

TAPE TRANSCRIPT
Durham Civil Rights Heritage Project
CDS, Durham, NC

Interviewee: Peter Klopfer
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Interviewer: Jim Wise
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Place: Hayti Heritage Center
St. Joseph's Historic Foundation, Inc.
804 Old Fayetteville Street
Durham, NC 27701

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Description of Interviewee:

Circumstances of the Interview:

JW: Jim Wise interviewing in the Hayti Heritage Center, November 15th, for the Durham Civil Rights Heritage Project. We're speaking with Professor Peter Klopfer, and I believe you are a professor of zoology at Duke University.

PK: That's correct.

JW: It's the 15th of November, we're at the Hayti Heritage Center. Cathy Abernathy said you came specifically to the United States from England, because you were interested in integration. Is that correct?

PK: That's not entirely the story. I was doing postdoctoral work at Cambridge, and was very happy there. This was during the McCarthy era, so being in England at the time was like having escaped from prison, at least for me, because I had been much hounded by the Un-American Activities Committee and its investigators. But I did get a courtship move from Duke, and I did have an interest in joining many of my friends and colleagues who were laboring in the South with the various civil rights groups, particularly the Fellowship of Reconciliation that I was a member of.

JW: What is the Fellowship of Reconciliation?

PK: It's a Christian pacifist group, which has sort of disappeared from the horizon, but back in the '50s and '60s it was one of the dominant organizations that supported movements to integration throughout the country. And was also predominantly a pacifist organization, and of course was very active in the anti-war movement at that time, too. So this one alone wouldn't suffice, probably, to make me leave England, but the combination of the academic opportunities that Duke offered and the colleagues that I had here in the south was a pull that I couldn't resist. Though I was not planning to stay here () wife and I for 3 years, and head back to sanctuary in England.

JW: This would have been '54?

PK: '58. We made the commitment in '57, but didn't get here until the summer of '58.

JW: I see. Could you describe, what did you find when you got here?

PK: I'd never been in the South before, so disembarking from the plane at what was then the rather provincial () international airport in Raleigh-Durham, where you had picked up your baggage on the edge of the tarmac on the little grassy verge, was quite a shock, and to go from there, pass through the building and suddenly see double sets of drinking fountains, "Colored Only," "White Only," double sets of bathrooms. We'd never in our lives experienced anything

like this. Cambridge is perhaps--was then, and still is one of the most polyglot towns in the world, and we'd gotten very accustomed to Cambridge, so it was a shock to us, even though we'd read about this kind of thing. And indeed it took a while to sink into our consciousness. About 2 weeks after we arrived, we still hadn't gotten fully settled in our rental house, I had to take laundry into town to the Laundromat, and the washing machines on one side said "Colored" and the others said "White," so I separated my laundry, and put the white stuff in one side in the machine, and the colored stuff in the machine on the other side, wondering why they bothered, but not until the supervisor there came and berated me did it finally dawn on me what this was all about.

JW: Are you English native?

PK: No. I went to England for a post-doc, and I had been thinking of emigrating for several years, because as a known Quaker and pacifist, I had refused to participate in the Korean War draft, and served a short bit of time on a 3-year prison sentence for that. Because I was active in a variety of student groups that were objecting to compulsory ROTC on the campuses and the like, and this was in California, I was the subject of an investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee, and was cited by them. So I was looking to emigrate.

JW: I can imagine.

PK: And then the opportunity for postdoctoral work at Cambridge presented itself, so I thought that would be a good temporary way to weigh my options, and I had really thought for sure that I was going to come back. I had options in Australia and New Zealand and such like that were appealing. But as I said, Duke courted me, and those opportunities were very attractive, because the kind of work I was doing in those days was not easily accommodated by major research universities.

JW: What sort of work was that?

PK: Well, I needed a facility where I had a lab, with all the technical support that labs have, but also within short, easy driving distance to a field station where I could keep wild animals. And that combination is hard to come by.

JW: Are you a native of California?

PK: No. I was actually, my earliest years were in Pennsylvania.

JW: So you arrived and made first acquaintance with the water fountains and then the Laundromat, and this was at the time I suppose when the school integration was beginning--

PK: That's right. Just as ().

JW: --and arriving in Durham. So how did you begin to involve yourself in () integration ()?

