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Fred Beaton: —from the standpoint of—

A.J. Ferrell: Well, I began work here in Tampa—

FB: Yeah. Worked here and, etc.

AF: Well, I have—as has been written several times, I went to high school in Jacksonville. I graduated from high school in Jacksonville. I did go to the elementary here. I got my bachelor's degree from Wilberforce University. I got my master's degree from New York University. My postgraduate work was done at Columbia and NYU.

I came into the school system and taught at Booker T. Washington Junior High School when I first began work here. It was not a junior high school then, it was a high school, a combination from 7 through 12 and I taught two years there, then I was promoted to a principalship. And I began my principalship work at Dobeyville Elementary School.

FB: Where was Dobeyville?

AF: Dobeyville's the West Side Park section, on South Dakota [Avenue]. It's no longer there. It was phased out several years ago. By the way, we have several people—Garland Stewart served as principal out there also. He came right behind me. And then I went to Harlem School, where I served from 1936 to 1940 as principal of Harlem Elementary School.

Then I got leave. I took leave from the school system to go into public housing. I hired as the first tenant selector in the City of Tampa, white or black. And then, after the project was nearly completed and we began to take in tenants, I was appointed manager. And I was the first manager in Tampa. There was only one project then. And I was—so I was the first manager. And I stayed there and managed that project until 1949 when I came

back to the school system.

I came back as principal of Carver Junior High School. I served 1949 to '54 [1954] as principal of Carver Junior High School. Then I was transferred to Booker T. [Washington] Junior High. I served as principal of junior high—Booker T.—from '54 to '59 [1959], then I was transferred to Middleton where I stayed until I retired, 13 years. During that time, of course, during the early years of my work, of course, I worked in New York. I did some work—perhaps you've read about, I understand—did some work in New York. That's not tantamount to this a—

What you want to know is what I did in Tampa. Well, during my work here, both in public housing and in the school system, I worked with the Boy Scouts, chairman of leadership training. I have served as vice-president of the Tampa Urban League, first vice-president of Tampa Urban League. I have a 15 year service award from the National Urban League for my service on the board here, a 15 year service award. I was on the advisory committee of the Clara Frye Hospital. Did you know that? I was on the advisory committee for that for several years. And—well, you'd better go ahead and ask questions because I didn't have anything thoroughly organized in my mind, you know.

FB: Okay. Can you give us the name of some of the pioneers, or some of the early black (inaudible), or early black administrators when you came into the school system?

AF: Yeah. When I first came here, S. Howard Newsome, have you heard of him?

FB: Umm mm. I don't remember him.

AF: S. Howard Newsome, N-E-W-S-O-M-E, was principal of Booker T. Washington High School.

FB: What year was this now?

AF: 1932.

FB: '32.

AF: And he was a principal. And then, you know, they built Middleton in about 1935, the first Middleton was built. And he, of course, was transferred out there to Middleton. And that's when Howard Blake came back here to serve as principal of Booker T. Washington Junior High School. Well, Newsome finally left here and he went to Fort Lauderdale. He retired, I think. And he's passed on now—during that time.

Well, there was C.B. Bryant. C.B. Bryant was also one of the early principals of Middleton High School. And Farley Stewart followed him as principal of Middleton, see? And I followed Stewart. But you have to get Stewart's story from him, because he has had quite a vast amount of experience here also, you know. And there was Johnny Clark. There was Johnny Clark. He's passed on now.

That information, by the way, this Mr. Armwood had on Blanche Armwood Beatty, did you all find much of that very useful?

FB: I found it very useful.

AF: Very good.

FB: She was part of the school system here, too, wasn't she?

AF: She was a supervis—she was a—you know, during that time they had a Supervisor of—what was—Negro Schools.

FB: Oh.

AF: And she was a supervisor. She was the head person over all Negro teachers at that particular time. But I think up until 19—the late '20s [1920s] or the early '30s [1930s]. I didn't have much experience with her. I knew her. But I didn't have any experience. I was away at college during the time that she was an administrator here. Go ahead.

