

Dr. Linwood Thomas Daye

Interview Summary

Interviewee: Reverend Linwood Thomas Daye

Interviewers: Carissa Fitchett and Nathaniel Bechtel

Interview Date: Thursday, November 1, 2012

Location: Zion Baptist Church, Newport News, Virginia

THE INTERVIEWEE. Dr. Linwood Thomas Daye was born on December 16, 1931 in Hillsborough, North Carolina. He grew up on a tobacco farm and attended Hillsborough Negro High School. After high school, he joined the army where he served in the Korean War effort for two years. After getting out of the service, he attended North Carolina College in Durham, North Carolina. He then rejoined the service and served an additional three years overseas. His goal was to become a mortician, but he was not allowed this opportunity because of his race. He then studied to become a military medic. At the end of his three years of service he returned to North Carolina College where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in 1961. He became the pastor at Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, and then at First Baptist Church in Mebane, North Carolina. During this time he became involved in the civil rights movement by protesting with students, participating in sit-ins, and preaching equality. His two daughters attended an integrated high school. To protect their safety, Dr. Daye dropped them off at school to the principal, who then escorted them inside. He experienced many threats, including harassment from the Ku Klux Klan. In 1966, he was offered the job of pastor to the Zion Baptist Church in Newport News, Virginia. In Virginia, Dr. Daye continued participating in the civil rights movement and the struggle for social justice by leading a protest against the *Daily Press*, creating the first daycare for black children in the area, and establishing a senior citizen home for elderly African Americans. He earned his Master of Divinity in 1972 from Shaw University and his Doctorate of Ministry in 1983 from Howard University. He is the author of two books, *Fifty Years in the Pulpit* and *Pastoral Crisis*. He is a licensed funeral director and has served at the Zion Baptist Church for more than forty years. The church has been called the “most influential black church on the Peninsula” for its involvement in the Newport News community.

THE INTERVIEWERS. Carissa Fitchett is business management major and history minor at Christopher Newport University. She is a spring 2013 intern for Walt Disney World Disney College Program. She intends to graduate in December of 2015. Nathaniel Bechtel is a senior Theater major with a History minor, who plans on pursuing Stand-up Comedy and writing after graduation. The two were partners for the Hampton Roads Oral History Project which was carried out in conjunction with their class on the Long Civil Rights Movement, taught by Professor Laura Puaca at Christopher Newport University in the fall of 2012.

CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW. The overall theme of the interview was Dr. Daye’s participation in the civil rights movement and how his experiences as a pastor influenced his participation. Dr. Daye discussed his experiences during his childhood in North Carolina, military service in Germany, early church work, family life, Newport News, and at the Zion Baptist Church. He also discusses the issues still facing African Americans today.

TRANSCRIPT-DR. LINWOOD THOMAS DAYE

Interviewee: Dr. Linwood Thomas Daye

Interviewers: Carissa Fitchett and Nathaniel Bechtel

Interview Date: November 1, 2012

Location: Zion Baptist Church, Newport News, Virginia

Length: 1:30:07

START OF RECORDING

CF: My name is Carissa Fitchett My partner is Nathaniel Bechtel, today is November 1 2012.

We are interviewing Dr. Daye. This interview is taking place at the Zion Baptist Church in Newport News, Virginia. This interview is sponsored by Dr. Laura Puaca, Director of the Hampton Roads Oral History Project and Professor of History at Christopher Newport University. Good afternoon Dr. Daye.

LTD: Good afternoon.

CF: You were born in Hillsborough, North Carolina in 1931. Can you please tell us what your childhood was like?