PK: It was clear that our children were going to be ready for school before there were integrated classrooms, and we were not going to make them--we were not going to allow them to go to a segregated school. So we had the option of returning to England or going elsewhere, or founding our own school. And it just happened that several members of the Chapel Hill Meeting approached us--the Friends Meeting, Quaker Meeting--to see if we might--() have to back step a moment, ours were the only children in the either of the two meetings at that time. Both meetings were quite small. And so these folks from the Chapel Hill Meeting approached us to ask if we would have an interest in helping them form an independent Friends school that would demonstrate the success one could have in bringing together children of different backgrounds. The two meetings themselves were not willing to sponsor a Friends school, they were both committed to fostering integration in the public sector, and felt that setting up a Friends school would distract from that effort. But my wife and I became very quickly convinced that that effort was not going anywhere nearly quickly enough, and that given the attitude of many of our liberal friends, which was that integration is fine in principle, but the economic and social differences are so great you can't bring these children together into the same classroom and expect to educate them. We felt that because of those attitudes, that the only way integration could be furthered was to set up a demonstration school. And of course we had other motives as well, since we are committed Friends and did want our children to grow up in a school that fostered Friends' beliefs. So we joined that group--there were six of us altogether on that committee, which did finally win the support of the two meetings, though we were still independent of the meetings, as the school is to this day. It's a Friends School which is run by an independent board of trustees, a third of which is appointed by each of the two meetings, but the board operates independently (). In any event, we joined that small group and decided to start the school, and things moved along so quickly and we were so deeply involved that we kept postponing our departure, because it was simply not a good time for us to leave. And then as I became involved in what became the Supreme Court case, then it was clear that I couldn't leave even if I wanted to, for reasons having to do with my travails of the law.

JW: What was the reaction of your colleagues at Duke and other people that you knew to your setting up this school that would take in both black and white children?

PK: There wasn't much reaction from our colleagues. The school was outside the purview of the university, and my younger colleagues with children the age of ours were very much interested and in some cases supportive. The older ones either didn't know or didn't care. There were a couple that were quite hostile. I did have a couple of my older colleagues take me aside and tell me that as an outsider, I had no business trying to challenge the traditions that prevailed.

JW: How did you feel? Did that surprise you?

PK: No, it didn't surprise me. I'd been hearing similar things all my life. It didn't affect me noticeably. My chair and the university administration were very supportive, and indeed once he became president, Terry Sanford actually came out and spoke at the dedication for one of our buildings, and before that Bill Friday was one of the original sponsors. When we founded the school, we decided to find a few highly placed citizens in North Carolina to sort of sponsor (), lend their names to the enterprise, Bill Friday was one of those. So we had good coverage.

JW: () Bill Friday. So how did you get involved or involve yourself in the movement as it regarded integrating Duke and in Durham?

PK: Well, don't forget now, as an undergraduate student, this was first at UCLA and then as a graduate student here, I was a very active member of these organizations such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, CORE, I was () a member of CORE when it was first formed, I had leadership roles in these and other student organizations. I was very active with the American Civil Liberties Union when I was in New Haven, and active with the () Christian Parish, which was a force for integration in the ghettos of that city. So I grew up in a very activist Quaker household, so to speak, and this was just a continuation of something I had done from as early as I could remember. I mean, even as a preteen, I was exploited by the local labor unions, by the Democratic precinct, and carried around leaflets and stuffed them under doors, so this was the way I grew up.

JW: What was going on, or was anything going at Duke in 1958 that would lead into the ()?

PK: Very little in 1958. Indeed, it was really only after the sit-ins began here in Durham that there was any involvement of students and faculty. It came after the fact.

JW: Were you one of those faculty getting involved?

PK: Oh, yes. Although at the beginning, my role was simply to drive our kids home from the police station they'd be in, and try to protect them when the university imposed sanctions. We had a number of resident advisors who were deprived of their positions after they had been

arrested, and I made a number of calls on Hollis () was imprisoned, and argued successfully that they hadn't yet been convicted, so () his argument that he couldn't have afford to have anyone convicted a crime of moral turpitude on the staff rang fairly hollow, and I informed him that I was in those days a felon, having been convicted of a Selective Service violation. He evidently didn't know this, and was very shocked to learn that a faculty member was a felon, and didn't want this to get out. And I said, well, I'll have no reason to publicize it, as long as you don't make this the ground for sanctions on these RAs. So we agreed that, as they hadn't even been convicted, there was no moral turpitude involved, and they got their jobs back. But the other problem that my colleagues and I were attempting to assist with had to do with the fact that when our students were arrested for trespass or assault or whatever the charges were, they would be held until fairly late at night, and after being booked, released singly, and they'd have to run a gauntlet of angry segregationists, who were waiting for them outside of the police station, so several of us organized a ferry service, so we'd be able to meet them and drive them back to campus.

JW: The gauntlet, was this something that had organized or just happened to be there? It sounds like ().

