

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH STANLEY R. WRINKLE

CONDUCTED AND EDITED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

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Interview with Stanley R. Wrinkle  
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott  
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TS: Stanley Wrinkle is a retired principal and assistant superintendent in the Cobb County School District. Stanley, why don't you start by talking about when and where you were born and a little about your background?

SW: Okay, thank you. I was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, and Knoxville is, in a lot of ways, still home. I'm blessed with two great homes, Knoxville and Cobb County. I have been for fifty years in Cobb County, but grew up in Knoxville and went to Knoxville public schools. I graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1964, obtained a master's degree in 1967 from Tennessee, and then got a doctorate in education in 1972.

TS: Also Tennessee?

SW: Also Tennessee. In 1964, after I graduated, I had taken a job at Bradley County High School, again in Tennessee. I had a chance meeting with some mutual friends of my brother and ended up in Cobb County teaching my first year at Keith Elementary School.

TS: Was that elementary or middle school?

SW: Well, it was a K-8 school at the time I was there, and then I was coaching at Marietta High School.

TS: Too early for middle school, isn't it?

SW: Right, right, it was prior to middle schools.

TS: That's right, even as late as the 1960s, you didn't even have Marietta Junior High School, did you?

SW: No, the county had junior highs that were 7, 8 and 9, but Keith had one eighth-grade class of about twenty-five to thirty kids. But, anyway, I had the opportunity to go to Wheeler High School with the opening faculty there. That was in 1965.

TS: Oh, you helped open the school?

SW: Well, I didn't help open it. I was just a teacher and a coach there the first year.

TS: Were you teaching the eighth grade at Keith?

SW: I taught seventh-grade English and eighth-grade English, and by a quirk I ended up teaching music, which I knew absolutely nothing about. Fortunately for the kids, I just had one music class a week. We survived that, and they survived it. We had a lot of fun, but we didn't learn a lot about music. "Puff the Magic Dragon" was the most popular song, and we sang that to a fare thee well. Then I went on to Wheeler.

TS: What did you teach at Wheeler?

SW: I taught history and economics. I taught there for two and a half years, and in the middle of the '66-'67 school year, I moved across the street to East Cobb [Junior High School] as the assistant principal. Then I finished my master's degree that summer. Then there was a possible change in the principalship, so I moved back across the street as assistant principal at Wheeler.

TS: There was a possible change in principalship at East Cobb?

SW: Right.

TS: So you didn't want to stay there?

SW: I didn't want to stay for that.

TS: So you got to be assistant principal at Wheeler?

SW: Right.

TS: What did you coach by the way?

SW: I coached football and track, but mainly football.

TS: Were you the head coach?

SW: No, I never was a head football coach at either place.

TS: So you were assistant coach in football, and what about track?

SW: I was the head track coach. Actually, Corky Kell, who was a legend around here with a school [later] named after him [Carlton J. Kell High School] came down in 1965 from Copper Hill, Tennessee, where he had been the head football coach. He had the offensive line, and I had the defensive line, and we just loved football.

TS: Who was the head coach?

SW: J.L. Jones, who went on to be a principal in Cobb County and retired several years ago.

TS: Do you think being a coach is good schooling for being an administrator?

SW: I certainly do, but it depends. A coach who takes his teaching seriously is just a nugget of gold in the classroom, if kids view the coach as serious about academic success of his students. The first mark of a good school administrator is he or she is serious about teaching and learning.

TS: Okay, so what year are we up to now?

SW: We're in about 1967.

TS: In 1967 you're back at Wheeler as assistant principal. And you're all of about 25 years old?

SW: Yes, about that. Then Alton [C.] Crews came to be the superintendent of schools in Cobb County [in September 1967]. Cobb County had been kind of a rural district, and it was not on the cutting edge of what was happening in education. Alton Crews, if there ever was a man who was [on the cutting edge], it was he. He advertised for a job for someone to come into the central office in the summertime and write a policy manual. The person who did it had to go through all the minutes of the board for years past, all the memoranda and everything that had been sent out, interview with people and so forth, to write a policy manually, which was codified. In other words, you would have a policy on field trips and a policy on attendance . . .

TS: So you're going through the minutes to pull out decisions that were made?

SW: Decisions and so forth. So I spent that whole summer writing the policy manual, and Dr. Crews used that at his first administrative meeting, kick off, at the beginning of the year, and every administrator got a copy of that. After that he employed me for almost two years as what was called the coordinator of informational services.

TS: This would have been the summer of '68 that you were writing this?

SW: That's right. Then I stayed there and did that for two years and then went back to graduate school, back to Tennessee, and came back in '72.

TS: So you actually took a leave of absence for a year or two?

SW: Yes, I took a leave of absence and came back as principal of Sedalia Park Elementary School in 1972. Kermit Keenum became superintendent in [February] 1973, and I don't know whether he asked me or he told me, but somewhere between the two that I was going to open Walton High School. He told me that in the summer of 1974. Of course, I kept my mouth shut until it was done. One of the interesting things about Walton—Walton had been opened to get Wheeler off of double sessions, and it was just a madhouse. Walton High School was built in eleven months. I got a call from Mr. Keenum one day at Sedalia Park, and he said, "You know, we've been on double time trying to get this school opened, and we have not named it."

TS: You've got a revolutionary hero for a name.

SW: He essentially said, "What do you want to name it?" I said, "Give me a little time, and I'll call you back." The board had to act on it because, if I understood it correctly, after a certain time, if the school doesn't have a name, it has the name of the road it's on or the street it's on: Powers Ferry Road, Powers Ferry Elementary School and so forth. So I went into the library, and I looked up all the people who had signed the Declaration of Independence. There was already a Lyman Hall High School; there was already a Button Gwinnett school; but George Walton didn't have a school named after him at that point.

TS: That's amazing.

SW: I called him back and said, "Why don't we name it George Walton Comprehensive High School?" And, lo and behold, the board acted on it, and that's how we got the name George Walton High School.

TS: How about that! I had never heard that story before of how it got its name. And that was obviously before any formal procedure of nominating names for schools.