LTD: My childhood was in a rural area. I grew up on a tobacco farm and it was a challenging time but it was a great opportunity for me to learn as a kid that life is a challenge. And, strange as it may sound, but at a young age, in the early days of school, I decided that life had more than that to offer for me and I was determined that I was going to advance beyond that situation. Growing up, it was a challenge to just attend school because little kids, six and seven years old, some of them had to walk as far as 8 or 10 miles to school every day. And it was a real challenge. Most of the boys dropped out of school at the fourth, fifth, or sixth grade to work on the farm. But I'm very thankful that I decided at that young age that life could be better. I determined to go through school. I studied on a daily basis and I excelled academically in school

at that age. I made it through to the seventh grade. At that time, I had no idea how I could go to college but I entered high school. We had to ride school buses on country roads for about two hours in the morning with no heat on the buses on the way to the one high school, that was Hillsborough Negro High School at the time. I recall those long rides on the school bus each day as young kids about twelve or thirteen years old. And, by the time we would get to the school on a regular day, our feet would be so cold we hardly had any feeling in our feet because there was no heat on the buses. I made it through high school and kept my grades up with no idea what I would do after high school. But I was determined that would not be the end of my preparation. When I was about six or seven years old, I saw a neighbor die. The neighbor's son and I were both kids and we played together. When the neighbor died, at that time, we only had one funeral home in the area and it was white-owned. They would bury blacks, but they would not direct funerals for blacks. They had two black men who worked for them who were the grave diggers for the whites and funeral directors for blacks. When I saw that as a little kid, I decided I would make things better. So, when I was in high school, I decided I wanted to be a mortician and funeral director. During my last year in high school, I learned I had to do an eighteen-month apprenticeship before going to college for that academic pursuit so I went out seeking opportunities through the various funeral homes in Durham, which was about twenty miles away, asking them if they would allow me to enroll as a student with them to do the eighteen-month apprenticeship. I did the apprenticeship. And just at the time I was concluding my apprenticeship—I was nineteen years old at the time—I was drafted for the Korean War. I went into the military and served two years in the military. Most of the time I spent in Germany. This was an interesting experience for me, having completed my apprenticeship for mortuary science. But the opportunities in the military at the time were only for whites. Blacks could not enroll. To

keep me from feeling rejected, they gave me the opportunity to choose to go to medical school and become a medic for the military. For two years, I served in Europe as a medical technician. When I got out of the army after two years, I decided to further pursue education. I enrolled in the North Carolina College, as it was at that time, it's now North Carolina Central University. I enrolled there, pursuing a degree in biology and math. After two years, for some reason, my life kind of got off track. I saw that my life was kind of drifting to waste, so I decided I would go back to the military. I reenlisted in the military and there I served for three more years. While I was in the military, I felt the urgent call that I should be a minister of the gospel. For some reason, I always understood that whatever you pursue, you had to be trained. Therefore, while in the military, I enrolled in a bible college pursuing the opportunity to learn more about the journey of the Bible. When I was discharged from the military after that three years, I immediately reenrolled at North Carolina College. Being in the ministry, I changed my area of concentration from biology to social sciences and psychology and I earned a bachelor's degree. While at North Carolina College, as a young veteran and a young preacher, strangely enough, I was invited to become the pastor of a small, rural church with only thirteen members. I accepted the challenge and continued my educational pursuit. Upon completion of the bachelor's degree from North Carolina College, I enrolled at Shaw University Divinity School for a degree in Theology. While there, I was granted the opportunity to move up another step in the ministry and was offered the opportunity to become the pastor of a church in the small town of Mebane, North Carolina. There I pastored the First Baptist Church for four years and completed my pursuit. At that time, in theology, you didn't get a master's degree per se. You got your Bachelor of Divinity, which was a BD, after seven years of study. I had two bachelor's. So, while there, I became involved also in the civil rights movement, which was initiated by students at A&T

