

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

***HISTORY OF THE COBB COUNTY BRANCH OF THE NAACP AND CIVIL RIGHTS
ACTIVITIES IN COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA***

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INTERVIEW WITH HUGH L. GORDON

COBB NAACP/CIVIL RIGHTS SERIES, NO. 16

CONDUCTED BY STEPHEN BRIGGS and JOHN McKAY

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Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
Cobb NAACP/Civil Rights Series, No. 16
Interview with Hugh L. Gordon
Conducted by Stephen Briggs and John McKay
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Location: Sturgis Library, Kennesaw State University

JM: Mr. Gordon, to begin with, why don't you tell us a little bit your background?

HG: Okay, I'm a southerner, I was born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia and went to Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia and got a BSIE degree and then came to Georgia Tech to get my master's degree and that was successful.

JM: I've read that you were an only child, is that correct?

HG: I'm an only child. Spoiled brat!

JM: What did your parents do for a living?

HG: My mother at one time was a teacher in North Carolina when she was young. My father owned with his brother, Bob, Gordon's Seafood Restaurant. Then he was employed as Special Investigator for the Commonwealth Attorney. Then he became a deputy city sergeant; the city sergeant runs the jail. In his later years, he was a judge, not a courtroom judge, but a Justice of the Peace at a precinct.

JM: Was that in Norfolk as well?

HG: That was in Norfolk.

JM: Was organized religion an important part of your early childhood?

HG: Yes, I've been Episcopalian since my youth and my whole family is Episcopalian, My wife and I were co-founders, with a few other people, of St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Atlanta. That was in 1955. I served as treasurer early on, warden, junior warden, president, vice president of the church corporation, and I was on the vestry for five years. I was very active with the lay part of the church. One of the highlights of my time at St. Anne's was a program I started in the early 70s, St. Anne's Career Transition Ministry. This was a time of massive downsizing of corporations and layoffs of a lot of people. I had earlier worked, after I retired from Lockheed, as a consultant in the South with the Derson Group, a Chicago-based reemployment assistance firm. Then I decided to use my new professional experience to serve our church if there was a need. I approached our church rector and asked, "Do you have a need for job search assistance?" He said, "I certainly do." I said, "Well, how do you know that?" He said, "Our members aren't paying their pledges as usual; they just don't have the money." I suggested, "Well, I can organize a professional job search assistance program with your blessing."

Our program was conducted in the Parish Hall every Thursday night from 7:00 to 10:00. There were five different workshops; focus, resume, interviewing, networking and that sort of thing, very professional. We had four Ph.D. level volunteers conducting the workshops. The program was patterned after what I had done as a consultant. Feedback showed the program was very successful and earned many compliments.

There was a scenario that showed how our program was received. Several participants had been laid off from IBM, and IBM had their own assistance program. It was really big, as can be imagined at IBM. One of the laid off workers said to us, "You guys are much more effective. I've been through IBM's program, but I like the personal way that you handle your program." It was true that our volunteers often went beyond teaching to personal counseling.

I had a program card including my home phone number which I handed out, and I told participants if they have a problem, give me a call. Phone calls have continued over the years. One called just this year; "Is this St. Anne's Career Transition Ministry?" I said, "No, we closed that a long time ago but I'd be happy to help you, what do you need?" I gave them a little advice on programs that are available.

JM: That's great. If you don't mind I'd like to back track a little bit.

HG: Sure.

JM: Back to the time you were growing up in Norfolk. Can you tell me a little bit about your schooling experience, and in particular, relationships you may have had with any black children at your school or a separate school?

HG: There were none. The public schools and college I attended had all white students. Educational segregation had its' breakthrough history with the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* in 1954 that outlawed separate and unequal schools. However, the Jim Crow culture seriously delayed abolishment of separate black and white schools in the south. Including DeKalb County with which I am familiar as my sister in law taught there. All this culture history goes back to the ten year Reconstruction period of 1865-1877 when slaves had a wide range of freedom all over the country. The right to vote, to hold political jobs, integrated housing, etc. After Reconstruction expired, 439 Jim Crow laws were passed throughout the states, but predominantly in the South. And, more powerful than the Jim Crow laws was a dominating, discriminating, pervasive culture that created those laws. Finally, Jim Crow laws became null and void when we had,,,,,you may know the date. I'm looking at the year of the first C-141 contract.

