of this country. I had an opportunity to attend many other meetings. I went as far Portland, Oregon representing Tampa Housing Authority. Went to Washington. I went to New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Kentucky, New Orleans, Miami. So, you see, I had a good rise in getting about—in representing the people of the city in that particular phase.

FB: Okay, Reverend Oates, what time did you come to Tampa? What year did you come to Tampa?

GO: Well, I can't say any definite time because, see, I had an aunt living here and I used to come here from way back, maybe 1936. Thirty-six [1936].

FB: Okay. And the year you was appointed to the board?

GO: I was—hmm. I'd have to get that. I don't know what that— It must have been about fifteen or twenty—now, see, if I'd have had all that out, so I could have been able to give to you the year, but I don't remember the year now, but you'll find that out. Because you're gonna have to document it. And I served there and because of my serving—there's a picture there of those who served with me—and my serving I adjusted myself to inter-association with these whites that I made a good record there, from which these other blacks could come. Because had I acted—in this initial acceptance and presentation and opportunity, I could have made it very blightful for black people. But it was very palatable in their serving.

And they're still serving till now. And I do remember when Mr. [J.L.] Young was there on the Housing Authority, I questioned their not having blacks around there in office—all the whites around in the office there. And I mentioned Mr. [Howard F.] Harris, whom he took on there, and made him just like himself and learning all the— He soon died and Mr. Harris became the executive director of that institution.

Along with that, I later decided to run for city council. We had a very good run and had many friends and had many experiences. You learn a great deal when you learn how to inter-relate and communicate, as well as, having close association. A lonely person, who is lonely or an introvert, gets nowhere. You've got to be one who goes out lookin' in search of—tryin' to find and makin' a contribution to—and ain't worried about what people gonna say about you. Gonna talk about you anyhow, don't care what you do; you be damned if you do and you're damned if you don't.

Later on I decided to run for state senate. I thought it a fine opportunity because— And I could show you a book here now, where you have all the names of all the people all over the state that are cutting into the pie. For an instance, the governor is elected, but he can make any number of appointments. And the senators can make any number of appointments within his framework, his cabinet within his—where he work, his office. So I went there and I saw no blacks in all these offices around there. And I thought, now if I could be elected there, I could open the opportunity to blacks—and not be narrow, and some whites—but would give an opportunity to the black people to become developed in the regards—finer things of a community operation.

FB: Now, this was in the fifties [1950s], right?

GO: Yeah.

FB: Okay.

GO: No. No. No, that was in the—that's been just about four years ago.

FB: Four years ago?

GO: Yeah, about four year. 'Cause see this is, what you call him, is just now serving out his first turn, who was elected.

FB: So that was in—

GO: Yeah, that's [Guy] Spicola.

FB: Okay.

GO: Spicola. And—there's a great need for more black people to become concerned about black people's progress in the world. One reason—I do want this to get around—one reason why we can't, maybe because we fight each other so much over small things.

The white man has all the banks, all the institutions, the trains, all kind of operations. We don't have anything but the church. We try to tear that up. We can't seem to cooperate in any particular thing. And that's what we need to learn. Not so much—it isn't enough how much or how long we've been to school and how much we have learned, but how you are going to articulate what you have learned. How you're going to be able to disseminate what you have learned. How you're going to be able to have a mixture, a blending.

Now, this young lady here, I know, I judge she can cook—most of the young people can't 'cause they got to go down to some kind of burger uptown. (laughs) But if you cook, you don't just throw somethin' on. You've got to first get your ingredients: the flour, the bakin' powder, the salt, and other little things put in there. And then blend them. Now, when you put the salt—eat all of this matter—you knew it was salt when you put it there but find your salt after you've blended.

SS: You can't.

GO: Can't. So that's what I'm saying. You would with your idiosyncrasies—she with hers, mine and the others out there—let us bring these together and just put 'em through this—what you call these things where you—with all these juices, you put all these—blenders, I guess, and put it all through there, and when you get through chopping it up and throw in like that you can't tell which was which. And that's what we need to do. We have to learn that.

You think we can't learn that. We fight too much. I don't know whether it's because the white man succeeded in putting some kind of stimuli in our system that is so different to human progress or not, because they were living the same time we were. Weren't no one man, unless he is extremely rich, will be able to get a business. But they can take five or fifteen and blend themselves, make a corporation and go forward. We can't do that. So it's—

There's something they put in when they—that cause us not to be able to understand each other. When I was a boy I had—tell me, said, "Now you know you said, you know you don't like black people." They're tellin' me I don't like— Why I don't I like black people? Now they spread that kind of propaganda and let plenty of people you know get the idea—long time we'd fight black people. We'd get a little yellow child come in and everybody—they're pettin' him up and all that kind of—and (laughs) not really, but I think that biologically, there's no difference between any male nor any female. All just a like. So one has no need to try to downgrade the other because you're a male too, or you're a female. See what I mean? And the same symptom that might strike you will strike me because we are the same genetic processes.

And, let me see, there's something here that I wanted to refer to here. And, by the way, this was such a phenomenal thing, I was elected as vice-chairman of the Housing Authority. A plaque is in the high-rise and in the office there now, with my name on them, as where I made a contribution here. I served as presiding elder. Or no, but, by the way, something else—I was the first black in this area—

Unknown Woman: Can you see in here? I took the curtains down to wash them.

GO: Umm hmm.

Unknown Woman: You didn't tell me you were gonna have company here today.

GO: And so—

Unknown Woman: Velma didn't tell me that anybody would be here today, and I took those curtains down and washed 'em. (inaudible) What is that?

GO: They have your picture when you came in here while ago.