SW: Yes. So it worked out fine. Anyway, I was at Walton for almost a year in opening or half a year, and then I was there for two years. Then I was appointed assistant superintendent for instruction for Cobb County in '77, and held that job until I retired in 1994.

TS: You were still fairly young when you retired then in '94.

SW: I was. I was 52 when I retired, and I don't regret it a bit.

TS: Well, let's back up and maybe talk about Alton Crews. What are your memories of him?

SW: He was probably one of the leading superintendents in terms of image. He had a doctorate from Columbia University in New York, a brilliant man, a good administrator, but he was not astute politically. It's interesting; when he came here he had seven solid votes on the board.

TS: Seven member school board.

SW: Right, seven member school board and unanimously accepted. Well, when I say not politically astute, that's probably not putting it the right way. He was bound and determined to do the right thing for the schools of Cobb County, and it didn't make any difference if it risked his position with the school board, but I'll tell you about the political part in a little bit. The first fight he had was with Mr. Sollie [C.] Cole. Mr. Sollie Cole was in the milk business.

TS: Right, down in Six Flags.

SW: That's right, and he pretty much had the Cobb County Schools' milk business. Dr. Crews said, "We're going to bid the milk business." So there went Sollie Cole's vote. Lost that one.

TS: A little ethical consideration there.

SW: Right, and, you know, back in those days that was never thought of.

TS: I guess we should mention that he's really the first professional full-term superintendent that was appointed as opposed to the old days when they ran for election every four years.

SW: Right. In fact, the first one was Jasper [M.] Griffin, and he had been elected, and then the board appointed him, but that didn't last very long.

TS; There was an interim?

SW: The interim was J. Milton Lewis [from May to September 1967], and then Dr. Crews came in. He was just—his dress, his appearance, and having someone you call "Dr." was a real rarity around here.

TS: Yes. But everybody's really learning the role of the superintendent and the school board, I guess, in that period.

SW: Yes. That's a great point, it was. But all this business that was going on with the milk business was a result of the board not having the policy manual or the policies that I first mentioned in the beginning.

TS: So that was why you were doing a policy manual.

SW: Right. And I wasn't doing it toward any board member. I just got the job. What started out as a policy manual about that thick is now volumes, as you well know, because the board is supposed to make policy—not run schools, but make policy. So that really started the whole policy.

TS: That's always the issue, isn't it? What are the board's duties, and where do they step over the line [into the superintendent's responsibilities]?

SW: That's correct, and there's always going to be tension between a board of education and a superintendent. If you don't have that there's an imbalance of power somewhere. Some boards and superintendents can keep that a healthy tension and disagree and the board doesn't say, "We're going to get you fired," and the superintendent doesn't say, "I'm going to make you look like a fool in public." It's when they get to that kind of position that schools don't work very well. Anyway, he lost Mr. Cole. Mr. Joe [Joseph S.] Bird [representative for Fullers and Vinings]—a jeweler had approached him out in east Cobb and wanted to sell class rings and graduation paraphernalia beyond what the schools

would select from a vendor. Dr. Crews didn't want to do that. Well, he lost Joe Bird over that one.

TS: And that is a school board function to vote on who the vendor is going to be?

SW: Well, I don't believe they voted on it, but it was the tradition, if not the policy, that you have Herff Jones and Josten's and these other businesses that would come in and show their rings and so forth to kids. Then the kids generally took whichever vendors, and that's who they bought their class rings from. You can do this now. You can go to K-mart or Walmart and buy a class ring, I think. He [Bird] wanted to—"I'll design your own ring, just for you"—he wanted to do that. Well, Dr. Crews didn't want to do that. Mr. Tom [R.] Wootten was on the board [representing northwest Cobb] as well, and he was Dr. Crews's most ardent supporter. A fellow named Lloyd [M.] Perry up in Acworth ran against him. This was after I was gone. I had gone back to school.

TS: Lloyd Perry ran against Wootten?

SW: He ran against Wootten.

TS: And you were back in Tennessee working on your doctorate.

SW: Right, at that point. Dr. Crews went out publicly and walked the Acworth area and all in support of Tom Wootten; he made no bones about it. Well, Tom Wootten lost the election. So now you've got a three-four board, and then you have a fellow named Ray Gary, who is a long time, still living, attorney; and his son is really the functional attorney right now. Mr. Gary saw that he could become the swing vote, and he was the swing vote. There was this constant battle, and a lot of stuff Mr. Gary didn't support the superintendent on. The board wanted Alton Crews gone, and Alton Crews was so bull-headed and so self-confident—he knew that he was not going to have four votes if things kept going the way they were. So, he made a deal with another board member that, "I'll leave if you'll not run for the board."

TS: That was Smitha wasn't it?

SW: No, that was Mr. Joe Bird.

TS: That's right! I do remember that.

SW: Joe Bird. He [Crews] was appointed as superintendent in Charleston, South Carolina. He appointed me and got four votes for me to come back to Sedalia Park because the board would want to get whomever—if they couldn't get the superintendent they could get the people that he wanted.

TS: So he was getting you out of the central office.

SW: Well, see I was out of the central office anyway because I went back to school; so actually the elementary principalship was an advancement for me.

TS: Were you keeping up with what was going on in Cobb County while you were in Tennessee?

SW: Pretty much. When Dr. Crews offered me that position, he said, “I need to tell you that nothing is certain down here right now. I don’t know whether I’ve got four votes for you or not.”

TS: For Sedalia Park?

SW: But anyway he did, and I came back.

TS: Did you enjoy it at Sedalia Park?

SW: I did. It was a wonderful little school at that point, and it was a real fine experience for me. I had never been in elementary education, and I had to get in and learn it. I had a great faculty and a great community.

TS: East Cobb is really booming at that point.

SW: Oh, yes. They were building schools right and left out there. It was a great time.

TS: You did that two years?

SW: I did that two years, and then Mr. Keenum asked me—well, I’ll tell you how that worked, Tom. Phil [Philip L.] Secrist was the social studies supervisor in Cobb County, and he resigned. Harold Dennis had come with Dr. Crews as the assistant superintendent for instruction. Earlier he had that position a long time in DeKalb County and had a falling out with [DeKalb superintendent] Jim Cherry. So Dr. Crews brought him over here, and they were good friends for a while.