College in Greensboro, North Carolina. One day, later, it moved over to North Carolina Central, where we as students started participating and I got really involved in the civil rights movement. At the time, I was the minister of the First Baptist Church of Mebane, North Carolina. I took the lead in the civil rights struggle. It was a difficult time because, in that small town, there was only one place of employment at what they call a mill, where the men were employed. I became involved with the civil rights movement and was expected to take a leading role. I led some young teenaged kids in a protest movement. We sat in at the counters of these little market places and we marched with these young people and the women because the men could not participate in the civil rights movement. If it were discovered that they were participating, they would have lost their jobs at the mill. And so, for the first time, I was introduced to threats. It was a difficult time. I recall I got up one morning and went out to get my paper and on my doorstep was a dead possum with my name on it. Then a note stating, "You will be next." That was quite a challenging period in my life. But I continued on in the struggle and later, after four years there in Mebane, North Carolina, I was offered the opportunity to become the minister of a larger congregation in Henderson, North Carolina, which was about 45 miles away from Mebane. And there, in Henderson, I had two young daughters. One was eight and the other was six. Yet I led the movement with my two young daughters to integrate the school there in Henderson. That was really a challenge. Each morning, I had to take my two young daughters to school and the principal would come out to the car to escort them into the school. There would be members of the Ku Klux Klan on the school campus grounds yelling, "Nigger, go home, we don't want you here!" It was a real challenge for my two little daughters. I still wonder sometimes. "Should I have put them through that?" But they survived it and did well, and I became more involved in the civil rights movement. I was enrolled in Shaw University. I completed my degree at Shaw

University. So for four years I labored there and that was quite a challenge. I don't guess you know anything about the Ku Klux Klan?

NB: The class had had a little education, mostly on their terror tactics. Is there something you would like to say about them?

LTD: Well, at that time, the Ku Klux Klan was a hatred group of whites. They would do most almost anything. There were lynchings in some places. At that time, Martin Luther King's movement was at its peak. They threatened me day and night. I recall so well many nights they parked in front of my door in three or four cars. They threatened to drag me out into the street. But somehow I made it through and, right at the peak of that, I received an invitation to come to Newport News and become minister at Zion Baptist Church. After arriving here, I said I wouldn't get involved anymore. But after about a year, a young lady from the congregation came to me and said she was getting married. They had planned a big wedding. She had gone to the *Daily Press* to try and get her picture on the Society page in her dress. They not only refused the picture but they ran her out. I know this sounds foreign to you, but when she came to me and informed me of what had happened, I immediately called together a group of the black clergymen and we decided we would lead a protest against the *Daily Press*. We did and for a good while. I would say possibly twelve months we struggled with that. Mass meetings and marches all moving against the *Daily Press*. Eventually, we succeeded. So now everybody's picture is in it. Did you have any questions you wanted to ask while I was talking?

NB: We're just going to do some follow up questions based on what you've been telling us before. You mentioned the morticians in your hometown. What were race relations like in that town when you were a child? Were there any events that galvanized the black community while you were there?

LTD: Well, we were just divided. As blacks, we knew that we had few privileges that the whites enjoyed and we accepted it at that time. As I was telling you, I grew up on the farm. My dad was a sharecropper on the farm and everything was segregated with black here and white there. I thank God that I always had the faith that there was a better life. I try to tell young people of today, “Your future is in your hands and life is what you make it. You cannot let circumstances keep you from reaching your goals.”

NB: I’m sorry I just have a follow up question, we don’t actually have it written down, but it’s from your story. As a black man who served abroad when he was in the military, did you experience a different treatment from German citizens than you did from American citizens and serviceman?

LTD: German citizens? Oh yes! I recall so well when we first arrived in the little town of Augsburg, Germany. We were the first black troops there and I recall so well the first time that I got an opportunity to go out to the town. A group of us—all five of us were black soldiers—we noticed that German kids walked behind us and were looking down at us. We didn’t know what was happening, but then we learned later on that the white soldiers who had arrived there ahead of us had told the German kids that black people had tails. So we learned later that the kids would walk behind us trying to see our tails. [laughter] It was quite interesting. Even in the military at the time we experienced segregation. I recall so well they had a plan in place when we arrived in that little town and we were the first black soldiers there. When it came time for promotions, they sent us out for what we call TDY, training exercises. They would send us out on TDY and when we would get back to the compound, the white soldiers had been promoted and we were asking the question, “How did they get promoted when we were here before they were?” We learned later on that what was happening was when the time for promotions came

down, they would ship us out on TDY and give the promotions that we should have received to the white soldiers.

NB: That's fascinating.