Unknown Woman: Oh, you do?

GO: And the talk that you made there. Yes, that's right. See—

Unknown Woman: Now, why you didn't tell me all of this?

GO: Well— But see that's the way you interrupt me all the time. See there? And they caught you this time.

Unknown Woman: Oh. (laughs)

C. G. Oates: And so— But I was the first—

Unknown Woman: Oh— This afternoon?

GO: Yes, that's right—there. That (inaudible).

Unknown Woman: Oh—

GO: I was the first black that you had served as MC in this—I don't know of anybody else in this country. I don't know of anybody else. Nat King Cole and G. J. Oates. Nat King Cole. You remember when Nat King Cole was on? Well, he was only black? He was the only black, wasn't he? Nat King Cole. The others have come.

I served Channel 13 here, presenting, developing talent and givin' approval to talent that had made enfurterments to help in progress the first year. And I did it for maybe about nine months. Channel 13. I can remember so vividly when I went to the man to speak about blacks getting on there, and he had all kind of evasions and subterfuges and so on like that, and excuses. And I told him, "But what we want to do is to make it possible so the black boys and the black girls can be able to speak intelligently to them so they can understand us." And after discarding it—went there twice, they disappointed us. That was to discourage us.

And I went on further. And on my first program, I remember having a little girl there from the west side of town—West Tampa—her name was Green. And Professor Stewart was the principal of the school and I had many, many persons of the high class on—not the boogie woogie, high class talent make it. Look up. See, you want to— Now, I'm not against having a little rhythm, see. I'm not against having rhythm, but that shouldn't be the utopia of our rise in civilization. That's secondary. But we make that the main thing.

For an instance, if we talk we've got to say, "My man, (inaudible), you dig, and (inaudible) did you tell me—" you say the man, you see the man... Well, how can I make it in the political arena in the legislature, and I'm tryin' to have a bill passed and I say, "Now, you—you—you—" hear, say what I mean. Do you understand what I mean? What do you mean? What are you saying? You're not saying anything. See? And so, we need to lift the culture of our people. The culture. Now, that means not to be the elites like they have in some places, certain people segregate themselves to a point of a great congregating just what they call the "big hats." No.

I believe in the word "education." Education came from a Latin word, *du cor educare*, which mean to lift out, to help out, to pull out, to bring up. It's in the passive mood. If one is educated it means that he has been helped to help somebody else. But that doesn't seem to be the spirit. As soon as the folk get a little money and a little of this and the other, they pull themselves aside and let those poor ones over yonder get along the best way they can. And so, hence, we have not been able to make the progress that we might have made and should have made.

I was appointed presiding elder for many churches over many districts of the Ft. Myers district. I served in that area of the Ft. Pierce district. The Lake City district. The St. Petersburg district. And, just recently, over the East Tampa district right here at home. And so, you see, I've had a good full life of getting around and giving service. I could just point to any number of people, young people, that I have helped by makin' loans to them, and many of them paid back and became my enemies after they got my money. (laughs)

SS: Reverend Oates—

GO: Huh?

SS: —after you started your political adventure—whatever you may call it—after you started out politically, how did blacks relate to you?

GO: Well, they tried to discourage me. They told me, say, "No, you got to be—you know, your life is at stake." And "I wouldn't do it if I were you." And a certain man of great standing of this town told me that, "You're a preacher, you shouldn't be out there in politics. And you'll never make it." And he used his influence to keep me from making it. And he didn't realize that in the days of antiquity, the Bible history, the people were—the leaders of the people was the ones who dealt in politics. Now, if you got bad leaders, then you had bad operations. The king, the priest, the preachers, everybody trying to lift

everybody. Now why shouldn't the preacher be out there trying to help to build and mold a society that would tend to uplift?

Now heaven is a beautiful place, and you've got to be prepared here. You got to get your ticket here if you want to go to New York. You can't go to New York and get your ticket, you got to get your ticket here. And so goin' to heaven, you've got to get your ticket here in your conduct and so on. But, now, that conduct means that you've got to eat, you've got to sleep, you've got to do those things that help to lift the morale of all the black man. Now, you can stay out there in the woods and you can love God. But you've got to intermingle with people to lift them.

FB: Reverend Oates, what were the conditions of the church, during say, the '40s and the '50s and what effect, if any, did it have on the masses of the people in Tampa?

GO: Well, I think that the church here in the forties [1940s] and the fifties [1950s] had a more definite centralized movement. Some definitiveness in its operation, more so than now. The people seemed to have had a greater impression—or the church made a greater impression on the people in the early days. And I don't know—I don't see why will do so but it is. We didn't have as many diversions to attract us then as we have now. But, as I tell the young people many times—and the old too, because I ask 'em—hospitals and wherever, about the church. And I say, "Well, how can you not realize God as bein' evil? You looked everything, your job and this and—but you turn God down and he is the—God is the center of life. Without God we wouldn't have any of this."

We're talkin' about science. And I was out an the porch, like, lookin' at the moon and lookin' at the man flying out there. See now, here that man is out there, flying out there, he doesn't have any air to fly in. He wouldn't be able to fly in a plane if God had not provided for the fundamentals or the materials of that thing and given to him the mind to put these fabrications together. And yet, we turn God down. But every day we're tellin' him this, we beggin' him, but we don't want to serve him. And this I would beg him. We say audibly or un-inaudibly, "Give me this day my daily bread." Now, he may say it, speakin' it, but he wish it all the time, it's an idea—want bread for everyday. He'll think about God's feedin' him, but he doesn't associate with him, and therefore these fragmentations come in and divide his mind and he decentralizes the thought of God and, therefore, he loses contact and touch of God.