SB: That was '61.

HG: In '61. Okay, Thanks. That was executive order 10925; it was Kennedy's executive order and you know this history. Kennedy was pressed by black civil rights leaders when he was running for President to do something about segregation. When Kennedy traveled the south, he had to be very careful because he needed southern votes, so he stayed away

from the segregation issue. But when he became President, like other Presidents, he began to issue executive orders to get the policies he wanted. Most important to this history, Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925 in 1961 which banned employment discrimination by federal contractors with regard to *race, creed, color, or national origin*. Interestingly enough, sex discrimination was not included, but that oversight was finally fixed by Kennedy's Executive Order 11375. As it happened, those Executive Orders affected non-federal contractors as well as federal contractors. However, the strong Jim Crow culture lived on. When the Civil Rights Act of '64 was passed by Congress, that provided another avenue for discrimination complaints and enforcement by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the EEOC, but they had problems that delayed their effectiveness. Lack of funding by reluctant southern congressmen.

JM: What you have described as far as the formalized segregation, be it in businesses or schools, we've read a lot about. What I'm curious about is in your personal life, did you have much, if any, interaction with people your age who were black

HG: When I was growing up in Norfolk—good question— before I went away to War. There were only three black people that I knew in Norfolk. One was Armsted who was short and stocky, and did yard work throughout the residential community where I lived. It was called Colonial Place for all the streets named after the Colonial States such as Massachusetts, Delaware, and Pennsylvania Avenue. It was a large community of over 1,000 people. Armsted had plenty of yard work customers. On weekends he would get drunk and in fights, and end up in jail. My father would get a call and go down and bail him out. I didn't think much about it; that was pretty routine. However, when my father died, a friend put together a book of clippings with a lot of memorabilia... things that were very nice to be said about my father. And to my surprise, in there was a little write-up by Armsted. He was a religious man and wrote the nicest testimonial citing passages of the Bible, about what a fine man my father was. That was a side of Armsted of which I was unaware.

The next one was a black female named Ella who was big and strong. In those days we used Johnson's Paste wax to polish and protect our floors. When the wax dries, it was hard to polish. I know. I had done it. You put the wax on, and polish it with a heavy iron mallet over a discarded piece of wool if you had the strength to do it. And Ella had the strength to do it. That was about all she did for us. I would come home from school and she would say, "Mr. Hugh, come look at this. Look at this beautiful floor." She was proud of her job.

The third one was Charlie, our postman and a neat guy. He had a little mustache, and of course, he wore his postman's uniform. I think you'd call him a handsome man. We had a little mailbox on the front porch, and Charlie would have to go up three steps to put the mail in the box, and then he would toot his whistle. That would set off Mickey, my fox terrier, who was fierce with his barking and showing of teeth. Then I'd hear Charlie out there saying, "Now Mickey, you know you want me to leave you your mail." That calmed Mickey down somehow. Charlie was a very nice guy. Those were the only black people I knew when I was young. I went to War, and one day on leave in Australia, I

saw a well dressed black man come over to my friend who was smoking and ask, “I say, there mate, I kind of need a light?” I’d never seen nor heard a black talk like that before.

SB: With the Aussie accent?

HG: Well, he had a full cockney accent.

SB: Oh, he was English, okay.

HG: Okay and he had a pronounced cockney accent.

JM: Now, in 1947 you married Josephine, correct?

HG: Yes. September 10. You never forget that. It’s a sin if you don’t remember your wedding day!

JM: What was her maiden name?

HG: Josephine Turrentine. She goes by Josephine T. Gordon.

JM: You graduated from Virginia Tech in 1950, is that right?

HG: Right.

JM: Tell us about what led you to continue your education at Georgia Tech?