CF: You said your two daughters went to an integrated school? Can you tell us more about why you chose to send them there and more about the struggles they faced?

LTD: Well, I sent them there because I was already involved in the civil rights movement and, being involved, I knew that somebody had to pave the way. By being a minister then and a leader in the civil rights movement, I had a responsibility. Somebody had to take the lead. At the time I was very much caught up in the civil rights movement and then I was asked by the congregation to take the lead. I subjected my two daughters to that and it was a harrowing experience. I had to take them to school every day and the principal would have to come out to the car and escort them into the school. There were people on the campus yelling, "Go home, nigger." It was a horrific experience not only for my daughters but for me as their father because I didn't really know what was going to happen. But my youngest daughter, who was about six at the time, said, "Daddy, I'm going to make all A's so the white students will have to like me!" [laughter] I guess she had a little of her daddy's determination because she did so. Now she's a very successful businesswoman down in Houston, Texas.

NB: Just because we are on the subject of education, we did just talk about your own family's struggles with integrate. What was your, and your family's, initial reaction to *Brown v. Board*?

LTD: To what?

NB: To the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to end separate but equal policy.

LTD: Glad to see it.

NB:[laughter] I think that's very good and true. You mentioned your time in North Carolina and specifically at Shaw, around the area and you mentioned your own efforts at organizing. Did you have much interaction other groups, such as the SNCC that organized at the time?

LTD: Yes, I became involved with the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. I became involved with them.

NB: Okay.

CF: Can you tell us more about your involvement with those organizations?

NB: You mentioned your sit-ins. We were just hoping you had a few more stories about protests or sit-ins that you were involved with.

LTD: Oh yes, I remember quite well. Martin Luther King—I'm sure you've heard of him—

NB: [laughter] A little bit.

LTD: We were having a national rally in Durham and Martin Luther King was to be the speaker that night. I was on the way. I was on the program at the rally, and I was on the way to the rally. I was running a little late and I was speeding. A cop pulled me over and he asked me where I was going. I made the mistake of telling him [laughter] where I was going and he said "You won't be hearing Martin Luther King tonight." They locked me up in jail. Put me in with the other prisoners. They kept me there until twelve o'clock that night when they knew the rally was over. Then they released me. No charges or anything.

NB: Now you mentioned your discrimination with the struggle to become a mortician. Did you face similar discrimination and challenges when you sought education to become a minister?

LTD: No. No, because at that time, 1956, we had come through a lot. It wasn't my participation in the civil rights movement, I was already a minister.

NB: You've mentioned your transition from North Carolina to Virginia. Did you find Virginia to be an equally hostile environment or were there differences between it and North Carolina?

LTD: No, it was the same here. I moved from one part [laughter] to another part. But, it was the same here, as I mentioned earlier with the *Daily Press*. There were a lot of things going on here. And the clergymen led rallies and demonstrations. We are still struggling. As I said earlier, your future is in your hands. You can do whatever you want to do if you put your mind to it.

CF: Your church, the Zion Baptist Church, has been called the most influential black church on the Peninsula. Can you tell us which ways the church has worked to improve the lives of African Americans and local residents in the area?

LTD: Yes, we've done so much. As I told you, this is my doctoral dissertation and it's all about what we have done as a church community. [pages flip] The first thing we observed here was that so many in the community—it was a poverty-stricken community. So many of the things that we have now they didn't have then. They had even less. But that encouraged me as a leader in the community to take the lead and try and improve. And I was grateful that the congregation was willing to follow my leadership. As a result, we were able to accomplish quite a few things for the community. Number one, we were the first licensed daycare center for blacks in the city of Newport News. We started with about thirty or forty kids. What we did was my wife and I went out through the community and interviewed people in the community. We discovered that so many of the mothers, especially, desired to be working but because they had small kids they couldn't. So that inspired me to start a school to offer the opportunity to all these mothers so they could go out and seek employment. I'm thankful that the congregation was willing to follow my leadership and I remember so well when we opened the school and secured the license from the state. On the first day, we had forty kids. We've had the school ever since. There was a positive