TS: Crews and Dennis were good friends?

SW: Yes.

TS: Phil goes to Southern Poly or Southern Tech at that point; is that right?

SW: I think that’s pretty much what he did, but he had some misunderstandings within the system, and he just felt it was better for him to go. When that job came open, I called Harold and said, “Can I come down and talk to you about the social studies position?” He said, “Sure you can, come on.” This is when I was at Sedalia Park. That had been my major and my teaching, and I loved it. I went down and talked to him, and he said, “Stanley, if you want the job, it’s yours. All you have to do is tell me you want it, and you’ll clear it with Kermit and so forth.” So I went right from Harold’s office up to



Kermit's office. Kermit had been appointed to special administrative assistant before I went back to school. So he and I had worked together closely on bond issues and with a fellow named Tom Mathis as well. We were known as the three fair-haired boys in Cobb County. Kermit, Tom, and I had become really close friends and still are. I turned around and called Jo Allison and asked if I could see Mr. Keenum for a few minutes.

TS: You called whom?

SW: Jo Allison was his secretary. She said, "Yes, he is available; come on up here." I went up thinking I was probably going to be the next social studies supervisor. Well, I went in and said, "Kermit, you know this job is open down there. I talked to Harold, and I think it could work out, but I certainly need your approval." I remember he got up out of his chair, and he walked over to the wall in his office, and he pulled down a map. He said, "Do you know we're building a brand new high school right here, and I want you to open it. You don't need any little piddling job like social studies supervisor. I want you to open this high school." So that was the end of my pursuit of the social studies supervisor position. Of course, I ended up getting to name the school and open the school, and it was a marvelous job.

TS: Talk a little bit about Kermit Keenum.

SW: He is one of a kind. He is the most politically astute, seeing the big picture, person that I have ever known. He knew how to handle the board, to work with the board, and to work with people in the community, and he is unparalleled. I think I said in that back cover to the book [Keenum's autobiography, *From Sharecropper to Shareholder in One Generation*] . . . let me read what I wrote. I don't know how long it took me to come up with this, but I said, "Sometimes people just have God given leadership talent. Kermit Keenum was and is in that class. Educationally, politically, administratively, and ethically, for the Cobb District he had it all. In instruction he saw the big picture...but in minute detail. Because of what he did and how he did it, innumerable people still call him one of their best friends." That's the best description. I just share this one thing with you. When the current superintendent came into town, he wanted to talk to a bunch of people. You may remember he had this listening tour he called it, I believe, and one of his secretaries contacted me and asked me if I would come in. I said I would, and I went in and talked to him. He said in the course of that conversation that, "I'd really like to talk to Kermit Kennan." Kermit was not living in Cobb County at that time, but again we were close, personal friends. He asked, "Could you arrange that?" I did, and so we went to lunch at Shillings on the Square. Kermit told him several things in a very kind and helpful way, I thought. He said, "This is what I did. I had a list of 100 to 125 names of people throughout the county while I was superintendent here for eight or nine years. Some of them were big name, Earl Smith, people like that. Some were not big names, but people that I knew. Every day just about I called one or two of them just to say, "Hey, this is Kermit, I want to know how you're doing, but more importantly for me, I want to know how our schools are doing—what's happening out in your neighborhood." He had this broad base of people that he kept in contact with. That's what makes Kermit Keenum who he is. He knows how to work with people.

TS: You know, when you talk about somebody being politically astute, you oftentimes think of somebody who maybe just goes with the flow, so that he's always on the winning team, but in reading his book, my impression is he was pretty strong-willed and didn't mince words. Nobody had any doubt what his opinion was.

SW: Absolutely. When it comes to principle, the principles are uncompromisable, but the way you do it is compromisable. The timing, who you talk to, who you don't talk to, all that sort of stuff, that's where the skill is. It is knowing how to do it—first of all, knowing what is the right thing to do, the ethical thing to do, but then knowing how to do it and get it done. That was Jesus. He never compromised a principle, but he said, "Give to Caesar what's his, and give to God what's his." He knew how to keep the flame from being lit.

TS: That's true. I did get the impression that maybe Kermit Keenum's style worked better with an all male board than when you had a majority female board.

SW: Yes. I would just put it this way. It depends on who the females are.

TS: And the males too.

SW: And the males as well. But I don't think it was a matter of their gender; it was a matter of their agenda. The great board members this district has had are people like Carl Harrison, Jack Darnell, John Frey, Harold Posey, Bill Bates.

TS: These are all males that you're listing.

SW: Bob Shaw . . . well you caught me there.

TS: Betty Gray?

SW: Betty Gray, forgive me, one of my very best friends. If you had the Betty Grays . . . and all those people are just about all alike. It's not my view, though, because I'm sure there are other people. I view it from one perspective, and there are other people who view the women and the men from another perspective. They may give a completely, very favorable, description, and I don't mean to degrade anybody. I just know that we've had some bad luck with some of the female board members. But by the same token, we've had an equal amount, proportionately, of bad luck from some of the male board members.

TS: Is it ideological; is it personalities; or what?

SW: Well, it all comes down to what they want to be on the board for. Quite honestly, when some board members get to focusing on some constituents or somebody that has a real interest in class rings or something else, that's when things go awry. You can have sound, philosophical debates about the instructional program or construction or transportation or something and what's best for kids. But when it becomes essentially a non-education issue, which is something that's important to me, that's when things begin to fall apart.

TS: I know during Kermit Keenum's first term back in the 1970s it sounded like the really emotional issues were things like teaching evolution and sex education, social issues. The board seemed to be more concerned about that than whether the students were actually learning anything.

SW: Unfortunately, the evolution and sex education thing fell into the instructional department.

TS: I guess they did. Why don't you talk about those?

SW: Well, the evolution part came about at a board meeting, and we walked into that board meeting with no idea whatsoever what was going to happen. It had to do with the fact that we were adopting science books.