PK: I can't tell you that, but my only belief at the time, and I have nothing to challenge it since then, was that the white power establishment was in close cahoots with the police, and it was organized. Certainly that was the case in Orange County, where the Sheriff's car on the () had a () sticker.

JW: Trouble with the classes.

PK: And the one incident that led to my Supreme Court case, of course, involved the officers standing around watching us being beaten. Blood began to flow then, and only then did they intervene in our ().

JW: Now, what was that?

PK: That was the Watts, as I said I was primarily involved in support, and feeling that this was a student movement, and shouldn't be co-opted. But then one of the--Buddy Keeger, one of the student leaders, approached several of us who were faculty members, to ask if we wouldn't form a faculty group that would call on the pride of a particular establishment as a way of demonstrating that it wasn't just a student movement. The student demonstrations were being written off by many as the equivalent of the panty raids of an earlier era, and something that was

fun and exciting and would pass, so the thought was that it needed to be a signal given that there was serious support for these students as goals of the adult community. So Buddy recruited a group of six faculty, originally two from Central, then were pressured to withdraw, and then four of us from Duke and we were joined by two colleagues from Carolina. And the plan was to go to a particular establishment that was a popular place for seminars to adjourn to for after-class coffee and remonstrate with the proprietor, and assure him that custom would not be lost if he served an integrated group. We didn't do our homework, though, it turned this particular establishment was popular after classes because it rented rooms by the hour in the adjoining motel, and the other thing we hadn't known and should have known was that the proprietor was one of the active members of the KKK.

JW: I see. Was this in ().

PK: Watts Grove.

JW: Watts Grove, in Chapel Hill?

PK: In Chapel Hill, correct. In any case, that was the first time Duke faculty were actively involved in a sit-in. David Smith from mathematics, Harmon Smith from religion, Marcus (). I can't remember the other two, there were two others from the Divinity School. And then a psychologist from Carolina, who subsequently died of a brain hemorrhage. He was the one had to be hospitalized from the beating.

JW: So you were demonstrating at ()?

PK: Well, we hadn't actually committed ourselves to demonstrate, we were going to go to seek a service, and remonstrate if refused with the proprietor, and our plan was to decide on the basis of the service we got, whether we would simply stay or withdraw. But we never got inside, because they apparently had been tipped off about our coming. We were jumped on in the parking lot, and beaten. The subsequent trials, which included criminal charges, assault, () all kinds of wild things, led to the conviction of all of my colleagues, but I kept getting a hung jury. Which is why the case achieved some significance. Between my having the hung jury and being retried, the Supreme Court ruled the Public Accommodations Act would apply retroactively, which would require that my case be dismissed. The solicitor, though, took advantage of a clause in North Carolina law which allowed him to plead a no () with leave. What this entailed was having me on the docket, so I had to go to court daily during the sessions, but never would have the case called, which would allow my attorney to file for dismissal. And so we appealed

to the Supreme Court for the right to trial so we could have the charges dropped, and the state Supreme Court said you have no right to trial, and then with the support of Friends file a writ of () with the US Supreme Court, which was surprisingly enough granted, I say surprisingly because no one thought this was a very significant issue. American Civil Liberties Union () their representative at Carolina, Dan (), wrote an () speech that he himself wouldn't take the case because he didn't think it was significant. But the Supreme Court did take it, and ruled then unanimously with the Chief Justice reading the decision that it violated the right to speedy trial, and that turned out to have an enormous impact on cases, thousands of cases around the country where the defendants were being held for long periods of time, and the prosecutors weren't sure enough with their evidence to be able to convict them, but by holding them indefinitely could get them to plead on lesser charges.

JW: Thus keeping them out of circulation for that period.

PK: Yeah. And so the significance of this whole Watts School case derived solely from the accident of my having a hung jury. We don't know for certain, of course, why they hung. My suspicion is, and that of Wade Penny, who was the lawyer at the time, that I refused to swear on the Bible because I'm Quaker, I always affirm. This judge, a very narrow-minded man, Raymond Mallard was his name, cited me for contempt for refusing to swear on the Bible. And at that point, the American Civil Liberties Union did jump in and found that Mallard had refused to accept a Supreme Court ruling on the taking of oaths as binding on the state court, because that ruling had been made only in a federal case. But it turns out there was a 19th century statute in North Carolina passed in the days when there was still lots of Quakers around, that exempted members of the Society of Friends and stating their membership from the taking oaths and the laying of hands on the Bible. And there's an old North Carolina statute, so we copied that out for the judge, and he had to dismiss the contempt and allow me to affirm. And while most of this was going with the jury absent, the fact that I had been cited for refusing to swear and the fact that I then was allowed to affirm suddenly, I think, clued them in to the fact that I had some religious reservations which must have had something to do with the Quakers, because that was the only group that was commonly known to refuse oaths. And I suspect that my testimony created credibility (). In any case, the jury could not agree to convict.