impact on the community. We had, at one time, over two hundred kids at the school. Then after that and visiting the various homes and neighborhoods I went through, I soon discovered that there were so many senior citizens who were living alone and who had no one to care for them. I was inspired to do something, to help them, because I visited so many homes and found elderly people living alone. No one was giving them medication. No one was preparing meals for them. So God gave me the vision that the church community could do something to improve their situation. I presented to the congregation a proposal that we would build a senior citizen home. They agreed to it and we built that home. It opened in 1985. We were licensed to care for twenty-four, and all on a daily basis. Not only did we care for the senior citizens, but we also provided job opportunities. And so, as a result of the measures we offered to the community, we have been able to empower a greater number of people through the years. At one time here, we were employing about seventy people on a daily basis and at the senior citizens home. Then from that we moved on to other programs. Do you want to hear about all those?

NB: Sure sir, yes.

LTD: Okay, then. After the senior citizens home, I realized that, this being a low-income area, many people in the community had not finished high school and had no training whatsoever. I presented to the church a proposal that we start a school called the Community Assistance School that would offer training in a number of areas [page flip]. I'll tell you some of the courses that we offered. [pause, pages flip]

NB: Sir, just as a quick question, would you say from most of what you've been describing a lot of your church's efforts have been community strengthening efforts?

LTD: Yes. [pages flip] I'm trying to find the courses that we were offering. [pause, pages flipping] Just when you look for something, you never find what you are looking for.

NB:[laughter] Now just while you quickly search, you were—you helped found this church itself and this building, you have mentioned—.

LTD: I didn't found it.

NB: You didn't found it—.

LTD: It was here before I came, but not in this building.

NB: The building you were—you were—the new addition to the building?

LTD: No.

NB: You mentioned before that often you had been new to a group that was relatively small. You mentioned in Carolina a new congregation you joined was thirteen individuals. What was the size of this church when you arrived?

LTD: I think it was around a thousand. [pages flipping] But I can't find the page with them. I think I can remember most of the courses we were offering in that school. We would train the people. We would offer a course in tailoring and typing, book-keeping, drafting, preparing people for the GED. Anyway, it did remarkably well because we had over a hundred students at one time. My ministry has always been about what the church can do for the community, not what the community can do for the church. So I think we've had a tremendous impact on this community. And all of the different ministries I've been involved in, I have no regrets. Being a minister for fifty years, we have great accomplishments. So now you can shoot with your questions.

CF:[laughter] We see that you pursued graduate work, first at Shaw and then at Howard. Can you talk more about that and did you move away from Newport News when you—

LTD: I commuted for my doctorate from here to Washington D.C. I made the trek for two years. I stayed on the Capitol Hill studying when I could.

CF: What inspired you to write your two books, *Fifty Years in the Pulpit* and *The Pastoral Crisis*? Can you tell us more about these two books mean to you?

LTD: Well, with all of the progress we made there was—. I wrote the first book, *The Pastoral Crisis*, right at the height of our accomplishments. You all might not understand, but I describe it as the Devil got involved [laughter] and created a lot of chaos in the congregation. One man couldn't have his way and he was of the sort of person in the congregation—. The reason why I call it *Pastoral Crisis* is because he led a group of the congregation on a crucifixion campaign against me because I'd been accused of some things, even though the church sided with me. Sometimes problems like this create real problems for the leadership and then the leaders are sought for so many things and you have to remain faithful and endure. As a result, we had a group of people who joined with that individual and whose sole intention was to drive me away. I felt that I had invested too much, that God had blessed us, and that we had accomplished too much for me to allow just a handful of people to tear down all that we did. So their main objective was to run me away. And because I refused to go and because I knew that the church was supporting me, I felt I would have done injustice to the congregation that had followed my leadership so far for me to jump ship just because of a little storm. You might not believe it, but they took me to court six times on trumped up charges, which were really a lot of effort. Every time the court threw it out, because there was really no value to it. But six times, for me and my family. That was a crisis that we came through. Finally, when I would try and have a meeting, they wouldn't let me. They would come to the meeting and disrupt it. Finally, the judge ordered a meeting because he was tired of dealing with this nonsense. [laughter] He even sent deputies over to maintain order and eventually we were able to conduct a meeting without distraction. So that was a blessing because—.