Now, as compared to now—we use a word ambiguity, it can mean anything. Well, that's about the way the church life is now, because we do not have a true concept of the church. A true concept and, therefore, it's ambiguous. It can mean—it can just—any way you turn, that's what it can mean. Mean any kind of thing. But nothin'—there is no definitiveness to it. And God said, "I am the Lord thy God who brought you out of the land of Egypt; thou shalt have no other Gods before me." But look at all these multiplicity of gods that we puttin', so we don't—we lose God. And so we have come in place now there's nothin' to God; he's dead.

FB: Okay. What were the conditions, say, of the blacks—the masses during this time?

What I mean conditions, I'm talking about the occupation; did they support the church?

GO: You mean in the fifties [1950s]? Well, the people have always supported the church according to their means. And the poor people are more dedicated, they gives— Because I remember when I was a little boy, people didn't have much money like they have money now. Because at that time I can remember I worked myself for three dollars a week. (laughs) Three dollars a week. And then we got a little job where we worked at the—where we were gettin'—were paid off every two weeks, nine dollars. Yeah, every two weeks, \$18.00 a month. Eighteen dollars a month. A good thing back then. That's indescribable to you. That's right.

But the people lived. The folk bought property. And there are many people with property right here now, they bought way years ago. But they had a dedication to God. And God took care of them. He provided for 'em. They bought homes. Way back there. They educated their children. Now compare that with now. Here we are now, a young person finishing high school and gettin' a job teaching, more like that—basically, around—I remember \$7,000; they get about \$9,000 now to start off with in their apprenticeship of the work. And if you pursue your course up to a higher degree till you get your doctorate or—yeah, master and your doctorate and go in that chosen profession you may get twelve, fifteen, eighteen thousand dollars a year. Hmm? And yet, with all of that money that's being gotten, look like people would appreciate God, but they're—the balance of scale is very low in appreciation now with all they get, compared to what they received many years ago.

FB: Okay, Reverend Oates, have the role of the church changed to a greater extent in, say, the seventies [1970s], and, if so, what—?

GO: The membership roll, did you mean?

FB: No. I'm talking about the role, the basic role.

GO: Role. Oh, yeah, I see what you mean, yeah. Well, now, see ask that question again. Well, see, has the role changed?

FB: Yes.

GO: Yeah—well, yes, the role has changed. The church now is a more of social than spiritual. It's just a matter—just getting together. But folk had a different reason for becoming a member of the church many years ago. They believed in what the Bible said, "You must be born again." But there's not much "birth" now. It's just a matter—it's a good thing and the people go clean and that gives me a place in society and so on, and he joins the church.

FB: Okay, now, what was the role of the church on the community problems?

GO: In times past, in the forties [1940s] and fifties [1950s], the people were concerned

about the community problems as they affected even the children. For I can remember when I was a little boy, the people within five or six blocks, or a quarter of a mile or a mile, were concerned about people in all of that area. And they would give word—giving helping hands and so on. They didn't have these nursing homes where the people would discard their relatives. They kept them around there until they died. They seemed to have a—they were more closely knitted together from a point of a human concept and humane attitude.

But now, it is not so now. And then the people did— God, in the life of people, meant something. I remember livin' in Jacksonville and if anybody died, it stirred people up; they were concerned. The young people, "I better get into church, I better try to do this." But now death doesn't mean nothin'. The people don't do—people come down, come from upstairs with a corpse and the folk gamblin' there and drinkin' down there and they don't turn around to see what's happenin'.

So you see how distraction has come in there. It's not there now. The church— Now, the agency of the church is to do all these things that are being done by the United Fund, the Salvation Army and all these other agencies and club activities. That's the duty of the church. But because what—I don't know what has come there. It is slipped joints, and all these other agencies— But now, in doing what they are doing, 70 percent of the end gathering goes to take care of the white collar steer of it, the operation of it. And the agency spends about 30 percent to the needy, if you get my— Huh?

FB: —percent. So, you can relate the church as having some influence on the black community?

GO: Well—yeah, maybe some, but not as much as it should have. Not as much as it should have. But it has some, but not as much as it should have. And it doesn't weigh as deeply now. There are exceptions, now. The exception is some young people come to the church and they're very much devoted to the church; they love the church. And there are two words in my mind now; Christianity and "Churchanity." Christianity are those who follow after Christ, who try the principle of Christ; love, kindness, tenderness, mercy, concern. But "Churchanity" is a place where I go and I was born there and it's a beautiful place, I like to go there and my friends go around, but that's about all that it is. A man stays up on the TV, a Mr. Bunker, and ask about his being a Christian. He said, "Sure, I'm a good Christian. Sure, I go there regular, on Christmas and Easter." You see what I mean? Did you get that?

SS: I got it.

GO: On Christmas and Easter. What is the upkeep with the church all the other time whether it's Christmas and Easter. It needs our very touch. I love thy church, oh, God. The wall before me stands. (inaudible) and graven on his hand. The church is the center of our life.

FB: Okay. What was the position of the church during Jim Crow?

GO: Well, we prayed, hopin' God would come. And still—eventually he did come. But nothin' we could do about it. The man had captivated our mind and we—you just couldn't think. The structure of our mind had been destroyed. I remember—

This word has occurred to me now—it doesn't come to me now, but it was—I didn't know what that—brainwash. Brainwash. I didn't understand exactly what that really meant for— The white man had done that to us, brainwashed us. Divided us. But during the war, the Japanese war, some of these young American whites went over there and they became accustomed to the way they're doing and they went out after that and told this white government said, "they're brainwashing our young people." Were changin' them from what they were to something different. And to be changed it means that we will never be able to harness their minds again.