TS: Is this after you go back to the board after you'd been a principal?

SW: I had only been there a month or two. This was in, let's see, August/September of 1977.

TS: So you've left Walton?

SW: Right, I've left Walton and made the transfer that summer.

TS: So welcome back to the board, back to the superintendent's office.

SW: We were in a board meeting, and there was a part on the agenda for me. We weren't adopting science books, but we were getting ready to. I think I was providing information. I had a report or something like that. Well, Mr. John McClure who was on the board at that time . . .

TS: What part of the county was he from?

SW: He was from the Sprayberry area. He had been an ROTC instructor at Sprayberry and had retired—a very interesting character. I remember, I think, going up and sitting in a chair at a desk in front of the board. Then you presented what you had. He had a paper sack full of books beside him, and, lo and behold, I said what I had to say, and he went on a tirade about teaching creationism that you wouldn't believe. Of course, the boardroom had been stacked with people who were against the science we were teaching.

TS: But you didn't know this was coming?

SW: I did not; nobody had an idea. Of course, they were raising their hands and shouting every time he would say something. He concluded it, and he presented this resolution about giving equal time to creationism as you did to evolution.

TS: Equal time?

SW: Equal time. The textbooks that you used had to give equal time to it. He just went on and on and on.

TS: Which is hard to find a reputable textbook that gives equal time I would imagine.

SW: Right. Of course, the board members were scared to death. They didn't know this was coming about. You're out there, and you're about to become an atheist if you don't support it.

TS: That's kind of ironic that you would be on the side defending the secularists.

SW: [Laughs.] He introduced this resolution and Mr. [William O.] Smitha seconded it, and before long there were seven votes for creationism.

TS: Unanimous?

SW: There was not a soul against it.

TS: Nobody was willing to go up against it?

SW: Absolutely. Even the school board attorney, Fred Bentley, spoke in some fashion, but he did not leave any question. Of course, Kermit just sat there silently. The very next day, I got a call from a textbook "publisher" who had all the textbooks I needed. There was an organization called The Institute for Creation Research in California, and all this business about creationism was centered right there in that place. So, we went through the process, and we proposed to prepare a statement and paste it in the front of all the biology books particularly about what we were going to . . .

TS: I remember that. That became controversial too.

SW: Well, that happened again just a few years ago. See, we did this long before that one. I said something about the other version of creation that was written down in ancient documents and so forth, but anyway, we did that.

TS: So you took the standard biology textbooks, and you put an insertion in the front that would be pro-creationism?

SW: That's right, to try to offset it. Then we bought a bunch of these creationism books and put them in the libraries because the balance had to be in the libraries as well. Then we created a course on creationism that was taught on a pilot basis at McEachern High School. You talk about . . .

TS: I bet you were getting it from both sides.

SW: Well, I went in to my daughter one time. It was really miserable at home because I was getting, not threatening calls, but tough calls at home, being called an atheist an all that.

TS: My goodness!

SW: I went in to Kirsten, and she said, “Dad what is all this creation business? Why are you having such a tough time with that?” I said, “Honey, it’s just a matter of the United States Constitution, what you can and cannot do.” So Wade Scholes [assistant superintendent and later principal]—I went into his office one day, and he said, “How’s the creationism business going?” I said “Not too well, they burned a monkey in my yard last night.”

TS: Oh, you’re kidding.

SW: No, I was just joking. But here’s the key point: Wayne Edwards, who was the science supervisor at that time, researched this Creation Institute, and he found they were sending out to local school districts procedures and steps to take to get your school board to get creationism books into the school. They had written a resolution for your board to adopt, and the resolution from the Creation Institute in California, headed by Duane Gish, was exactly the same resolution that Mr. McClure had brought. In fact, in their procedures they said that it would be better if you didn’t even mention the Institute for Creation. For them to think that it’s . . . well, when it came time to adopt the books, I pulled that out on him, and said, “Here’s where you got that, Mr. McClure.” Anyway, the board went ahead and adopted the books that we had, but that pretty much blew the creationism business up.

TS: I bet you had some biology teachers up in arms.

SW: Oh, gracious, talk about mad! They were upset.

TS: So you stopped being an atheist after that!

SW: Yes! I was a good Methodist, but it was a difficult time.

TS: I guess so. What about the sex education? Were you involved with that?

SW: Well, the sex education was in middle school, and we had a lot of parents that were really interested in that, and particularly through the PTA.

TS: Interested in having it taught?

SW: Yes. Having it taught and having it taught in a responsible way. To do it at all was just like raising a red flag in a bull’s face to some of these parents. We set it up, and this was pretty much Mr. Keenum’s plan. He said, “We’re going to take this program to the board, and we’re going to have them approve it, but we’re going to stipulate that we will not do it unless we have full seven member support of the board to do it. If we don’t, then we’re not going to do it.” Of course, the politics of that was that you knew you’d

have two votes not to do it, but we were going to let them have the wrath of the PTA on them for not having voted for it. There was an uprising of PTA people not to let two people stand [in the way]. Of course, the next time, Mr. Smitha and Mr. McClure both got beat for the board.

TS: That solved that.

SW: For the time being it did.

TS: Right. Talk a little bit about opening the school at Walton High School and being the principal there.

SW: It was just such a blessing and a pleasure. It was a matter of pulling kids from Sprayberry and Wheeler, neither of the schools having a great love for the other.

TS: We don't have a Lassiter; we don't have a Pope at that time.

SW: That's right. [Dodgen] Middle School opened at the same time right across the street, and Murdock Elementary School opened at the same time. We took ninth and tenth graders and eleventh graders who wanted to come from both schools. It was voluntary on [the eleventh graders'] part to come if they wanted to. The school was being built while the faculty was in there trying to get ready. In fact, we didn't open up with a gymnasium. We didn't even have that, but we got in there. One of the first things I did was to pull together a committee of students to name the mascot. I was just hoping that they were going to name it the Walton Patriots just to fulfill the whole thing. They wouldn't have anything to do with the Walton Patriots, but they wanted the Walton Raiders. So the students gave the name the Walton Raiders. I interviewed teachers from both Sprayberry and from Wheeler, and I would say that it was probably close to a third and a third and a third. I got a third from each of those two schools and then a third from other schools plus a few new teachers. The parents just poured in to support the school. Of course, the big thing for many parents, for all of us, was the athletic program, and we played a B team schedule in football and basketball, well, just about everything.