FB: Okay. What were some of the conditions of the black schools?

AF: Very poor. The black schools were in very poor conditions. And they remained in poor condition. And the one thing that first began pulling them up a few notches was when the School Board established the budget system for each school. There was a time when schools needed supplies and equipment, each individual school would have to ask for it, you know. If you needed supplies you'd have to go to the warehouse, make a requisition of what you wanted, and they would give you what they wanted. Likewise for equipment. You did not know how much money you had to operate your school on, you see, that is, each individual principal. There were schools not fitted for educational purposes by any means, you see?

They had a little school down here at the garrison. They had one out at Robles Park in very, very poor condition. Dobeyville, itself, was in very poor condition. And then, about 1950, I believe, or '51 [1951], they put the budget system in. They would allocate to each school a certain amount of money based upon the number of students you had per capita, you see, so much per student. And then each principal would know exactly how much money he would have to operate his school, for supplies and equipment, for that particular year, unless, of course, it was something very large. I'm talking about small equipment and supplies. I'm not talking about if you needed a new piano or needed additional room or something like that. That was major funds.

But during that time schools—black schools—were kept in very poor condition because the white schools always got five times more than the black schools, as you might know. But when they put the budget system in, one of the things that kept the black schools in still a lower position was because of the size of the student bodies in some schools. Let's

just take Middleton High School for instance. When Middleton first started, I imagine they had a student body of five or six hundred students, you see? Well, they was a high school you had to run—I wasn't there. But now compare that with a high school with 2,000 students and you see how much more money that school had. They had a smaller school. Likewise, it was in the elementary schools. The amount of money coming into the school from the school board was allocated on the basis of the number of students so they still remained poor. And they remained poor on up through your time, as you know, much poorer.

FB: All right. How would you compare if any, say, the teachers at that time and at the present time, since you have been a principal at, say, at a school when the schools wasn't segregated and—

A.F: Well, a—is this for publication, or are you going through the notes and take out what you want?

FB: We're gonna go through the notes and take out—

AF: Yeah. Let's start from a student standpoint, beginning—students enjoyed their high school days during that time, before the schools were integrated. They were much closer together—(inaudible). I'll say this, that maybe they did not have as much as equipment or supplies to work with as they do now, but the teaching was just as good as it is now. And I'll guarantee anybody that because I've had both white and black teachers. When I left Middleton I had over—three-fourths of my faculty was white when I retired, you see, three-fourths. And the teaching, as far as instruction was concerned, the black teachers manifested themselves and taught just as well as any teachers in the system.

In fact, as I made a statement to the [*Florida*] *Sentinel Bulletin*, just before Martha White passed she interviewed me here, and I told her the black teachers took a lot more interest in the black students than the white teachers, see? The black teachers knew about the environmental situations from whence the students came, the aspirations of their parents, etc., and they spent a lot more time than white teachers would spend. The black teachers went over and above the call of duty, you see, in order to help many, many students. And the white teachers just didn't have that feeling toward 'em. It was a matter of instruction with them. during the day and go home.

Now, when the first white teachers came into our school, I think about 30 of them hit there at the same time, I told them this in a meeting. I said, "Now, you went to school, you didn't—none of you here, perhaps, went to a segregated school." Well, there were one or two who were from the South who remembered going to integrated schools, you know, where there were black and white students. And I said, "You'll find some difference. You will come in contact"—I was very frank with 'em. I said, "You're going to come in contact with some students who have not had as many opportunities and have not been exposed to as many things, as far as a cultural environment is concerned, as many of the white students with whom you were in contact with. But I'll guarantee you, if you do yourself a good job you'll find out that they do have the same learning capacity as

anybody you've ever come in contact with. But you have to work just a little bit harder because their background is not quite as high as many students."