[Interruption]

LTD: It gave the church the opportunity to get rid of those people. As a result, the church dismissed those three or four people who had been leading them. That was a bitter lesson. The healing would not have begun if they hadn't left.

NB: Just because you've discussed division and dissent, obviously with that—. Was that a trial that faced the civil rights community?

LTD: No, no, no. No, that was just between this congregation. The community was affected because the community knew the contributions this congregation was making to the community and they were upset about it. So I wrote the book to remind all clergymen that you're not always dealing with Christians in the church, you know?

NB: You've mentioned before the struggles your daughters went through with the integration of schools. How important, not specifically your family, but family as a unit, as a bond—how important was family to the civil rights movement?

LTD: Run that by me again.

NB: How important were families to the civil rights movement? Acting together, you seem to have described the struggle as a very unifying force that families were involved in. I was just wondering was that a broad subject? That a lot of families were involved together?

LTD: Oh yes, colored families were always involved together. But in some situations, like I said when I was a pastor in the little town of Mebane, North Carolina at the mills, there were mostly men at work so they couldn't be coming to our public events. But under the table they were.

CF: You talked about *The Pastoral Crisis* book that you wrote. Can you tell us more about the *Fifty Years in the Pulpit*?

LTD: About the what?

CF: *Fifty Years in the Pulpit*.

LTD: In *Fifty Years in the Pulpit*, I talk about all my experiences from the beginning until my retirement. From the time I entered the ministry until the later years. It had been a challenging journey and a joyful one.

CF: What are some of the most important lessons that you learned from your fifty years?

LTD: The most important lesson I learned from fifty years is to know what your objectives are, be faithful, and the reward will come.

CF: Thinking about your time in the Hampton Roads area, how have you noticed that it's changed since you moved here?

LTD: Oh, it has changed considerably since I first came here because the community has changed from then to now. Families, primarily with one parent families. And then there has been a shift in the racial population because when I came here forty-sixty years ago, basically from here down to the James River was all white. Even on these streets there were whites. But now all those whites have moved out and so there has been quite a turnaround there. The move from a harmonious community that works to, unfortunately, a community of crime saddens my heart. Even the church—that we have to have deputies here to feel safe during worship services is sad. When I came here you would never even consider having security for services but now we have to have security.

CF: You were very active in your church among the community. Were you involved in any other community groups outside of the church?

LTD: Outside of the church?

CF: Mmmhmm

LTD: Oh yes, I was involved in a large number of watch groups, political activities and economics. I tried to be involved. I've always said that as a leader in the community you are a part of the entire community. That's how I tried to lead the congregation. Whatever affects the community affects the church.

CF: What was it like being the father of four children during the sixties, when the civil rights movement was in its prime?

LTD: It was a wonderful experience. I taught my kids to have respect and set your goals in life and, fortunately, I saw all of them finish college. My oldest son got his doctorate and he was in the ministry. Both sons were in the ministry. He came here to assist me while I retired and he got cancer and he died shortly after he came to my assistance. That was quite a trying experience but all of my kids have done well and I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to rear them at any time.

NB: Sir, you've given us considerably a large list of efforts and events and marches and accomplishments on your own part. Is there one you consider your greatest accomplishment?

LTD: I think my greatest accomplishment is the forty years that I've led this congregation and this community, that I can look now and see what my ministry has done for this community and church.

CF: Speaking of the church, in the eighties your church hosted many famous speakers such as Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. and Reverend Joseph Lowery, president of the SCLC. Can you tell us about these speakers and the impact they had on your church and the local community?

LTD: Well, at the time that they came, it was the latter part of the movement and I wouldn't say they had much impact on the church per se or any more than the total community because when they came it wasn't just the congregation but the entire community that was brought together. I

was just the one giving the leadership and I also happened to side with the (). But you know, it was more for the community than just us.