And so that's what is wrong with us, we were—during Jim Crow days and period, we were brainwashed. And we never thought like in the interest of you and me. And I remember during this little uprising over here to Sarasota—they used to have the meeting at my church. The folks say, "Now we don't want people comin' here, a black on the outside and white in the center, 'Oreo-style'." You see? (laughs) See, the fellow, he was black. He couldn't be nothin' else but black, but in his thinkin' he was white. And you go by your thinking.

FB: Gettin' back to the political situation—

GO: Hmm?

FB: Gettin' back to the political situation, what were the conditions, say, when you first started running, just for office? And what I mean, "conditions," were you supported—did you receive any type of monetary support from anybody, or did you have to do it an your own?

GO: No. I had to run on my own. I couldn't impress— And pathetic. This is very pathetic, very pathetic. I used to hear people say, those who anticipated—venturing out, sayin' "We can get the church to help us." And many times they were not connected with—particularly with any church. But they wanted to enhance themselves by the—coming from the politicians—

So I went to the Ministerial Alliance— Hmm? I went to the Ministerial Alliance, and I told the ministers that the ministers should organize as the leaders of the people, because God made him a leader. I don't care what kind of other folk, but God made him the leader and deeply concerned of his everything, his coming into the world and then deposit him when he's dead. Goin' to the hospital to visit when he's sick. I said, so, if we would get together and band ourselves and get somebody to run whom we feel that is "spiritual-minded"—I used that term, "spiritual-minded." A "community-minded"—has a human outlook, like Carter's talkin' about now, concerned about people. It would make the people have a greater respect for the church because the preachers are leading the

movement for uplift and progress.

I told the Ministerial Alliance. Well, I figured in doing that that they would certainly use their influence to help foster a movement. And so I announced—maybe that was the reason why it wasn't done—I announced that I was running, and didn't a church— Which church you a member of?

FB: Tyer Temple [United Methodist Church].

GO: What church you a member of?

SS: I'm a member of Plant City Mount Moriah [Baptist Church].

GO: Didn't a church in town make a contribution toward my aspiration. I say, didn't a church in town.

FB: But what was the position of the leaders, the quote/unquote black leaders, during this time toward your campaign?

CG: Well, I hate to say this. What we find may times— We've heard the old story about the crab—you've heard about the crab? When one tries to group, the others may not pull him down because that maybe would be don't stayin' in—pull him but they'll knock against you and you'll lose your hold.

SS: (inaudible)

GO: See what I mean? Now, nobody can become offended at that. For I said— Now, I didn't say they wanted to pull me down, but they knock against you and you lose your hold, when they could give suggestions and advice. And not only that, I set up a committee that would get with me—some of the leading people of this town that would get with me. Since I had taken the forward step, they would get with me and their input would help to make fuller the idea of having a candidate fully qualified, because he'd be representing—we haven't gone yet, but he'd be representing us—not in their narrow views, but the broad views and he could decide upon the better thing. We called a meeting at the—oh, my gosh, what's this little fellow's name? Up there across from the Longshoreman's Hall, what's that little meeting place there—meet around there?

SS: Kid Mason's?

GO: Kid Mason's. One outstanding person came—that was Dr. Jackson—and made a contribution. So all the other—I'm suffering now. That's the reason my wife is nervous. You see how nervous she is? She's nervous because I spent all that money around here working to make the conditions better for my people. And I got no help. So you can see they were not— Well, I put it—they were not too concerned. I had some of the preachers, one as the treasurer and one as the secretary—only 'cause you've got to have them—you think they'd served? Well, they could have been fear. I don't know. And then the

members said, "Why are you with that nut?" It might have fear. It might have been that. But I didn't have full cooperation.

SS: Do you feel like if we had single-member districts here in Tampa blacks would become more equal?

GO: That's what I—that is my contention. And they fought me because I said that. Some of the leading folk here said if you would have single districts—that's what it is, isn't it?—said you'd have that same mob system that they had here years ago. Wards and the whole ward system. But I couldn't see that. No. I couldn't see that because we could do this and we had the single system. There would be some represented—black representative, whether he's good or bad. Hmm? Whether he's good or bad, you'd have some black representative there. And I'll tell you feel mighty proud if you walk in a place and you see a black brother there, you know. See what I mean?

Now, I'm not.. I'm not narrow. I'm not narrow. I love white people. And I've helped white people. I love everybody. I really do. But when the fight come on TV that black boy looks like he's studied—why doesn't he wake up? See, that's somethin'. I want that black boy to wake up and— (laughs) You see what I mean?

SS: Yes.

GO: Naturally you'll be concerned about that which is yours. Let us take in the—in this integration as it reflects upon the school and the religious life of the community. Now, I remember right over there at Plant City and throughout Florida, the little black children go to school about from two to three months a year. They have to stop and go out and pick berries or work on the farm, or somethin' or other like that. But the white children are going to school the whole nine months. Well, now then the man didn't care too much about the black. And then psychologically he was holding the black down. The black looked it from the point that he's makin' some money because he could work three months out of the year. But he's holdin' 'em down. And mentality, intellectuality will never descend to the depths of ignorance. Then after that becom. . .