TS: Was [James M.] Jim Wood the coach?

SW: Jim Wood was the head football coach.

TS: Who also came from Fulton High School in Knoxville, Tennessee?

SW: He and I grew up and went to school together, as he did with you. Alan [C.] Pope had come as the head basketball coach from Sprayberry, an outstanding athlete at Sprayberry. His mother taught at Sprayberry for years. He was selected as the head basketball coach. He was a great young man, a great teacher, just the example for anyone to follow, the kind of person you'd want your child to play for. Well, at Thanksgiving of that very first year just a few months after school had opened, he and his wife and his little boy had gone on a trip to Alabama, I think it was, anyway, it happened in Alabama. They had a

head on collision, and they were all three killed [November 30, 1975]. The hardest day of my professional life was learning about that on a Sunday night and dealing with it and going to school the next morning and pulling the basketball team together first and telling them what had happened and then telling the faculty over the next few days. Nelson Price [pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church] was just a saint. Alan and his family and the Pope family had gone to Roswell Street. He came out and had a memorial service at the school because otherwise we would have every student wanting to go to the funeral at Roswell Street. Anyway, it was just a tragedy, and, ironically it was just a few months ago that Mrs. Pope, his mother, passed away. She was 89. I wrote a letter to the editor of the Marietta Daily Journal, and they were very kind to publish that. But anyway, that happened. [In 1987 the Cobb County School District opened Alan C. Pope High School in east Cobb, named in his memory].

Then the second year we were there, the booster club had built a football stadium, and we got our gym opened the first year, and we were well on our way. I did some recruiting up at the University of Kentucky for the school district. I happened to be up there [when] they had “dead week,” and “dead week” meant that there was nothing going on; “we’re getting ready for exams.” Of course, we were on the quarter system in the school district at the time. So I said, “We’re going to have dead week [at Walton]. Every teacher will give a final exam in every course. It will count so much of the final grade.” We established what we liked to think was a very strong academic program and that was a very disciplined part of it. People recognized that, and a lot of kids really supported that kind of idea. But, of course, you’ve got a wide diversity when you have 1,700 kids there. We felt like we got it started off right. I just loved it. I just love Walton High School today.

TS: You actually had a week that—are classes going on during that week?

SW: Oh, yes, classes are going on, but we said we’re going to minimize everything we can.

TS: No extracurricular activities.

SW: If we’ve got a basketball game that’s scheduled or whatever, we will do the things that we have to do, but if we don’t have to do it, we’re not going to have club meetings and all these other sorts of things. We’re going to go home and study. That kind of caught on. But it was just a wonderful time. I have been so blessed.

TS: That was a pretty affluent part of the county.

SW: Oh, yes. Kids smoked back in those days. Every Cobb County school had to come up with a smoking area, and a lot of kids smoked. You would not believe the amount of time I spent on the opening days of Walton High School on two things: one was cheerleading and how we were going to choose the cheerleaders and how we were going to handle smoking. Well, we set up a couple of periods, the break time, where they could go out and smoke. We set up a smoking area, and when you had the smoking period, not everyone of them smoked, but it was a mass of kids out there. Of course, you had drug

dealers out there, and it was a mess. Thankfully, John McClure, [the district] board member supported doing away with smoking. Anyway, we had our share of discipline problems and drug problems, but we established what was Saturday school, so instead of suspending kids and kicking them out of school for two or three days, you would get so many hours in Saturday school. If you didn't do Saturday school, and your parents decided whether you came or not . . . well, I paid teachers out of the Coke fund and so forth, and we set up Saturday school, and, lo and behold, the parents had their kids back up there. Boy, they hated it. I remember some kid saying, "Nobody has Saturday school; nobody anywhere has Saturday school. But there was a movie where they were having Saturday school."

TS: So Saturday school was for the disciplinary problems?

SW: Saturday school was for the disciplinary problems. If you do something, you would go to Saturday school instead of being kicked out or suspended. Of course, if you had a minor [offense], you might stay after school or a silent lunch or something like that. I really wanted to get out of kicking kids out of school.

TS: Did you not have a Jewish Sabbath problem?

SW: That never came up.

TS: I would think in that area there would be a fair number of Jewish students.

SW: If that had come up, we would have said, "We will work out some other arrangement for your child." But I never thought of that coming up, and it didn't come up.

TS: Wow. So was it all day on Saturday?

SW: It was up until the early afternoon.

TS: I imagine they did hate it.

SW: And they didn't come in and go out and do work. Everybody came in, and you could study.

TS: It was a study hall?

SW: They could bring their homework and do that, but getting up and being at school at eight o'clock on Saturday wasn't a popular thing for anybody.

TS: Did that actually reform some people?

SW: I hope it did, but in those situations you just try everything you can. Some things work for some kids, and they don't work for other kids.



TS: Why did you want to go back to the central office after being principal?

SW: Well, it was a promotion for me, and if I had my druthers before I retired, I would have been a superintendent. But I was always a bride's maid and never a bride in that process, but it doesn't bother me a bit now.

TS: Did you apply to other systems?

SW: I applied to several others over time and was interviewed, but it just never worked out, and sometimes I think it's more difficult to come out of the instructional division and get a superintendency than to have come out of other divisions. Personnel is the best place to come from if you are looking for a superintendency.

TS: Really? Why is that?

SW: Well, personnel directors are people in high positions. Personnel has more contact with board members than all the other people together. They have more contact with attorneys and particularly with board members, and they develop connections and know people and that's fine, if that's what a person chooses to do. But, frankly, you just don't see a lot of assistant superintendents for instruction coming out [and becoming superintendents], and a lot of them don't want to.

TS: That's interesting because I would think that would be the heart of what schools do—the instruction.