HG: I’ll have to think about that. I was determined to get a master’s degree, but was uncertain as to where to go. Jo’s father lived in Atlanta at that time, and he had lived with us in Norfolk for awhile. One day he said, “Come on down here.” So that’s what brought me to Atlanta and Georgia Tech. Jo likes to tell a story about my going to Georgia Tech. My counselor in applying for entry into the MS program was Professor Marshall. As we were talking, I said we’ve run out of GI funding. We’d been married all the way through Virginia Tech. Then Jo said, “We’ve run out of money, we don’t have any GI bill left. I just wondered if Hughie could get his degree in maybe nine months.” I could see Dr. Marshall had to think about it. It was a four-year program at that time; it may be longer now; is it longer now?

JM: I would assume so.

HG: Yes. Well, as he was thinking, Jo said, “Dr. Marshall, he’s very smart, I think he can do it.” And Dr. Marshall said, “Well, okay, we’ll give it a try.” So I got my master’s degree in nine months. Believe me; I put in a *lot* of hours. You can imagine.

JM: That’s still impressive though. “You did mention in the past that you were in the Army Air Corps before it became the Air Force.

HG: Right.

JM: Did you see the same kind of discrimination that the Tuskegee airman dealt with relating to the Tuskegee experiment?

HG: No I didn't see it because there weren't any blacks in the Night Fighters. Incidentally, Tuskegee was one of the great successes of WWII. You can read about it on the web. Let me tell you how I decided to go into the Air Force. When I was in my junior year in high school and senior year also, I attended a, let's see, it was one month at Ft. Meade, MD. It was the Citizens Military Training Camp. CMTC It was a month to learn how to be a soldier. We put on leggings and campaign hats and all that. We looked like World War I because our clothing was a carry over from WW I. I remember up at Ft. Meade when they had a training exercise, they'd have a big truck with a sign on its side saying "tank". Those were the primitive days of WW II military. I liked the CMTC, and think it influenced me to go into the Army Air Corps which I did shortly after Pearl Harbor.

JM: You entered the Corps in 1942, is that correct, right after Pearl Harbor?

HG: Close, it was '43. I had to wait eleven months before I was called to duty. The USA was just unprepared for a world war, and not prepared for a rush of recruits.

JM: In '43. In your experience did you feel that contributions of African Americans in the World War II effort were enough to prove that they were as capable flying planes and performing other high level duties?

HG: I must add, the Tuskegee airmen proved it in combat; but they did experience discrimination in training at Tuskegee. To answer your question, it really didn't occur to me at the time. There was absence of blacks even as I went through training; I served three years in the Army Air Corps, fifty-one combat missions in the South Pacific, awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for shooting down two Japanese planes attacking General Macarthur's invasion fleet of Luzon; the Philippines. Now, much later at Lockheed, Col. Chuck Dryden, a Tuskegee airman worked in my Personnel Programs Department. He did good work for which he was respected. As I mentioned, the combat record of the Tuskegee airmen was truly outstanding. I have researched that on the web, and they were subject to demeaning discrimination in training that they overcame by proving themselves in combat.

JM: So the segregation kept it out of your realm of consciousness, is that fair to say?

HG: I think so. Well, you know the Jim Crow laws and the culture still existed; it was massive even in California where the Jim Crow laws centered on Hispanics more so than blacks, or along with blacks, but in the South it was solid. And everywhere you went, not only the laws, the colored and white signs were required by law, and the culture that went along with that was so prevailing and so overwhelming, much more problem some than the laws themselves. When the '61 executive order 10925 went into effect it effectively

nullified all Jim Crow laws even though the order specifically applied to federal contractors. I know at Lockheed we had no problem with policy change. The plant engineering group worked on a weekend and removed the colored and white signs. Now I do know that come Monday, there were managers and employees that were perplexed. Everything had been segregated. And bingo that was over. The new policy was strictly enforced, and to my knowledge, we really didn't have any overt problems with it. I have to say there was always concern. For example, our time clocks for hourly employees were segregated. And the changeover for that, as I recall, was a little slow. Apparently it was to avoid time clock close interaction between whites and blacks. When the bell rang to go home, there was a mad rush that also could have been a race problem. We had a lot of what they called red necks from north Georgia; that's not very complimentary, but they were viewed as more hardnosed about race than others. At least, there was concern about that. Our workplace integration in the 1950s was probably a strong factor in avoiding people problems later on. I don't recall any fights or anybody that was fired because of fights, and if you're in a fight, we had a management directive on discipline, and fights were a cardinal offence.