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

GO: Now, if you dislike a person—I mean showed a dislike and evil intent in your heart—but both of you are promoted to a high place in society and you come together, well, you're not gonna get around him too much to promote him because first place you just don't like him. You don't agree. But when they took these and I—one thing, we're responsible for some of—the blacks are responsible—that they cussed out the black teachers. They weren't doin' this and they weren't doin' that—first, weren't they—

But now, nobody loves a black child better than another black person. Now, you say, "He's mean." What, well, the whites was mean too. What they— But the whites were mean too. But I'll tell you what the black one did. The black one, because he had to live among us, in church and in lodge and what—he didn't want to have it said where he goes

and where he went and would go that he was not doing something to make the black children better. His work, because he had to live among those people.

And he'd give 'em the best. He might not have had 'cause they—the condition in schools was not as palatable then as now. They said "equal" this, but they didn't mean that, for we didn't get that. See what I mean? We were separated, but we didn't get "equal." But they would say, "Oh, but you were gettin' equal." Not over here. But they didn't do it either, didn't give it. They gave the better to the whites and they had the good books and the fine accommodation in the school. And the blacks—they would bus them, going to their schools and negroes walkin' to theirs and so on. He was not concerned then. So when you take 'em now and put them together as such, under the framework in which we operate, them same white people go down into the black school. And he ain't particular about the black. And now can't you see it—the 75 percent of the black children failed here the other day?

SS: Umm hmm.

GO: Well, now, he isn't as concerned about the black he is about the white. Now, here's the advantage of the white. We don't get together. I see some little pretty little—beautiful little girls right over there. They come home all around there. Just as soon as they get home—(slap) right out to the street, all in the place up there. Well, the white people get together—you don't see them when the white people get together and say, "We must keep our children, we must do this," and so on. To their clubs and to all that. So when the children come out here to the black school, where the white teacher was, he has a white orientation when he comes here. When he goes back, he goes back to train people who are going to see that the children are trained. Is that right?

SS: That's right.

GO: Therefore, the black and the whites down here, we integrated. The white person didn't particularly care about you down there. And then they have this thing now, they write it out. If this white? You've got to tell 'em whether it's white or black. That's the kind of studyin' you do. Would the sun come up at six? Let me see what time did it come up? Six-thirty. Now, what kind of studyin' is that?

They can't read. I have 'em in my church. They can't read. I have one on—have my youth day programs. And why the people don't like me for it. I don't care whether he likes me or not. But the child would be better off when they— "All right, son, read louder so I can hear you." See? And he— Then, say—I said, now, if I'm preachin', the people gonna criticize me if they can't hear me over the church. See what I mean? But (inaudible) Read, speak out louder. And I have them now—I want you to come to my church on the fourth Sunday, in next month. I know you're not coming.

SS: I am.

GO: On the fourth Sunday, it's fun. And I get right with 'em. And now I have it to the

point now, all right; they come to church, they— "Speak out loud so he can hear you." They raise their voice—can almost raise the voice and their reading levels are better. Not as good as I desire for them to read, but they're doing a little bit better. Calling the name. Calling the words wrong and all like that.

Well, the parents aren't helping their black children when they go home. The children, black children, aren't any real help in the school. Right? Therefore, when they graduate you have 75 or 80 percent of the black children failing. But you have a greater point. I just looked the other day through the paper, I guess you saw it. We didn't have— Where's the wind of the black? We didn't have one valedictorian out of all of those black people. We didn't have one salutatorian out of the— Did you see that in the paper?

SS: Uh huh.

GO: Well, now, it does look like we would have had somethin' somewhere, doesn't it?

SS: It does look that way.

GO: It does look that way.

SS: How do you feel about disruptive schools?

GO: Well— I'm against the disruptive school because what good would it be? It would be another small reformatory school, or a place of a small—well, I— Let me say a gang, a penitentiary. You put 'em off over there and they're all together, they have nothin' by which they can compare themselves. Only thing I think they should be a deeper concern about the parents of the children and the school board to see that certain things are done. So you see what I'm talkin'—why couldn't they come here to this integration?

Now, I am for integration. I'm not for integration that, say, we're integrated because a man—because we were integrated a long time ago and we go to these meetings. We're integrated. We're sittin' out there (laughs) in the parlor, we've been—and the white people are all upstairs and goin' nobody bothers you. We integrated the hotel but we—who we talk to? The same black people. I felt that had they done it this way— See, I was a small peon. I said it loudly, but there was so much out there they couldn't hear me. Why not take these little children from the first grade—see, they're not embittered—and let them start off from the kindergarten and bring them all—that's if the country want to do that. The country doesn't want to do that, you know. They just hope that because of circumstantial conditions the other countries around are saying America used this and so they went out with the camouflage. See what I mean?

But, see, we aren't getting anywhere with it. But they'd started these small children—in twenty-five years we'd have had, let us say, two raisings—I put it that way—two raising of twelfth grade students. That means— Let's say you'd have in this country—I've forgotten now, I did read that the other day—about 30 million. Let's say—just put it at 30 million children. Thirty million children startin' from the first—from the kindergarten—

they come up—30 million. Then you get down here to the second group, probably 30 million; that'd be 60 million children here who would have a different idea about life because they were little children, studied at the same little (inaudible) place. They grew up together and so on. And they love each other and so on like that, all of them. But you see what I mean?

But when they started up, they started up with the higher ups from about the—in the eleventh grade and the twelfth grade—well, they're already embittered with racism and all that kind of stuff. And their parents can't get a—say, "Don't you take nothin' off them niggers." And the negroes say, "Don't you take nothin' off them crackers."

SS: Umm hmm.

GO: And you see—and it made a bad lookin' picture.

SS: That's right.

GO: Yeah, that's what it did. So, I didn't care too much for (inaudible) that, but I do think there ought to be some way where we ought to be able to get together. Now we're gettin' together. We integrated—said, integrated you now in sport. Yes, we're integrated into sport, but that doesn't mean a thing, we've integrated into sport. Now, that doesn't mean nothing. The man go out there—all our folk out there integrated into sport. You've got to pick him out. He won't be there long gettin' that money before he's a dope addict. Hmm?