SW: Oh, but Tom, you're thinking that things need to make sense! That's a mistake I made a number of times over the years thinking that things are supposed to make sense in the school business, but they don't.

TS: Were you involved with the issue where they were knocking out the walls of the classrooms to have team-teaching?

SW: Oh, yes. There was a real economic difficulty at the time Walton was built. Prices had just gone sky high for construction, and they would call me when they were building the school and say, "This came in over budget, so we're going to have to take out some more walls." I told the [Walton] faculty when we were coming there that this is going to be a new situation. See, Sprayberry had been built, not exactly on that same plan, but on the team-teaching, open-space kind of thing, but it was different. Our teachers did a great job with it. They really did a great job, and the noise situation was pretty much under control, and it didn't present us with a great problem. Sprayberry had abandoned the conventional approach to teaching and had gone to what was called learning activities packages where the kids would get a package, and they would go through all these papers, and the teacher would walk around and help facilitate things. We didn't go that direction. We stayed with the more conventional plan, and teachers were learning to use the space and trying things, and then if they weren't successful, going back. So we didn't have the kind of reaction that Sprayberry had. Sprayberry was a great school and had

great leadership and teachers, but it got off to a kind of rough start. It was not long though before everyone realized we needed some walls. In fact, I think it was the summer I left if not the following summer that they came in and started putting walls back up. It was better in theory than it was in practice.

TS: Kermit Keenum said that you had to have teachers with the right personality to make it work.

SW: That's right. Anyway, we were just very fortunate to get through it, and, of course, you know the reputation that Walton has. It's just a great place, a great school.

TS: What were some of the other issues that you had to deal with with regard to instruction?

SW: Not a great deal. The major thing was the library. The library was in the center of the school, and the lunchroom was down here, and the gymnasium in this direction, and you had about half the school walking through the library all the time. The books just flew off the shelf. The kids would take the books. So the library itself was not a place for studying the way it should have been. I think they have corrected that now. We had a wonderful music program, and part of that is being able to select your own teachers from the beginning. I used to tell them in Personnel, "You can do more in forty-five minutes in Personnel to improve instruction than I can in forty-five years up here trying to turn things around. I can't say anything about difficulties. The drug situation was probably the one I disliked the most.

TS: Well, it was the 1970s.

SW: Right, but the kids were great. The kids were just great. But a high school principalship is a tough, tough, tough job.

TS: I think everything with regard to the public schools would be. I get invited out occasionally to talk to in the public schools. One teacher was teaching five or six classes of Georgia History a day, and she asked me to come and talk to as many of them as I could. So I went out to talk to two of her classes and left exhausted. I was just thinking, this poor teacher does it every day, class after class. I don't know how they do it.

SW: It takes a special person.

TS: I'm sure in administration, it's tough to deal with all the parents and what-have-you.

SW: Yes.

TS: So you go into the central office. I remember somewhere along the line there was a controversy over grades and whether we would assign grades to first and second and third graders.

- SW: Oh, yes, that was what was called the continuous progress program that a Cobb County principal had a lot to do with. He had a doctorate under John Goodland at UCLA, and that was the thinking. We go through fads in education, and we were going to have non-graded . . .
- TS: Didn't want to warp anybody's personality?
- SW: Right, didn't want to warp anybody's personality, and everybody got a trophy. You're going to do away with valedictorian and the salutatorian and the honor graduates so that the other people won't feel bad.
- TS: Oh, he wanted to do away with grades all the way through high school?
- SW: Well, no, this is just with the graduation thing. We weren't going to have honor graduates anymore. But like you say, we don't want to hurt anybody's feelings.
- TS: That's ridiculous. It's kind of like saying we're not going to have honor athletes any more.
- SW: Yes. It kind of got its foothold; a lot of people supported it. They wanted to do away with letter grades and you had these checklists and so forth. Of course, parents, most people grew up on an A, B, C, D system.
- TS: They understand that.
- SW: They understand that, and you can define an A to be whatever you want it to be, but as long as you're using a symbol that stands for something that they can understand and respect, why go out to all these other possibilities that people don't understand?
- TS: Talk about Thomas S. Tocco a little bit. He was superintendent for most of the 1980s.
- SW: Yes. I didn't know him from Adam's house cat when he came. None of us did. When you're assistant superintendent on the superintendent's cabinet, you don't know what's going to happen. That's just part of the risk you take when you have those kinds of jobs. I said, "Whatever happens, happens, and I'll go with it." So the first day he came into the office, I'd never seen him. I just happened to be in the hall where the superintendent's office opens into. I just went up to him and said, "My name is Stanley Wrinkle. Right now, I'm assistant superintendent for instruction, and I want you to know you can count on my loyalty." He said, "I can't find my keys!" So that was a rather innocuous beginning, but I just kept my distance. I didn't try to influence him or impress him or anything. I just went on and did my job. He brought in a person named Dr. Bob Burke from Pinellas County who was a high school principal down there, sharp guy. That's where Dr. Tocco came from. He was an assistant superintendent in Pinellas County, which is the Tampa area, I believe. He came up here and brought Bob Burke with him. He was the associate superintendent. They reorganized, and there was an associate superintendent for curriculum and operations, and then an associate superintendent for

business and personnel. It was a very wise and very effective way of organizing in that you put the instructional division and the actual operations of the schools over whom there were assistant superintendents at that point for the middle, elementary and high school, and administratively and instructionally we worked together. I really enjoyed it and thrived on it.

TS: So you're the associate superintendent?

SW: No, I'm the assistant superintendent of instruction under the associate superintendent for instruction and operations.

TS: So you report to Burke.

SW: I reported to Burke at that time, but the thing that really created our relationship, which proved to be a very close one over the years, was that we were on the quarter system as a school district, which was a disaster. You wouldn't any more get through with scheduling . . . now, you're talk about schools of 2,000 or more than that, and they wanted us to schedule kids three times a year. When I say they, I'm talking about Harold Dennis and the people that were still down there at that time. They wanted us to schedule kids three times a year using the old pull card method, going down to the gymnasium and letting kids pull the six cards. You would go down there to the gymnasium on registration day, and there'd be a few kids in line for the math class and a few kids in line for social studies, but the line for lunch would be out the door. Everybody wanted to get the lunch period they wanted. I had talked to him, and I said, "We need to get out of the quarter system."