Well, just take, for instance, the kid who lived in Palma Ceia and a kid who lives in "the garrison." You see what I mean? I talked about the testing program just like they doin' all this talk about it now. I said, "Most of the tests are geared to the middle classes." You see? "A lot of our students are not from the middle classes, they're from the lower strata." You see? The tests are based primarily on—particularly the 12th—well, I would say the 12 grade test, but particularly the psychological tests are based on what experience. You see? Your past experiences. What you have been exposed to. Not necessarily what you learned in classroom. You see? And then your aptitude tests are based upon, you know, your scholastic aptitude based on what you actually learned in school. Well, our students made lower on the psychological tests because they had not been exposed to the cultural surroundings that the students had not been exposed to—

You have read, of course, what Dr. (inaudible), out in California, said.

FB: Right.

AF: I pity him, to have such a position in such a (inaudible). Not Cal—not—he was not at UCLA was he?

FB: Well, he's a visiting professor at UCLA.

AF: Yeah. At UCLA, that's where he was, huh? And also—well, he—he sticks to it, too that, biologically, the black child is inferior. He sticks to it. You see? But he can't prove—he hasn't proved—he can't prove one thing, yet, that will stand up under real fire. But he has that exulted position. He has access to press, you know, media and he says what he wants to say. Likewise, Dr.—now, here—do you remember the Coleman Report? The United States Army?

FB: No.

AF: Coleman said that the pretty school, all of the equipment and supplies you have, it doesn't matter how many movie projectors you have, filmstrip projectors, and all that kind of stuff. He say, you can put all that—that's not the thing that helps the child learn best. He said a child really learns more easily and faster according to the quality of his classmates and his teachers. That's the real learning situation there. You see? The quality of his classmates and the quality of his teacher. The teacher's first. The first thing you've got to have is a good teacher, I don't care what kind of school you have. You know that. If you have any kind of school—you can have the most beautiful school in the world, and equipment, if you don't have good teachers, good instruction, it's just no good.

You know, I have seen—I had quite an argument here—we were talking, my brother-in-law was a Dr. Combs in Tallahassee. Dr. Combs taught at—brought in—anyway, he's retired. He's retired now, but he was director of secondary education for the state for quite

a while. And he got his doctorate at Indiana. And we were talking one day about this whole thing, you know, and you know, you can come across some—

The point—let's see, the point that I was trying to get to—oh, was about this. I have seen students in high school that could have gone a long ways in a high school by just having access to a library. You know that? It's just like when you go to graduate school. When you go to graduate school, you've got to learn your library system. If you don't know your library system you're lost. Isn't that right?

FB: That's right.

AF: You are totally lost. And which—under a little bit of direction, some students can go a long ways without instructions, but the majority of 'em have to have a good instruction, the majority of 'em.

I was talking to a lady about her son across the street there. Now, he entered—first thing he did, after he finished community college, he went to FSU [Florida State University]. I said, "You tell him, if I don't get a chance to talk with him, that the first thing that he does when he gets his first assignment, is to learn the school library system thoroughly." And he can transfer it to South Florida. I told her the same thing. Because, you see, you gonna be in graduate classes—I know I've been in graduate classes in New York, and you get an assignment and they want the work and you've got to know how to go to the library and get it. And if they don't have but a certain number—well, you've got to know how to get right on and get there and so you can get that book. You know what I mean? If it don't, you'll be late gettin'—I had an assignment one day and—to go to the *New York Times Magazine* section; it comes in the *New York Times* every week.

FB: Yeah.

AF: They usually have educational writings in there that are very good, every week. And I had an assignment and I had to review the *New York Times* Educational Section and those—for six months. You know what I had to do? As soon as I got out of class every day, I had to leave and go over to the *New York Times* in New York and go into the microfilm library and stay all afternoon. Get home six or seven o'clock in the evening. Had to stay there, you know, for the microfilm. Did you use microfilm much?

FB: Yeah, I can use the microfilm. There's no way around it.

AF: Huh?

FB: There's no way around it.

F: You—no. You're right about that. Most of the press have lots of microfilm. I remember when the [*Tampa*] *Tribune* didn't have it. And I—the school system required a lot of records on microfilm now, instead of just keepin' file after file. You go over there and ask for a person—

FB: During say, the early days when we had, say, Blake and Middleton, were they were a high expulsion rate of students in school?