JW: Well, it sounds like it turned out to be a very significant case.

PK: It did, because of the Supreme Court ruling.

JW: This Supreme Court ruling, the incident itself where you were beaten, that was 1962?

PK: Well, golly, 2 or 3. I'd have to go ().

JW: () before the Public Accommodations Act.

PK: That's correct. It was before Public Accommodations, but then before I could be re-tried, probably they never would have re-tried me because they were able to keep me hamstrung by calling me to court in every session. On one occasion, they even, when I hadn't gotten there on time, they sent a deputy to campus and I was led away in handcuffs to Orange County.

JW: () spectacular. You mentioned that you worked together with some professors from UNC. Were there professors from NC Central involved--you mentioned that they ().

PK: You know, they had originally been involved, and then were told by their president that they would lose their jobs if they did this. So we had two black students, Clinton, what was his name--well, a book has been published describing the student movement at Chapel Hill which names these people. It's by John Ehle.

JW: Ah, The Free Men.

PK: The Free Men. And that details much of this whole () has a few of its facts mixed up, but that's okay. He got the basic idea, and he got the names of them straight.

JW: What was your impression--I know you were observing from the other side of town, but your impression of the activity or the sentiment at NC Central, what was then NC College?

PK: I wasn't () very close to anyone there at that time. In subsequent years, I had more to do with activities on that campus and had some friends there. But in those years, I really had no contact. One of the members of our founding school trinity, founding school committee, was on the faculty at North Carolina Central, a European gentleman, an Austrian, (). So he was an outsider there, and then later on Professor Brown from the arts department became a good friend. But in those years I didn't have any contacts there.

JW: How about at Duke? The image we have, most people have now of Duke in those days is very conservative, ().

PK: It was segregated, of course. Medical school was the first to bring in a black student, resident. Indeed, one of the elders of the Friends Meeting who was one of the founding fathers of the medical school, David B. Smith, told me this tale, which () me greatly. He was a convinced Friend, that is, he hadn't grown up as Quaker. Joined the Society late in life. He grew up in South Carolina in a Baptist community, and had very little contact with black people

till he came to Duke, and then it was () just the janitorial staff. After his having committed to the Society of Friends, he recognized that he had to fight for integration, that segregation was wrong. He was instrumental in seeing that the first resident was admitted. He describes seeing this resident in the refectory, sitting all alone at a table, all the white residents as far away from him as possible, and recognized that his duty as the senior person present was to sit down next to this young man and share the lunch with him, which he did. And David told me then that he finished his lunch, and it was all he could do to get to the bathroom before he had to vomit. Because all of his life, he'd been conditioned that this was just an unthinkable thing to do. And it was quite a moving testimony for me, because I had grown up in a mixed community, roommates of all colors and sizes, so to speak. This was my first opportunity to really understand what some of the southerners I was in contact with () were going through.

JW: It must have seemed incredibly strange to you.

PK: Oh, it seemed absolutely strange, but I could not dismiss it, because I knew and respected Dave Smith so much. Indeed, he was one of the major financial supporters of the school, at the time when we had no resources at all. Not part of the founding group, he thought it was a mistake, but he paid for the first classroom building entirely out of his own pocket.

JW: Wow. That's dedication.

PK: Yeah. () the answer to your question was that I met very few like David among my colleagues. There were other younger people who had just recently come, with backgrounds not all that different from mine, just couldn't believe that Duke was still segregated. We were a minority, of course. And there were the older majority who just couldn't see any reason for changing. And then the () represented what the chair of the Board of Trustees said at the time, that we had made an appeal for Duke to admit students without regard to race. His response was, "Duke will integrate, and we will not be the last, but we will not be the first." That was the attitude of most of my colleagues. Yeah, sure, we're going to do it, but what's the hurry?

JW: Let somebody else ().

PK: Right. And it was the young guys who were saying "Now" and the older guys were saying "Not ever." And it was interesting, too, that the support for integration was very much concentrated in particular departments. It was largely in the biological sciences and social sciences.

JW: How interesting.

PK: I don't know why that is. I don't think it was--maybe it was across the board that way, in other institutions, too. But among the students, it was the graduate students in biology who were dominant in these demonstrations. () and very few from other disciplines.

JW: Was integration a frequent topic of conversation among the faculty and graduate students? Was it something that would come up over coffee, or at parties?