Harold Posey who was a board member was very much in favor of that. It was just obvious. It was just plain as day that it was just not working. For some reason Harold and Dr. Tocco and I were riding to Atlanta to go to a meeting together, and I think Dr. Tocco said to me, "Stanley, what do you want to do about the quarter system?" I said, "Go back to the semester system and get out of it." Harold Posey spoke up, and I think it was just that ride down in the car that set us in a good relationship. Shortly after that, we were together at a restaurant for some other meeting. Wade Scholes became really his right-hand man. He was just kind of an administrative assistant, but he was in charge of keeping things going. I was sitting at a table, and Wade came up and said, "I just want to tell you; Dr. Tocco really respects you and wants you to stay in your position of instructional leadership." Anyway, it just worked out that way. So we went on. We did change back to the semester system, and it worked out very well.

In those days the principalship, K-12, was a male dominated situation. There were no women principals. The first woman principal that was appointed was Betty Gray. Kermit Keenum appointed her to take my position at Sedalia Park after I left to go to open Walton. I don't know how many others were appointed by him, but others were appointed. Kermit began building that base of getting away from what some people would call the good ol' boy system—you were a good coach, therefore you'd make a good principal. But Tom Tocco moved many women particularly into the elementary

principalships and appointed women high school principals. Gwen Paul was appointed as the first high school principal at Pebblebrook. That was a tough, tough job, and she was excellent. Eventually, she went to Walton.

TS: That's interesting that it was so late since, at Marietta High School, Mary Swain was principal back in the late 1940s.

SW: That's right. And then Edna Lee [Rensink] in the 1970s [1973-1981]. When I first came down here, for some reason, Miss Lee was one of a half a dozen people that took me under their arm and said, "You need to do this; you don't need to do that," and so forth. Why in the world that happens to some people and doesn't happen to other people, I don't know. I just had so many folks in my life who have steered me in the right way and told me what to do. But he [Tocco] had a number of issues. The biggest issue that he faced outside of running the schools was the business of the annexation of county property.

TS: Marietta was annexing county property.

SW: Right. At one time the mayor of Marietta wanted to live in the county, and the city took a foot or two strip down a road to his property and annexed his property. I mean, it was just a circus.

TS: They were getting good commercial property.

SW: Yes, taking the commercial property. But he [Tocco] was very forceful and very courageous. I think the county government said, "If he'll do it, let him do it and suffer the blows that come with that." That was a big issue. The funniest thing I suppose that happened during that time—Mr. Paul Moore was a board member from the Osborne area when Dr. Tocco first came. Mr. Moore was a truck driver. He was not an educated man, and he was not a sophisticated man, but he was a good man. He loved schools, but he had his own personality and quirks. Dr. Crews had started the community schools in Cobb County, and it was a big thing going, you know, where you were using the schools on Saturdays and at night for classes. It was a big thing.

Well, the county commission decided that they would either cut or pull the funding—it was a shared funding responsibility between the county and the school board—they would pull some if not all of the funding out. Well, it got all in the paper, and Tom Tocco had just been here a short while. People were fussing back and forth, but somehow they got together and worked it out. As a symbol or signal of solidarity and peace between the board of commissioners and the school board, the board of commissioners came over to a board meeting and sat down right in front of the board, and they were going to be recognized, and everything was going to be copasetic after that between the school board and the county commissioners. Well, we always had a prayer, and one of the board members prayed before the meeting, and I think this may have been his [Tocco's] first meeting. I'm not exactly sure, but for some reason it was Mr. Moore's turn to say the prayer. Well, he stood up, and he would always start out with "thy

graciously Heavenly Father.” So he thanked the Lord, and then he said, “And, oh, Lord, we thank you for us getting this thing worked out, and we have the board of commissioners here with us today, and they’ve made a lot of mistakes in this thing, and we’ve had to put up with a lot . . .” And he went through all this harangue in his prayer and just about separated the two again, and then he said, “Amen.”

Well, Dr. Tocco took the microphone after that, and he said, “We are so glad to have you, and irrespective of what Mr. Moore said in his prayer, we’re glad that everything has worked out.” Tom Tocco made a recording of that prayer, and I don’t know how many people he had listen to it. Tom and his wife divorced while he was here. He had two sons. One of them got into some big trouble, and he got to feeling that some of the board members were just not doing [their jobs], and he was very abrupt in the way that he worked with them. So there was a dispute over his contract at the end of it. Then elected to the board were four women and three men, and within just a little bit of time [in 1989] he was gone.

TS: So this is when Kermit Keenum comes back.

SW: He came back, right. They called him and asked him if he would come back.

TS: And then he had about a three year run and ran into some controversies as well.

SW: Right. It was the same group that had gotten rid of [Tocco].

TS: Why did you retire at age 52? That was right after Keenum left, wasn’t it?

SW: Well, no, [I retired in 1994]; see, after Kermit left [in 1992] . . .

TS: It was a zoo around there for a few years, wasn’t it?

SW: Yes. We had . . .

TS: Steller . . .

SW: We had Art [Arthur] Steller [1992-1993], and, see, Jimmy Howard served as interim after Kermit left the first time. After Tocco left, Jerry Ingram was the interim. Then after Steller left, they appointed Grace Calhoun to be superintendent [1993-1996]. After Grace Calhoun, he was the interim again. In that time there I got moved around. I was still in instruction and part of it was I had some enemies on the board, frankly, because I stayed loyal to Dr. Tocco. I don’t say this in a self-serving way, but when all that was happening, I had a number of people say it. My title remained the same and my duties, but I didn’t have the job that I wanted and that I had had, but it was still assistant superintendent on the cabinet and everything else. But people said, “If they would do that to the hardest working, most dedicated person in the system, what would they do to the rest of us?” So I felt good about that, but, anyway, I worked it on out all the way through, and when it came time to retire, I just retired. I don’t regret it a bit.