SS: That's true.

GO: That isn't lifting us. Now, what could help us if the folk were concerned? You had the—I've got to use these words, "religiosity," that is practiced by our fathers and mothers. They didn't have anything but they built a good little society where they lived and so on. Now, suppose all these people with all this money that they're makin' would be turned off to self help, where would we be? All that money just blown to the piss. Joe Louis made millions and millions, and when he came down to the finale he was broke. Hmm? So you see, unless we are undergirded with what Jesus said, we aren't gonna get anywhere. Now, you are a member of the New Hope [Baptist Church], you said?

FB: Tyer Temple.

GO: Tyer Temple. Tyer Temple. Yeah. You have a pastor; he and I were in school together—Reverend Williams—in Atlanta. We were there in Atlanta. I can't—yeah, he was (inaudible) then. But, now, what does it mean for us if we don't have the church? Now, you're a member Tyer Temple. Well, you're Methodist and I'm Methodist, so far as bein' overshadowed with what we call the same pursuit of doctoring—in a measure. Because she's a member of a Baptist church and we have the same (inaudible) with God and all like that. But, now, what does it matter? All of 'em are madhouses, in the purest sense of the word. I said, in the purest sense of the word. I wonder if you understand what I mean. In the purest sense of the word, all of 'em are madhouses. Now, what you mean

by that? What you— You say you're a member of whose church?

SS: Mount Moriah.

GO: Mount Moriah. All right. Mount Moriah has had three or four splits in the church, in Mount Moriah. I know the Mount Moriah Church, the pastor there (inaudible). Somebody gets somebody in that church and they can't have his way, he gets mad and do what— (slaps his hands) he pull out. Somebody over yonder doesn't, so he get mad— (slaps his hands) he pull out. Well, you can't split up God's church. But you can split up all these kind of things like that. And then you start a different thing.

I can't have the same thing that went on in Mount Moriah or in Tyer Temple or in St. Paul. I've got to start a little bit somethin' different. Isn't that right? Because the people left that thing up there. But Jesus said, "They who worship me must worship me in spirit and in truth." That's the genuine church. That genuine church ought to meet together because they help each other. The genuine church, spirit of truth. Can you buy truth? Can you sell truth? Can you buy spirit, sell spirit? You can't buy it nor sell it, but you can possess it. Ain't that right? You can possess it. Hmm? Now, that's the church.

SS: Do you think the church—if the preachers would start, you know, talkin' to the black people, gettin' 'em more aware, in the political sense, that this would somehow eliminate—you know, a response to goin' out and votin' and stickin' together, electing black officials?

GO: Well, yes. I think the—see, the—I'm trying to say now, we don't want to get racism in there. See? But I think if the white— If a black minister would show in there that you were training—that's in a broad perspective—were training these black people to fit into this arena then we must encourage them. See, because we're in a state of what we in the third world, we're not yet developed, or that's what they say, so we must encourage it. In that respect we would be pushing our own.

But when I get out there and see like the white people do, organized the white—the blacks are organized against them, then we—many people think the same thing you do, racism. Don't you think so? But then we would try to prepare our folks so they could be as deeply entrenched in politics and right and so on, and in community interests as the other man. Then you get who? The better man. But now, listen, when you say that, my dear, now, what you say, got to watch this now—but if I'm gonna push a black man—he's not prepared but he's black, I'm gonna push him. Well, now you're gonna make things worse when he get in office. See what I mean?

SS: That's true.

GO: Yeah. See what I mean? And so I think we prepare this thing, so he would stand out. We have some men right now who stand high in the world. [Senator Edward] Brooke, for an instance. But even at Brooke— The other day I felt badly about him, from Massachusetts—now that's a small black neighborhood, as it were, so far as the state is

concerned. So the people who elected him, in the main, were bright—were white people. And the black—yeah, he run in Massachusetts.

Now, the other day here he's come out with a little somethin' or other and make a black spot on him. Now, he is what you call a light-skinned black man. A light-skinned black man. Now, he's fair of color, but his origin is black. Hmm? So he's a light-skinned, black man. Well, now, since he's a light-skinned, black man when he goes up there. And you read about pro-tem or somethin' up there. Then he came around and said, "Well, I made a mistake because I was havin' conflict." But that's against his record in the Congress. Hmm? And, therefore, he represent whom? The black people. See?

So what we want— You want to prepare the people so they will be outstanding and stoop for a nickel or little dope or a little somethin' like that, but stand for a principle. In the church—I'm gonna tell you because you're young people, it has gotten to the place now where there's a price almost for everything. A price. And in some places and phases there's a price in the ministry, like this, you'll find. And then I know your people and you're a good speaker and you (inaudible) and I can sort of use you too, you know, see and you won't get out of control. You give me three or four hundred dollars and I'll put Reverend Johnson out of commission up there at the church (inaudible). I put him out of commission and I'll ease in another little fellow over here. Now, that wasn't God's—but personal gain. See what I mean? That's what we have come to in every phase (inaudible). But we've got to have some men who say, "I will not stoop. I go on a principle basis." Now I serve as presiding elder in your church, as superintendent. In your church as missionary. In my church as presiding elder. They're all the same thing, but different names.

SS: Umm hmm.

GO: Same function. And I've had men say, "Reverend if you get me the—I'll take care of you, fifteen hundred dollars." I said, "Well, I appreciate your thinkin' of me but I'll keep you under observation." I don't know if (inaudible) you know. I never have bought a church in my life. I've never sold a church to somebody in faith. You're married. And now you're not— Look here. You're not liked by everybody when you do that.