NB: We have been talking about the whole length of the civil rights movement. Is there anything you consider unfinished legacies of the movement? And do you think there are still pressing issues today that are left over?

LTD: I think one of the most important issues is now, after the civil rights movement. I think when the civil rights movement ended so many of our people assumed that we had arrived. As a result it is causing a lot of our young people in the community—too many of whom are talented, gifted and intelligent—to have gotten caught up in lifestyles and things not conducive to economic growth, spiritual growth, or education. And they are dropping out of school and getting caught up in the drug traffic, which was not the case before. During the civil rights movement in this community, I could walk anywhere I wanted at night without fear, but now I'm almost afraid to go out to my car at night. What I feel is the whole community attitude is different. This community has now become a community of crime and, unfortunately, we have a lot of it in the church congregation. But 80% of those who attend these churches don't live in the community. They come here to worship and just return to their communities. And so I regret seeing the community that was such a productive community earlier that is now so crime ridden. It's a sad sight to see the things that are happening—the murders and the robberies. I never dreamed that you would have to have burglar alarms on the church and need to protect it. I had never dreamed of that. Before I retired six years ago, it was so depressing that night after night after night the alarm system was going off and I'd have to get up and come over and meet the police and we had break-ins. In earlier times you never heard of such a thing as burglarizing a

church. But there's still hope and somebody has to take the lead and I hope that someday I will see the community be what it once was.

CF: Would you say that your church or the congregation has changed from the civil rights movement till now? We've talked about the community but not the actual church institution.

LTD: The actual church institution hasn't. I think you might not understand it but everybody whose name is on the church roll is not, theologically speaking, part of the church.

NB: I'm sorry, just looking over my sheet. Do you mind if we go back to your high school experience? What was it like attending the Hillsborough High School as a segregated school?

LTD: Well, at the time, there were advantages and disadvantages. But we knew that was what we had to deal with, and we tried to make the best of it for the most. And then some of us went on to be successful. You know, it was difficult at times, to see all the advantages were with students in white schools who had what we didn't have. All of us didn't let that hinder us. I always believed that. I look at myself and I say, "It would have been so easy to let that defeat me." But, as I said earlier, even as a child, I was determined that life had more to offer.

NB: You have spoken extensively about self-determination and your own sense of what's right. Would you say it was that just that self-intuition, that own purpose of what you should be doing with your life or was there another predominant figure who, if not guided, inspired your actions?

LTD: I think basically my own motto was more—. It was determination. I can't think of a particular person that really inspired me that much but I think it was just something that was in me.

NB: Ok.

LTD: I think that's important for everybody, because if you don't have that, I don't care how much outside influence you have, you just won't.

CF: You said in your college years that you were involved in the civil rights movement. In your earlier years were there any events of the civil rights that really inspired or motivated you to get involved?

LTD: No, as I said, I was a student in North Carolina College when it all began. Sit-in movements started at A&T College at Greensboro, and one day they went to North Carolina College and the next day I joined the movement.

NB: Specifically as the movement itself, do you think there's anyone particular event or cause that you were able to win that was the greatest triumph of the movement?

LTD: I can't think of any one particular thing. There are so many things. Put them all together. But, individually, I can't think of anything like that.

CF: How would you compare your church's involvement in North Carolina to you church's involvement here in Newport News, in regards to the civil rights movement?

LTD: In North Carolina, the church was, I think, more involved than it was here. I think maybe that was because many of the things we were protesting against at the time really happened there and that was because, like I said, in the area that I grew up and in the schools, we were suffering inhumane treatment in so many ways.

NB: You mentioned your transits to Washington D.C. for your doctorate. Did you notice a different cultural treatment just from being in different areas like North Carolina to Virginia to D.C itself? Did D.C seem different—

LTD: It was about the same

NB: Than the southern states? About the same? Ok.

CF: You talked about that protest here in Newport News that you lead to the *Daily Press* for not publishing the story of the woman getting married. Can you tell us about any other specific protests you were involved in?