PK: All the time. It was a dominant theme at the time, much as Vietnam became the dominant theme in the later era, or the present mess today. It was very much in everybody's mind, especially during the period of several months, very messy bloody demonstrations in Chapel Hill. Durham was fairly--Durham had marvelous leadership, and they resolved this in the business community. And so the demonstrations here never got out of control to the extent they did in Chapel Hill. Very quickly, the mayor had been able to agree with the student leaders on a moratorium, during which some quietly agreed that the tests would be done very discreetly, one place at a time. And the Friends in Durham, after the initial group of demonstrations in front of Howard Johnson's and here at the Holiday Inn, ran fairly quietly in Durham, moved ahead in the public accommodations area, fairly smoothly and without too much fuss. So we didn't have all that much to talk about with respect to Durham, but the Chapel Hill scene was very ugly, as you may recall. And that was on everybody's mind every day.

JW: What ()

PK: I know, I know. Chapel Hill had this liberal reputation, and Durham was the redneck factory town. Circumstance of leadership, I suspect. I don't know what else to say. But there were some very sensible people in the Durham power structure.

JW: Was perhaps Chapel Hill () --well, was most of the opposition in Chapel Hill coming from within Chapel Hill or was it coming into Chapel Hill?

PK: Which opposition, now?

JW: The opposition to integration.

PK: No, it was local merchants. Watts, the old rock pile at the bottom of Franklin Street, you name it. All up and down Franklin Street. It was proprietors of these places, all southerners, now. And much of their justification was based on the fact that the demonstrations were a result of the outside interference, which was true to the extent that after the movement started, and it was totally indigenous, I know this from firsthand experience initially, but after it had started, then CORE did send in some of its organizers from the north. These were people I knew well,

and I spent hours arguing with them to go back home, that we didn't need their help and that they were going to in effect justify the positions of the locals, the local merchants, that this was simply outsiders fomenting the rebellion. And we were not successful in getting them to withdraw, but in fact they were unneeded, unnecessary, and came long after things had gotten started.

JW: Do you think the animosity of the Chapel Hill merchants, was this something that's springing up spontaneously (), or was this something that had been nestling there?

PK: I can't tell you that. There's no question but that people like Mr. Watts and the proprietor of the Rock () are the two most egregious example of violent reaction, no question but that these guys were acting out their beliefs, and I suspect were encouraged to do so by the connivance of the authorities, the police, and the failure of the mayor and his board to take a clear and decisive stand for change. () always surmise ().

JW: The reason I asked that question is because I know that when Frank Lloyd Graham was president of the university for a long time, had a very liberal reputation, a deserved one I think. He was in the US Senate, and it was a very ugly race, a heated campaign.

PK: I've read the descriptions of that.

JW: 1950, there was a book called *Blood on the Old Well*, reported to unmask communists that () in Chapel Hill. I was wondering if that was something ().

PK: It may well have been. It was never made explicit in my hearing, but certainly Graham was not a popular figure among the bulk of people in Chapel Hill. He didn't, at the time that I arrived.

JW: What about in Durham? You said that integration moved along, the demonstrations did not get out of hand, and Durham moved ahead, at least as far as the public accommodations were concerned. What happened after that? I got to Durham in 1966, and I remember that things over the next two years got pretty tense at times, around '68, '69.

PK: Yeah, there was a little blip then too.

JW: What did () after '63?

PK: I think at that point, we began to see some progress in school integration, and then it sort of reached a threshold toward the end of that decade, where the inevitable problems did emerge, some of them, of course, intentionally fomented by those who opposed furthering of integration, and the beginnings of the white right movement, and the white citizens academies, which were

proliferating at the time. So that brought things to a head again, I think. At least that's always been my reading is that the integration (), when it began was in the earliest grades and in a very nominal fashion, and then when it began to accelerate, you had the academies forming, and the white flight (), and then the black families were reacting, so the racial tensions then arose anew, and you had these phenomena in the late '60s.

JW: What was your impression of--were you paying much attention to the effects of urban renewal and the dislocation of blacks ()?