JM: I'd like to back track just one more question. You're speaking about executive orders. In July of 1948 President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 establishing equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed services for people of all races, religions, and national origins. However, the last of the all black segregated units in the U.S. military was abolished in September of 1954, which is a six-year gap. In your opinion what do you think were some of the reasons for that gap?

HG: Good question. I don't know about the gap. Incidentally that order was issued after WWII and I do know from research that Executive Order 9981 did not have enforcement powers. It was well intended—it was Truman, wasn't it?

JM: Yes sir, this one was Truman.

HG: As far as I'm concerned I had no personal awareness of that order; 10925 was the first strong executive order with enforcement power.

SB: And that was Kennedy's in 1961—10925

HG: Right.

JM: Now, with regard to Lockheed, you came to Lockheed in May of '51 and worked in Labor Relations; is that right?

HG: Correct.

JM: Can you tell me a little bit about your experience of coming to Lockheed and your first year or two on the job?

HG: I was green as grass, I really was. I had friends who said we need to go to Lockheed, they're hiring people. This was early 51. Two of them were lawyers and the other was in insurance, and we said, okay, sounds good. Lockheed has a series of head houses, and they're tunnels that go into the plant, and these are the entrances and exits. Head house 3 was turned into an employment office by removing the turnstiles. That's where we were hired. There was an employment office in downtown Atlanta also. The main employment office became located at 834 West Peachtree right across from the Biltmore Hotel. But anyway, let's see, the three of us got Lockheed jobs, but at that time there was no assurance Lockheed would continue to be there long. Two of my friends left and I stayed.

JM: Was that because Lockheed was primarily there to support the Korean War?

HG: Exactly. And we were building the B-47 Stratojet and had started a C-130 line. The C-130 Hercules was a creation of the Lockheed California company, and Lockheed's top man, Kelly Johnson, he was famous; for his design and production of amazing planes in his secret Skunk Works, for which he earned his place in the Aviation Hall of Fame.

There also was a good story about the C-130 which later became the breadwinner for GELAC, the acronym for our Georgia plant. After the prototype was flown, they were going to build the plane in California, and Kelly Johnson was quoted as saying, "That's an ugly plane; let's send it on to Georgia to be made." However, that decision paid off for a lot of us including me.

JM: How would you describe race relations at Lockheed when you first got there?

HG: Lockheed was a segregated plant, but changes were underway when I was hired on May 16, 1951. In the 50s, Lockheed hired all told 1,200 blacks mostly in non-traditional aircraft assembly jobs. Nine hundred blacks were trained and assigned to build the aft section of the B-47 Stratojet. Apparently they also worked on the nose section but I have no familiarity with that; I've just seen it in writing. I was certainly aware of the 900 and we had—do you have the story on this? Is this familiar or is this new to you?

JM: What you're telling me is new to me.

HG: Okay, let me finish then. Good. The 900 worked in a segregated section separated by parts bends about six to eight feet high. That line went from east to west and was the last assembly line station before the end of the building. When the airplanes went out the door there, they went to the flight line, a mile or so away. Behind the parts bends, away from the segregated B-47 aft section, on the far side of that was a C-130 assembly line. Occasionally the blacks would have problems, in fact, they had a lot of problems in building that airplane; there was much too much of what was called out-of-station work. That means every assigned assembly task was not finished before the next move date when that airplane *had* to go and that became out of station work for the next position. This became one of the problems of the B-47 segregated aft section.

JM: What was the cause of these problems?