AF: Was there what?

FB: A high—was there many black students being expelled during this time?

AF: Oh, nothing like the case now. You see, that is a pitiful thing what—during the later part of my tenure, it got so that if you didn't suspend a certain number of students a month they thought that you didn't have good discipline in the school, which was a very poor way to look at it. You see, I just happened to say that. Because we had to make a report. Any time you suspended a student for any number of days a copy of it had to go to Pupil Personnel Office, a copy to the County Superintendent's office and a copy to the student's parents. You see? You had to send those. In addition to that, each month we had to fill out a report on the number of students suspended, what the offenses were, the number of days that student was suspended for.

You see, a principal can suspend a student without authorization of the school board. A principal cannot expel a student without authorization from the school board. If you do something in school of a nature that's worthy of expulsion I can't tell you—walk up to you and tell you you're expelled. I can say I'm going to recommend you for expulsion, but you are suspended until the county school board acts on it. And, so—but they have to act on it because the maximum number of days a principal can suspend the student is 10 days. You see? To go over that you have to get permission from the county school board.

But what we did, we knew that when we suspended a student it's like puttin' a rabbit in a cabbage patch. You put him out there on the streets. You know, you suspend a girl—say, for instance livin' out there in the housing project next to our school, half of the parents gone to work during the day. The girl commits an act in school and you suspend the girl and send her home. She's goin' home to a vacant house. See what I mean? All right. Ordinarily, the parents want their daughter chaperoned at all times. They don't want them home keepin' house during the time by themselves. And what it turned out, we found that sometimes even the kids who were truant they'd, you know, have parties different places, you know, like that.

But we'd try to help the kid stay in school more than put him out. That was what we tried to do. Everybody—we wanted to help him to try to keep in school because we knew that's exactly where he should be. He had so many strikes on him that without a high school diploma he'd already struck out. You see? He needed the high school diploma in order to compete to the extent that he—and it was such a meager opportunity to compete up until, you know, the civil rights acts and all that type of thing. So we didn't have nearly the amount of suspension. And very few expulsions.

I'll tell you the truth. Well, we never did come across acts that serious for—I don't know—let's see. I think during—I was at Middleton for 12 or 13 years. I think we had

one student expelled the whole time. We had a number of suspensions, but nothing like they have now. Because it got—it's gotten to the place now anytime a kid does any little thing that normally teenagers will do, why, he's up for suspension. Right? You see. He's up for suspension. Well, we—we tried to help 'em stay in school. See? We never had any student riots or anything and all that kind of business like that. We—kids got angry and struck on the lunchroom once. I don't know whether you were there or not.

FB: No, I wasn't.

AF: It was during the time Arthenia Joyner was there and all that business. Why, we never had any riots. I'll tell you what we did start though. You remember when the sit-ins started?

FB: No, I wasn't familiar with that.

AF: All right. When they—this was just before the Public Accommodations Act of 1964, when the kids—when the grown people started integrating the eating places and the theaters. I remember Arthenia Joyner, you know her—

FB: Right.

AF: —she's a lawyer now—

FB: Oh, yeah.

AF: —and some of her classmates came to me and talked about it. And they wanted to go downtown and "sit-in" at the lunch counters. You see? And I said, "Well, now, I'll tell you what you do, when you do that just be sure you don't cut school to do it." You see? "Because if you cut school to do it then they got you from two angles. But whatever you want to do, do it after school and then they can't say anything about you should be in school instead of down here sittin'-in, you've got that part clear. Well, do it on the weekend and after school." See? And they did it. And after a while the whole thing was successful, too. They got the kids from Blake and Middleton. The kids from Blake and Middleton started [it] in this town. You know? Started that whole sit-in movement. And they got the grown people to join 'em. Then after awhile it became somethin'.