PK: Unfortunately, I was not paying attention to it. After the fact, I suddenly realized how much damage that had done, both to the black community and its () organization, as well as to the prospects for peaceful integration of the schools without busing, because Durham was geographically quite integrated when we first arrived. It's the pattern that prevailed from the post-slavery days, where you didn't have slaves anymore, but you had black servants, and you wanted them to live close to you. So the black neighborhoods of course were checker boarded, as were the white neighborhoods, rather than being cleanly separated. And that made for a very easy task of integrating the schools, because it reduced busing. We saw that in Orange County too. We had a white bus going one direction, and then there was () a black bus going in the other direction, coming by our door. And now you didn't need the buses at all, because the schools would be truly for the local kids, black and white. And the urban renewal, of course, served to separate the board, put all the white squares on one side and black squares on the other. So that, for that very short time where integration reduced the strain by eliminating busing, it was very quickly transformed into a situation where integration could only be had through the contrivance of busing, which nobody liked, black or white. And I was not really tuned into this, I wasn't aware of it. I was preoccupied with my research, with my teaching, with Friends School, issues with my own family.

JW: I know you became very involved with the anti-war movement, especially the draft resisters. I imagine for you, that was a pretty natural shift of focus from ().

PK: () change in focus.

JW: Did the anti-war movement, specifically at Duke, was that a further development or maturation, the activism that developed for civil rights, or was this something that developed--

PK: () the activism sort of left its mark on the student. There was () the students could do, because there was no question that the students were the ones that took the lead in transforming

Duke. I remember the vigil on the quad after Martin Luther King's assassination, that was the most powerful demonstration of the role students could play in transforming a university that I can imagine.

JW: Were you involved in the vigil?

PK: Well, I was there, but I had no organizational responsibility. My kids insisted on camping out there. I had to go keep an eye on them, they were pretty young to be out there with a bunch of raucous college students, although the behavior there was impeccable, students () was a very dignified affair . So there was a tradition of student that certainly played into the anti-war movement, but I think the facts of Vietnam probably would have stimulated a reaction in any case. Maybe not as (). () time, we had two successive presidents at Duke who understood students, who were sympathetic to their aims, if not always to their methods, and who could act in a way that didn't inflame them needlessly. I'm thinking of, of course Terry Sanford, but before him--

JW: Douglas Knight.

PK: Douglas Knight, thank you. He was just here. But I blocked on his name. But Douglas Knight and Sanford, I think, made an enormous difference in both empowering the students and in preventing the more extreme kinds of student reaction that were seen in other institutions.

JW: Tell me from your perspective about the vigil and then the black student movement and the Allen Building takeover. How did this develop? Were you involved in ()?

PK: No. I didn't know anything about the black student movement in advance, or its actions, in advance of when they occurred that night. Students in my lab were part of this, and tell me when something was going to happen and what it war for, but I wasn't involved in any of the planning, and had no insight into how that was accomplished. To the best of my knowledge, none of us on the faculty were, I think these were truly student led movements. And even my friends from the outside, who were professional organizers and advisors to student movements, played no role in the Allen Building takeover, for example, or the Martin Luther King or the other sit-ins that took place on campus.

JW: What was the effect of those demonstrations on Duke, on the atmosphere?

PK: Well, I think it was profound. It certainly caused many of my uncommitted colleagues, my fence-sitting colleagues to reassess their positions. And you know, say you're not particularly concerned about King's message, and you go to class and two-thirds of your students aren't here,

because they're on the quad, you have to stop and think about the importance of what this man's message is. Since the students () views are going to anticipate they will be penalized for having missed class, but they're willing to take that penalty, and as a teacher, you can't be blind to that. So I think it certainly had an impact. And I can say this, just because I heard that impact reflected in conversations or faculty meetings--"Well, what shall we do about the exam that half my class missed. Well, given the reason they missed it, maybe we'd better reschedule it." Now that was not something you would have heard at an earlier time, but more of the students demonstrated, in such an effective and dignified manner.

JW: You mentioned that you were a member of CORE. Did you know Floyd McKissick?

PK: Oh, yes, of course.

JW: Did you have contact with him?

PK: Lots.

JW: At a movement level, a social level, a -- So did you become yourself involved, or were you a close observer of what was going on in Durham as distinct from what was going on at Duke? I'm sure you were very busy with () at Duke.

PK: I was involved in Durham, too. Initially, I was () the taxi service, and of course I knew all of these people from Durham. Then because of circumstances, I became more heavily involved in the Chapel Hill scene, but the principals in the civil rights movement were really the same in both communities, so I never made that kind of distinction.

JW: What happened--what's your view on how race relations have developed in Durham specifically, perhaps in the Triangle area, since the '60s?