HG: Well, you've got blacks building this airplane who had a disproportionate amount of training, pre-hire training. To my knowledge, none of them had aircraft experience. When that plant was opened, we hired as many of the old Bell bomber skilled workers that Lockheed could find, but we didn't have enough of those, so Lockheed decided to recruit blacks along with thousands of others in a massive hiring program. This likely was a corporate decision that included Robert and Courtlandt Gross, President and Vice President. And Dan Haughton who was one of the most experienced aircraft builders in the corporation and Jimmie Carmichael was the first general manager. They brought him in. He was the Bell general manager. And there was a lot that he could do to help set up the vendor system and more. There was a controversial statement he made that was published in the *Southern Star* that we're going to have blacks—this is not exactly what he said but—in their traditional jobs. It was sort of a racist type statement, but the truth of the matter is it was a calming statement. We didn't want trouble. We didn't want people to get excited because they'd have to work with blacks, and he knew that, and to my knowledge, he was not a racist.

JM: Did the creation of all this out of station work create new tension between blacks and whites?

HG: I don't recall that. It was mainly a production problem. So blacks were recruited and given as much training as possible; in fact, I knew there was a complaint or two from the blacks saying, why don't they let us go to work? They're still training us. But everybody lives in a small world, and sometimes one doesn't understand the big picture of what's going on. So anyway, they didn't have the work ethic, they didn't have industrial work experience, they'd never even been in an industrial plant ... and here they were building this fantastic airplane. In a Lockheed publication, the B-47 was called the "Strongest, most advanced bomber in the world at that time." That's not the exact quote but it is close. And here it was, this great plane being built by blacks, and before it was all over, almost 300 of those planes were built by the aft section black group I mentioned. But those same blacks had production problems. Housekeeping was one. Housekeeping is extremely important in building airplanes as more than one airplane (in the aircraft industry) has flown off with a wrench in the wing and horrible things like that can happen and cause the airplane to crash. So housekeeping was bad ... and production was bad ... and they're slow and their attendance was bad. There were too many people with Monday and Friday absences. So Dan Haughton, who was president at that time, asked Harold Mintz who had worked for Bell Aircraft and was the most experienced assembly production manager in the plant. He said, "Harold, I want you to go down there and straighten this all out." There is an oral history tape of all of this in the collection, and I'm talking from a taped interview. He said, "I took these employees, black employees down to the training center where we had an auditorium in groups of twenty or so and told them what we expect, the standards and why and all of that." Also he told them that, "There are some management people that would like to sub-contract this cost center to another aircraft company and have them build it in which case all of you lose your jobs." That was true. They weren't making that up but I also don't think they wanted to do that. Just straighten things out and make getting the job done the main priority. Harold Mintz

was real proud that he was able to get them on schedule and cleaned up the housekeeping. Actually I think they won an award. If a group did something outstanding, they got group awards.

One more thing on this story: Dan Haughton walked around the plant often and shook hands with workers. Uncle Dan as everybody called him. There's a saying, if everybody that says they shook hands with Dan Haughton, there must have been nobody at work. He was truly a people man. So Dan was on the line one day with Harold Mintz standing beside him, and he said, "Harold, what's this I see over here?" It was a white worker from the C-130 line over there helping a black guy fixing something on the segregated B-47 line. Harold said, "Well, what you see is what happens. I didn't ask for him to do it. That's voluntary." That was the break-through of integration in the plant so far as we know. Also Harold thought it was. It is in his Oral History interview.

JM: Any idea approximately when that was?

HG: It would have been in the 1950s.

JM: When did you become the Director of Personnel at Lockheed?

HG: Well, most of the time I was a Manager of Personnel, and then I became a division manager, which is a Director; I don't remember precisely. I can tell you this. It was after 1961 when I was Employment Manager. In 1961 we got the C-141 contract. About '65 we got the C-5 Galaxy contract. Then we went to 33,000 employees. About 3,000 of those were in feeder plants and about 30,000 were in Marietta. We had 14,000 parking places in that big B-1 lot. People parked on the grass too. I had at one time 100 people in my employment department... like a small company. I had a supervisor for salary, another for hourly hiring, and a supervisor for administration. We worked 7 days a week. In one twelve month period, not a calendar period, but in a twelve-month period, we hired 10,000 people. They were not just bodies. To do that we relied on Lockheed's very strong training department. That's characteristic of airplane production. The training department had a major role in making sure everybody was trained to do their specific job.