LTD: What year?

CF: Just throughout your life.

LTD: Oh yes, one time they were going to resegregate the schools and I led us in another protest movement. They integrated the schools and then they came up with a plan that anybody could see was moving it right back, and we led protests. In fact, I recall, once it was snowing and there was a group of us ministers who were picketing at the school board offices in the snow. As I was out in protest, the superintendent had come up with this plan that was obviously a move backwards.

NB: I have a personal question, just as a very history oriented person myself. You had mentioned, again, your time in the military and the various means they would use to prevent promotion and telling German children that black soldiers had tails. Did the executive order that came after World War II that officially did desegregate the army—. How long did that truly take to effect? Where it wasn't only just an order, but the military—was it past your time when the military did finally embrace this?

LTD: It took a while, a good while. On paper it was there, but in reality it took some time. I would say a good five years.

CF: What do you consider the most important accomplishment of the civil rights movement?

LTD: Sometimes I wonder now. Well, I guess most of us—. Integrating the buses, that stimulated it more than anything else. The sit-ins and the buses. That kind of really got it going.

NB: Do you have any more questions?

CF: I just have a question I forgot to ask

NB: Oh, while she is thinking of one, sir you have described a long amount of history and a large amount of accomplishments. My question is, is there anything you, any event, any march, any protest where you wish you had tried a different tactic? Or are there some regrets that you feel not completely whole heartedly about? Or was this truly an everyday, every time you gave it your all and you felt—

LTD: Every day I gave it my best, and I told you earlier about when my two daughters integrated the schools in North Carolina and what my family and I went through there. The Ku Klux Klan and the possum in front of the house, dragging you out, and sitting there night after night. It was an awesome experience. We had to go all out to sleep at night. That was the most trying experience of my life.

CF: During the civil rights movement, voting for black Americans was a very difficult task as the whites tried to suppress their votes. Did you ever experience this?

LTD: I didn't but there were a lot of areas, especially in North Carolina, that blacks would not vote.

NB: Just because you've mentioned a lot about community-strengthening, did the church encourage citizens and community members to be politically active?

LTD: Oh yes! Yes, very much so because the whole civil rights movement was basically led by clergymen you know. It was also our movement as clergymen.

[interruption]

CF: The civil rights movement changed on a focus from non-violent protests, by Martin Luther King's ideals, to more of a Black Power movement and a Black Pride movement. Would you say

you related to one of these policies more than the other? Or would you consider one more effective than the other?

LTD: The civil rights movement was more effective. The Black Power movement was less effective. Being bad doesn't help any situation and you know it's difficult for you to abuse somebody when they don't fight back. I don't care who you are but that's it, that's the movement.

NB: Now to finish up, you have obviously seen the depths and horrors which with race relations were at its worst and you discussed your own view points on the end of the civil rights movement toward the black community. How do you feel having lived through all this history and all this and you see today's current race relations?

LTD: Well, it's sometimes disappointing because racism is still very prevalent. The thing about it though is that I see so many elements of racism that it's kind of under the table. But it's still there and a lot of things have happened and I hope I'm wrong, but I wonder if it will ever go away.

NB: Well, sir, as we are obviously wrapping up is there anything else you'd like to contribute that we haven't asked you so far that you believe would be important for the tail end of this interview?

LTD: No, I think you covered most everything and I hope that you can appreciate my side of the interview

NB: Oh, very much so.

LTD: I hope I served something that will help your research.

CF: Finally, do you have any recommendations for other people we might want to interview for this project?

LTD: Not really

NB: Ok, well then on behalf of our class and obviously the students of Christopher Newport University, you've helped out so much by agreeing to do this, we just want to go ahead and on record thank you so much for your time today.

LTD: Ok, and thank you for coming and I hope you'll gain some information from it.

NB: And this concludes our interview on the first of November, the year 2012.

END OF INTERVIEW

**Transcribed by Carissa Fitchett and Nathaniel Bechtel
Edited by Laura Puaca and Chuck Dailey**