PK: () gone through several phases. Certainly, there was a period in the mid-60s, probably through the early '70s, where you really felt that the--Joan Baez's metaphor of salt and pepper applied. () really could feel very hopeful about a colorblind community emerging. And then, I can't put a date on it, but at some point in the '70s where the black power movement began, you had the white and black academies, so the segregationist tendencies reinforced by the black power movement, which quite intentionally sought to separate the races. And there was a period there of very great tension. I always had a mixed lab, in terms of race, and half of my staff were black. And they very much reflected those tensions. That staff was long-term, permanent staff. They didn't change, but the same three guys, who at one point would come to parties with my graduate students, who were predominantly, in those years, in fact, exclusively white. Not

having to do with any exclusionary policy, but having to do with the fact that you didn't have many black Ph.D. students in biology. There was a period in the '60s where my black techs would come to parties with white students, and there was a period where they didn't come. They'd come to my home when I personally invited them, but when somebody in the lab said (), then they wouldn't come. And then () the '90s and then they were coming again. And now, I think within the university context, among the graduate students and faculty, () deny the existence of real problems, but I don't see any signs of color awareness.

JW: What's your sense of it being like among undergraduates?

PK: I have very limited contact, because I've been a research professor for most of my professional career. Shortly after I arrived, the National Institutes of Health gave me a career award that gave the university the funds with which to hire somebody else (). So I continue to teach the occasional undergraduate course because I enjoy it, but my primary responsibility was research and graduate training, so most of my emphasis has been on graduate courses and Ph.D. students. I have had some contact with undergraduate athletics, because I was for years the women's track coach, before we had a varsity team, it was still just club sport, I was their coach. And I was advisor for a number of undergraduate clubs () other activity. So my involvement with undergraduate life has been limited, and of course in those years, where I was involved, there were precious few black undergraduates. It's only in the last decade where we've seen that number increase significantly. When I've had them in my classroom, I have not detected any kind of diffidence on the part of other students. In my courses () reason perhaps because of my reputation, have in the past attracted disproportionate number of students from minorities, Hispanic, Asian, African-American. And I haven't perceived any kind of awkwardness or difficulty in their interactions with the white students (). So I'm aware of the articles that the Chronicle publishes, which point to this, that, and the other difficulty and I don't doubt that these perceptions are real, and I am willing to accept that some of the perceptions may even be based on objective actual grounds, although probably many of the other aren't. But I can't say that I'm aware of the kinds of awkwardness and difficulty that I was very much aware of in the early years of integration to Duke.

JW: How () off campus, in the community in Durham and Orange Counties?

PK: In the circles that I move in, the changes haven't been all that great, because I live in a rural area of Orange County, which has from day one been black and white together, and the only

thing that's changed are some of the surreal rules of behavior. When we first arrived here, we were living actually not where we are now, but for several months in a rented house near Bahama, and our nearest neighbors were a black tenant family, kids the age of ours, so right away started spending time with our kids. Our next door neighbor was an old, old southern dairy family, and they from day one were at our door with covered dishes and offers of help and--an aside here, when the first day we arrived, they came and they asked us if they could help us find the church of our choice, and we already had a contact with the local Friends Meeting, which is where we attend. Oh, () we were so afraid you might be Catholic. But she then invited us over to her house for afternoon tea, and we came and we were sitting in the garden, and this lady from the tenant family was sitting there with us, and we were all drinking tea together, and we thought, gee, the south isn't at all like we first thought it was. The next day, or a few days later, I don't know what it was, the tenant lady--I've blocked on her name, although we remain close friends to this day. In any case, she was having coffee with us in our kitchen, and the dairy farming wife came in, and we invited her to sit down to coffee--"No, thank you, I have to go." And she seemed a little agitated. And the next time we saw her, she explained to us the rules. You can sit down with blacks in the garden or on the porch, but you don't sit down with them in your kitchen.

JW: That must have seemed really bizarre. I think surreal is the word to use.

PK: Well, we learned that in Durham, you could be waited on by a black person, but they couldn't take the money, cash register, and in Greensboro, the other way around. () backwards, but () local restrictions and rules. My point is, that this applied to us in Orange County, where we live now, black and white together. We would go to social functions together, they formed together a volunteer fire department and have barbecues, () together. This was in the height of segregation. But there were these strict rules about where you sat. You could sit together outside--you never sat together inside. If your black tenant farmer came inside for coffee, he stood while you sat. He did not sit. and he knew that, and you knew that, and you knew better than to invite them to sit. That's what's changed. Folks across the street from us are long-time neighbors, black, and they would not sit down when they came to our kitchen for coffee. Now they do. Without anything ever having been said about it, we offer them a chair (), and of course we usually contrive to stand up to get something and then stay standing up too. But then, over a period of time, without anything changing, it wasn't just our families getting used to each,

because we see this happening right down the street. The rules are dropped. So because it was a rural community, the changes weren't dramatic, but subtle. And I just never was part of the urban social scene, so I can't concur with what happened here in Durham.