But I'll tell what'll happen. I'm livin' witness. If you take a stand, then God will take care of you. You'll be strengthened in mind, strengthened in body, fearless to speak. But if you've done all kind of other—you're afraid to speak out because you're gonna— Huh?

FB: That's right. Fearless to speak.

GO: You should hear—you sing, don't you? I guess you (laughs) you sing. I had a preacher; one of our outstanding ministers was preaching, and as he preached he said—he had all his children coming home and going to church. And so the elder went to this minister's church—he's more or less what you call the orthodox—and he said, "Man, you dragged 'em out this morning, you were way out there. Man, let me tell you, you in need, you understand, all that kind of stuff like that." And so he didn't know what they're talkin'

about, so he said, "Man, you're crazy." (laughs) He said you have all this new talk and—while did you reach—same—

The same thing that I spoke about in training the children and so on, it's been a good many years that I've say that. My people fought me. "Don't say the black children." I said, "No, I have to say the black children." The black children in my church and in yours too, and in all of 'em. I have twenty-two college graduates, and I can't get one to put himself or herself on the alter in teaching the young people in the church. How many have you got in church who will go and—I mean, the college graduates—

FB: In (inaudible) you mean?

GO: Yeah. How many of your sisters, the college graduates who'd put themselves out there. You find one every now and—but, I mean, I've got twenty-two in my church and I try the person, "Why don't you take charge of this class in Sunday School?" "Reverend, I think—" One lady had had a brain condition and I thought after we prayed with her and the Lord blessed her with that brain condition she'd come to the church. And I told her, I said, "Now, the Lord blessed you—better come." Now, there should be the ones who are so obsessed with the lifting of the people that they'd be there to giving their lives 'cause they didn't have to be able to finish school, because they could have been born blind (inaudible) like that. What that Brad? What is that thing he got—dystrophy. Anything like that. But God blessed you. My God, I owe my life to him because he's been so good to me.

SS: How do you feel about tent revivals?

GO: Hmm?

SS: How do you feel about tent revivals?

GO: Well, I think if it's properly carried out—I mean, when I say—I'm not—I mean a tent revival. I don't think we should dare say just go our tent revivals all around like that. But, a tent revival, if it's carried out properly I can't see anything wrong with it—well organized, proper objective— For all of these churches, all of them—I mean, not all, because some of 'em people bought some after they got—but, basically, many years ago all of them start from what you'd call a little camp meetings and gettin' the people together and so on like that. And they eventually developed more and more. If their intent was good it's a— But I don't care anything about these things that people goin' around highly flim-flamming people in the name, because you have that—in the name of the Jesus and there's no Jesus there, you know. You see, but now you have that in every facet of endeavor. There are some doctors that are crooks. You believe that, sir?

FB: Yes.

GO: Yeah, some doctors who are crooks. Defend— But they're crooks. There are some lawyers who are crooks. There are some preachers who are crooks. Well, let's see how

anybody say, "Prea—yeah, but all are not."

There were four men who were traveling on this way; they were all dressed alike, had the preacher's garb, they all moved their hands alike and so on. And they were talking similar to each other. They all were the same. But, to God, there was a difference. And he spoke and he said, "Satan, where you goin'?"

"Up and down, to and fro, seekin' what I can devour."

Do you get that? But he is right along there with that crowd. Whether they're doctors or they're lawyers, whether you see that up there in the administration—we taught us the other day, get education. Well, we didn't have a better educated group of people in this nation brought together than when we had Nixon's crew there, did we? You didn't seem them—know that thing about the program where them young people up there just stealin' money? They were—after they had the Watergate—

SS: Umm hmm.

CG: See? So it isn't that. It's havin' that center thought within the man. I preach this sometimes, refer to it now, even in my yard out there. Everything comes out of yourself. Everything comes out of yourself. And I say, now, here is a rose, you put it down there—a little something down there. It's nothing. And you grow that little stem when you—And after a while you'll see a little bud on it, it'll shoot out and have—or you see some beautiful leaves come out. You're hopeful then. After a while, here comes a little bud. Oh, my. Oh, this bud is beautiful. Opens up. Oh, my! The fragrance. All comes out of that same thing.

Everything good comes out of the individual. Everything bad comes out of the individual. So if the center is right here, everything that comes out'll be good. If it isn't, it'll be bad. And then sometimes— See the devil is so shrewd. God doesn't change. God's the same yesterday, today, and forever. But, now, the devil got—he's psychedelically changing. If he can't get you, then he puts something else over here.

SS: That's the truth.

GO: Did I say that right? And I preach this picking at the soft heart of your life. Picking at the soft part— Now, the devil knows where the soft part is. And wherever it is, whether it's in being inebriated, or sex, or theft, or hypocrisy—he knows where it is and that's where he'll play right around there. And then if you try to stand up, he stand you, but he'll show you somethin' and take your mind off of that and put it on something else.

'Cause this has happened to me, in the ministry. I went to school, prepared myself for the ministry, came out of a Christian home. My father was a minister, my great-grandfather was a minister, and my mother's a good Christian woman, and the people around me are Christians, my aunt and so on. And so that was within me, embedded within me. But after I got out and meaning to do right, and here I just was workin' and strugglin' and

strugglin'—look like I'm not having any success. But I looked right over at that fellow's field over yonder and he's doin' everything. And, boy, his corn, as it were—or okra, as it were—just flourishin', the man just flourish out there and I'm wondering what's he doin' to make his grow better. Better try some of that too, to make mine grow.