Arthenia asked me about passing out literature to the kids, you know, on what the group planned to do. I said, "All right, I'll tell you what," I said, "I'm for it just as much as you are, but don't interrupt the classes." See? I said, "If you interrupt the classes they've got you from that angle, see? But as long as you don't interrupt the classes you just as free to let kids read anything you want to let 'em read as long as there is no immorality in it." You see what I mean? And so those are the kind of things there—those were really the high school days, man, those days. Sometime when you talk with Arthenia you talk with her about it.

FB: (inaudible)

AF: Have you talked with her?

FB: Well, we haven't interviewed her yet, but we will.

AF: Yeah. Well, Arthenia was really a key in that whole movement here, you know. Yes, sir.

FB: Well, Mr. Ferrell, were there any other problems that were affecting blacks in education during this time?

AF: During the historic times. Well, that was a—you know about the unequal salaries, probably.

FB: Well, that's the part I was talking about.

AF: Yes. During the time the teachers sued for equal salaries, I was employed by the Housing Authority then. So there are others who carried the ball on that.

FB: But did you know anything about it?

AF: Oh, yes, I know—I know about it. The Florida State Teachers Association began the move and the county—the county association here took it up. And they hired—you know who their attorney was, who came, Thurgood Marshall.

FB: Hmm?

AF: Thurgood Marshall. I sat in court during nearly the whole proceeding. And they hired Thurgood Marshall to come here. And he was a attorney for this group in federal court, when they sued. And the whole thing was accomplished. Because the white teachers were getting one salary, much higher than black teachers doing the same amount of work. You see? White teachers, white principals, vice versa.

I remember a time here in Hillsborough County, back in the late '30s, when the women made one salary in high school and the men made another salary. The men made a higher salary that was somewhat higher than women because (inaudible) men (inaudible) black and he was a male. That's right.

FB: Mr. Ferrell, can you tell me some of the people who participated in this suit?

AF: Yeah.

FB: People (inaudible).

AF: Ben Griffin. You know him?

FB: Right.

AF: It was Hilda Turner who was on our advisory committee down there. She was in it. She's been away from here in Chicago for a long time, but she's back now. She wasn't in the meeting the other day. She had a little trouble with her eyes, Bob said. Because Bob had been goin' out pickin' her up, you know, bringin'—I'll name those two particularly. Ben Griffin. But—when you talk with Ben Griffin he can give you the whole story because he was very active in it. He was very active in pushin' the whole thing, Ben Griffin. So I hope you get a chance to interview him.

FB: Right.

AF: You haven't talked to him yet have you?

FB: No. We haven't talked to him. Okay. As we go down the line, Mr. Ferrell, what started the teachers' strike, say, just before I—let's see, I think it was just before I came to Hillsborough?

AF: Let's see if I can (inaudible) for you. The strike started because the Florida Education Association had been requesting from the legislature to start with more money for education in the state of Florida. See? And not particularly was this for teachers' salaries, the way this thing started, see? But, of course, teachers' salaries would be included in more appropriated money for education in the state of Florida. Governor Claude Kirk was the governor of the state of Florida then, and he wasn't very sensitive toward this case. That was one of the main things, see. His philosophy was that teachers were getting what they were worth at that particular time. And that thing really, in itself, was a disgusting thing to members of the Florida Education Association.

And so, they just kept on lobbying and lobbying and trying to deal with the educational committees up there and they couldn't get anything until the Florida Education Association decided to request the teachers to walk out. That wasn't just a local situation. That was a state-wide situation. They called a meeting up in the stadium in Orlando one day during free planning of that year the walk-out took place. And we all went up there to the stadium. And they had thousands of teachers in that stadium in Orlando, you know. And they had speakers who were in sympathy of more money for education in the state of Florida. They had—so they set a date. And on that date a large majority of the teachers walked out, quite a number of 'em. But, not quite as many as they thought would. A lot of 'em stayed, they did, a lot of 'em stayed.

So—now, to document this I would suggest that you get more definite information. It's been a good while and maybe some of the real facts are getting away from me and I wouldn't want to be misquoted. So, value to you—your documentation check on the thoroughness of what I'm talking about with other persons who were right along and knew all about it.

end of interview