JW: That's fascinating. Looking back over all your years (), is there any particular event or impression that stands out? I'm sure with the Watts Grill incident stands out pretty much.

PK: () it wasn't planned, we sort of blended in. Well, it's really--I guess it does stand out, because it's one thing I hearken back to when I get really depressed and pessimistic about the future of American democracy, as I periodically become, as I am right now. Just re-reading some history of the rise of Hitler to power, and it's pointed out to me by one of my colleagues, Holly Koontz, historian at Duke, that when Hitler was made Chancellor in early '33, it was just a temporary appointment, he was not expected to be there, didn't have a hold on power at all and not a lot of support. And then there's the Reichstag fire in February and March, and the Capitol was burned down, obviously a communist, and that event allowed him to seize power, oppress the opposition, and from that day on there was no turning back. And I'm suddenly realizing, man, here we have this president who has squeaked into office, and no chance of continuing since he was even a majority, didn't have a majority of the popular vote, and now we have our equivalent of the Reichstag fire in 9/11, and suddenly the 18th century Alien Sedition Act is reenacted, it's called the Patriot Act now, but it's the same thing, () proceedings, and civil rights being restricted, freedom to travel. I think, my gosh, what a scary parallel. And you see people increasingly persuaded that yeah, our safety, our well-being is dependent on our supporting him all the way in Iraq. It just frightens me, but the thing that I always come back to, that gives me a little bit of hope, was the argument of my case before the US Supreme Court. I did get talked into going up there as a visitor and sitting next to Bill Van Alstein, who helped write the brief, and listening to the justices questioning the North Carolina state's attorney. At one point, Chief Justice Warren, having gotten the state's attorney to admit that possibly () did place a defendant at a disadvantage. The state had maintained that this was a harmless measure that didn't really deserve the court's attention, and the cross-examination was forced to admit that someone with a () hanging over his head had to reply yes when he answered questionnaires as to whether criminal proceedings were pending, and that would influence his ability to get a passport, or federal grant, or this that or the other. In any case, he finally admitted, yeah, it could have these adverse effects, at which point Justice Warren leaned forward and said, "Young man, would you

like to consult your superiors about changing the state's plea?" And Andy (), the state's attorney, looked around (). Justice Douglas leaned back in his chair and slapped his thighs and roared with laughter. () You know we've won. And the state's attorney did not change his plea, and the court adjourned, and that was that. Three months later I got a call from the New York Times, () I know that the Chief Justice had read the unanimous decision. I think back on that, and I think, well, there's still hope.

JW: There's one for the good guys.

PK: Yeah. Would today's court do that? I don't know.

JW: I don't know. Earl Warren is long gone.

PK: Yeah. Well, it wasn't just Earl Warren, though, I mean, there was some--

JW: Well, you said it was unanimous. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

PK: Well, I'm going to be interested to see this entire series of comments, I mean, I don't have any particular interest in reading this, but I will have great interest in reading some of your other reporters from the past. Are you going to transcribe all of this and put it together, or is it just going to get archived as tapes?

JW: It will be selectively transcribed. Some will, but the cost of finding somebody to type it ().

PK: () machine transcription isn't that far along.

JW: It's not. I asked someone who's an expert about it, and he says that the trouble with it is that different people's speech--

PK: You have to be trained--

JW: ()

PK: --train your computer. Now, we do that, we use these voice recognition devices a great deal in the lab. () some of the surgeons no longer have to worry about transcribing their recordings. They go directly into computer and a printout of what they said is waiting for them when they leave the OR. But you don't have individually to talk to your computer and then correct the output. Which is easier to do, but it has to be done individually, for each speaker. The day is coming when you have someone like me spend three minutes reading the text and then correcting the words as they appear on the screen, and then the machine is trained.

JW: Right. So eventually, yes, we'll be able to--

PK: Well, whatever you do transcribe, I will be very eager to see some of the others.

JW: I think it's going to be some very good reading.

PK: How many folks have you had, or will you expect to have had by the time this project is at an end?

JW: Well, I would we would have several dozen, at least. Fifty, maybe.

PK: A lot of them are dying out.

JW: That's one reason that exists to get this done, or to get it started, really. I mean, it could be an ongoing process. What prompted you to come in this morning?

PK: Well, Lynn--

JW: Richardson?

PK: Richardson had phoned me back in September sometime and had asked me to come to Durham Library, and the date was a conflict with a conference I was attending, so I put it off, and she said, "Well, may I call you again another time?" And she did, and I couldn't say no twice.

JW: Well, thank you very much.

PK: Sure.

JW: This has been a real pleasure.

END OF TAPE