That's the weakness. See the devil tryin' to make you do what— You don't know what that man doin' to make his grow. In St. Augustine there's a boy came along with us and many others, they were dressed all the time. My, they were dressed. Dress heavy. Wasn't anything there. Well, now, they were stealin'. They went to them place and sellin' the people's furniture and all that stuff. Bit one day it came to an end, then they was embarrassed in it. Then I was glad that I didn't have a part of that. You see what I mean? You've got to have that thing that says, "I will not, I'll just stand here and wait on the Lord."

SS: Umm hmm.

GO: I'll wait on the Lord. Well, did you—hear you say Jefferson the other night? Not Jefferson. Yes, Jefferson. Did you see that? This lady played the clerk.

SS: Uh huh.

GO: That was a beautiful thing.

SS: Yes.

GO: She knew God would help her. Oh, she knew God would help her and she brought it in. "Oh, God gonna help me." And she'd go in there and the words would agitate her. And go through— But in the last minute when they were fixin' to kill her, somebody came in and prevented the killing. She's, "Oh, God, I knew you were comin'; why'd you take so long to come." I knew you were comin'. (laughs) But she said, "Why'd you take so long to come?" He's comin'. He may not come every time you call him, but he is there when you need him most.

SS: He knows your every need.

GO: He meets your every (inaudible). I had an experience; as you remember I've been driving for over forty years, and I never—and I'm a pretty good driver, I've driven all over this country, but they—spendin'—all these little things happened right here in town. Somebody run into you like that. Well, I don't want to be in court, don't want to be bothered like that. And then the white man who said get out of here and go on. And so if the white man or the white woman, or whoever it is, they're white, when they go to court it's gonna be the same thing. But you're there so I just (inaudible).

So I had three of these altercations—wrecks—went over there on Cypress [Street] and Armenia [Avenue], truck came by and ran into the side of my car and took all the—what you call it? —striping off of the—is that what you call it, striping? —and that— When it

was over I was wrong. I was on the highway where the sign going like that. And the car going—you know, you go through a little bit and another one go through. They went through, and so this bus went through and this car and then I went, and this woman hit me on the side back here. I was wrong. And so—

But, I guess I did wrong here, but, you know, you think the law that's—the woman give you the right (inaudible). And on them cards up there—wavin' this woman out there. One of them tell me—I'll put my opinion up for you like that. And then I said, I'd better get away before them crackers come out here and jump on me and kill me here and they said they didn't. So I drove on away. Well, I was wrong, according to the law, to do that. I just drove on away from the man and left him there. So they gave me a suspended sentence. And my wife was drivin' me all around this month, from the first of May until the first of June; she'll be glad when (inaudible) over, and I will too.

But I was with a little white fellow; was in the car, a policeman, and I didn't know where to go to take these lessons. I'm takin' lessons. And I asked him—I got to talkin' with him and he said, irreverent, you know, "Sometimes we don't know; God intervenes." Well, and this was a young white fellow, that was a surprising thing. See what God prepared for me? And I said, "That's right, for he said that the Lord does good to those who serve him." That isn't the proper quotation. But whatever; if you servin' him whatever comes to you, it is for good. Whatever comes to you, it is for good. You can't see it, but it's for good. And I said, yes, that's true. And I felt uplifted to hear this young man sayin' that. Because I was rather reluctant.

So I went on out to the school and gettin' there, they brought—up in this teaching and so on, but the psychology, that theoretical psychology that I had in some of the practice, I could see there and I could see myself and the way they depicted because—the parent, the influence of the parent on the child, it makes him act or react. The influence on the adult as we act and incurrent on the childishness. And we sit here now, and I've done some of those same things. Whoa. Why do you that (inaudible) when I should be, what? Have sanity and so on. I said, "Now, Lord, I've done something (inaudible)." But I've learned a great deal—of course he didn't know; there was probably something that was up there because you get to the place. I know it.

SS: Umm hmm.

GO: I know it. (laughs) You see. And thoughtlessly. And, what the Lord did is stop me here, because something's up there and by doin' it, that deferred it. The thing probably was there, but I was not there. And I told my wife the other day, I said, "You know what I mean, I believe in him, going to Jacksonville later, I've got to get there. I ought to be there about this time." See what I mean? And I'm tryin' to get there that time, too. So I told her, "Now, Atlanta will be the same distance whether I hurry to get there or if I take my time to get there."

SS: Umm hmm.

GO: I said, from now on I'm goin' take my time. See how the Lord was workin' through me?

SS: Umm hmm.

GO: Take my time. And he's runnin'. And many times I've run up to the—goin' to hit somebody, and they'll get up to the light and have to wait there until that car come up there and catch up with him. (slaps hands) I could have taken my time just like they did.

SS: That's the truth.

GO: Yeah, so that's— So that was a great lesson to me. And so— I said, so I'm servin' my sentence, but I'm doin' it with great joy since I went out and found out— I saw somethin' the other night. Here's a fellow, he's a nice lookin' cop, he has a little truck goin' hit him— (inaudible) but a— And there's the car comin', the man in the truck said, "Come on out; come on around." And he out there, go on— (inaudible) let 'em stand—comin' up there now— You see what I mean? Huh? Now, wonder what—he should exercise common sense. That truck gonna pass that car after a while and then you can go on around, and you save your tension and all that kind of stuff.

FB: That's right.

GO: Hmm? (laughs)

FB: Reverend Oates, you're gonna have to be gettin' back through—

GO: Well, now, I hope— What you gonna do now? We said a whole lot of things there now. Now, don't do like—

end of interview