TS: You had thirty years in?

SW: I had thirty years in. After that I taught some up at Kennesaw [State]. I had a wonderful time, had student teachers and taught classes, and just loved it, but as you well know, it's missionary work to some extent. Then I got a call from Roswell Street Baptist Church that they were in dire need of a principal at their little private school. I loved the pastor, Nelson Price, but I didn't want to do that. I was having a good time. I really didn't want to do it, but Nelson Price called and left a message on my phone. You know, you pick up the phone, and it sounds like God's talking to you. We had been good friends ever since I had come to the county. He and I came to the county about the same time, and I couldn't turn him down. I talked Murray Barber into taking the job with me on a co-principal basis, and I was there for seven years. When Murray died, Ralph Williams took the job.

TS: From McEachern High School?

SW: From McEachern, but for seven years, and it was a beautiful, wonderful job with both Murray and Ralph.

TS: Was the school on the church's campus?

SW: Right, the school was in the church. Dr. Price started it, and he said at that point, "I want a school that people can afford." We tried to keep our prices as low as we could, but we got great teachers. Of course, it had a strong Christian emphasis, and I just loved it. I kept on doing it until I started having grandbabies, and that put a stop to a lot of things.

TS: I saw where you're something on the board of Mount Paran Christian School?

SW: Right, they let me be on their board now for I think this is the fourth year.

TS: I think you are the assistant chair?

SW: I'm the vice chair. It's kind of like being vice president; you know, I'm there primarily because I have had a long time friendship with Dave [David W.] Tilley who is the head of the school. I'm the oldest person there. I've never had a job with the school, but for some reason they think it's good to have me around, so I'll just do it as long as they want me to.

TS: That's great. Well, what else should we add to this interview?

SW: I just love this place [Cobb County]. We could be doing this in reverse, Tom. I could be talking to you, and you could tell the same stories, and for whatever little achievement I've had, you've done far more than I have.

TS: That's not true. We both came from Knoxville to Cobb County somehow or other.

SW: Yes, it is true. And my brother [Jerry Wrinkle] has had a great influence on both of us.

TS: Yes, he could have been in Cobb County if he hadn't gone to Fulton High School [as a teacher and coach] instead.

SW: Yes, he could have been. I'm just so happy that over the years we've seen one another, spoken to one another, but never had the chance to really get together until this point in time.

TS: It's high time.

SW: Oh, it has been a blessing.



## INDEX

Allison, Jo, 8

Barber, Murray, 22

Bates, Bill, 9

Bentley, Fred D. Sr., 11

Bird, Joseph S., 5-6

Burke, Bob, 18-19

Calhoun, Grace, 21

Cherry, Jim, 7

Cobb County, Georgia, School District (CCSD), 3-13, 16-21

    Development of policy manual, 3, 5

    Shift from elected superintendents to elected boards, 5

    Inherent tension between board and superintendent, 5

    Textbook controversies over teaching evolution, 10-12

    Controversies over sex education, 12-13

    Conventional teaching v. team-teaching in open-space rooms, 16-17

    Assigned grades v. continuous progress assessments, 17

    Shift from quarters to semester system, 19

    Movement away from a system of all-male principals, 19

    Community schools and the Cobb County Commission, 20-21

Cole, Sollie C., 4-5

Crews, Alton C., 3-7, 20

Darnell, Jack, 9

Dennis, Harold, 7, 19

Dodgen Middle School, Marietta, 13

Edwards, Wayne, 12

Frey, John S. Jr., 9

Gary, Ray, 6

Gish, Duane, 12

Goodland, John, 18

Gray, Betty, 9, 19

Griffin, Jasper M., 5

Harrison, Carl, 9

Howard, Jimmy, 21

Ingram, Jerry, 21

Institute for Creation Research, California, 11-12

Jones. J.L., 2

Keenum, Kermit, 3-4, 7-12, 17, 19, 21  
*From Sharecropper to Shareholder in One Generation*, 8

Kell, Carlton J. (Corky), 2

Lee [Rensink], Edna Poole, 20

Lewis, J. Milton, 5

Mathis, Tom, 8

McClure, John, 10-13, 15

McEachern High School, Powder Springs, 11, 22

Moore, Paul, 20-21

Mount Paran Christian School, Kennesaw, 22

Murdock Elementary School, Marietta, 13

Paul, Gwen, 20

Perry, Lloyd M., 6

Pope, Alan C., 13-14

Posey, Harold, 9, 19

Price, Nelson, 14, 22

Roswell Street Baptist Church, Marietta, 14, 22

Scholes, Wade, 12, 19

Sedalia Park Elementary School, Marietta, 3, 6-7, 19

Secrist, Philip L., 7

Shaw, Bob, 9

Smitha, William O., 11, 13

Steller, Arthur, 21

Swain, Mary Hall, 20

Tilley, David W., 22

Tocco, Thomas S., 18-21

Walton High School, Marietta, 3-4, 8, 10, 13-17, 19, 20  
 Named for signer of Declaration of Independence, 4

Williams, Ralph, 22

Wood, James M., 13

Wootten, Tom R., 6

Wrinkle, Jerry, 23

Wrinkle, Stanley R.  
 Education, 1-2, 6  
 Start of teaching career at Keith Elementary School, 1-2, 20  
 Coaching experience, 1-3

Move to Wheeler High School and East Cobb Junior High, 1  
Promotion to assistant principal, 2-3  
Development of policy manual for CCSD, 3, 5  
Coordination of information services for CCSD, 3  
Principal of Sedalia Park Elementary School, 3, 6-7, 19  
First principal of Walton High School, 3-4, 8, 10, 13-17, 19  
Assistant superintendent for instruction, 4, 16-19  
Retirement, 4, 21-22  
Role in evolution and science textbook controversy, 10-12  
Daughter Kirsten, 11-12  
Desire at one time to be a superintendent, 16  
Role in CCSD's shift to a semester system, 19  
Teaching at Kennesaw State University, 22  
Co-principal of private school at Roswell Street Baptist Church, 22  
Board vice chair at Mount Paran Christian School, 22