I recently found a little supervisor handbook and gave it to Anne Graham [Archive Specialist] for inclusion in the collection [in the KSU Archives]. It is a supervisor's handbook in which there's an article about skill certification. That's another way to assure the airplane is built to needed standards. Assembly workers, for example, had to go to training and be skill certified to do their job. That was another reason how we could hire unskilled blacks; because they had to be skill certified for assembly work.

JM: I'd like to ask you, if you don't mind, about Plans for Progress and also the Merit Employer's Association. If you could help us understand what your involvement was with those programs?

HG: Okay, do you want to cut that off for just a moment? Let me think about that a little bit.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A
START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

HG: I'm looking at one of my write-ups, one of the most important write-ups in this whole thing is a Book Abstract in which I have a prologue and a series of chapters that could be in the book and one is called Plans for Progress...Business Voluntarism in the '60s. If you don't mind I'll just sort of paraphrase what's here. Concurrent threads came together in '61 to create a national crisis. It just happened to have a fortuitous outcome. It was on March 6 that Kennedy's new executive order 10925 established the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, which was chaired, in a Kennedy strategic move, by Vice President Lyndon Johnson. I had a friend who lived in Texas and he said, "Why did he do that? I knew Lyndon Johnson in Texas. I can't believe this." Kennedy knew exactly what he was doing. He put him in charge of equal employment opportunity with the authority to deny or cancel federal contracts with firms that did not comply with the affirmative action requirements in the Order.

Exactly seven days later on the 13th of March '61, Lockheed became the first test case as the Marietta plant was awarded a one billion dollar contract to build 100 C-141 cargo planes urgently needed for the Cold War. We had the Korean War crisis; now we've got the Cold War crisis. With the assistance of the NAACP, 36 black workers, all a part of the pioneer group in the 1950s, submitted claims of racial discrimination to the President's Committee in Washington. A well publicized stalemate dilemma put the award on hold and in jeopardy for over two months, and that's a long time considering we had vendors that were all ready to go.

JM: You were on a time line.

HG: Yes. To the dismay of the Air Force with its Cold War sense of urgency, to Lockheed and an array of vendors to supply materials, tools and equipment for the new program, and to the dismay of the President of the United States who was faced with a front page controversial contract award. However, this controversy fortuitously resulted in the formation of a history making business/government partnership called Plans for Progress, PffP. Kennedy called this "a milestone in the history of civil rights for this country." In the collection is a picture of the signing with Cortlandt Gross, Lockheed Corporate President, Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg, President Kennedy, and VP Lyndon Johnson. PffP was the nation's first affirmative action plan, and it outlined not only what Lockheed Georgia and the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation would do, but also what the President's Committee would do.

My role to answer your question: Going back to the time of resolving the 36 charges of racial discrimination, the Lockheed Corporate office called me often for progress reports knowing the power to enforce compliance applied to the *entire* Lockheed Corporation. *And* it took two months to resolve all the issues. The pace was controlled by the federal investigators. Now you can imagine my job. The calls kept coming from the west coast. How are you coming on this? I would say we are making progress and are not in trouble.

And then I'd get more calls. For good reason; Corporate kept close track of what was happening. The investigators had to learn for themselves what we had done in the 50s when we hired 1,200 blacks, ninety-eight percent or more in non-traditional jobs.

JM: So you feel that Lockheed was a leader in employment of equality.

HG: No question. I can tell you how I can say that. Gene Mattison, my boss was a wonderful guy and highly admired in the whole aircraft industry. We were members of the AIA, Aircraft Industry Association, and that's all of the major aircraft companies. And I knew how much they respected Gene because I attended for him one of those meetings in the Midwest and they told me so. This paid off when Gene asked his AIA friends for data showing the comparable industry black employment stats to see where we stood although Gene already had a good feel for that. In the meantime I helped put together responses to each of the 36 charges of discrimination and the class action charge. That data was then shared with the federal investigators. Any notion they may have had to go elsewhere with the C-141 contract died right there.

Gene along with his corporate boss, Jim Lydon, authored the first Plans for Progress. Jim was the Corporate Vice President of Industrial Relations. The first affirmative action plan was, well, let me back up just a little bit. This is very important history. The President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity was created by President Kennedy, and he put a close friend of his, Robert B. Troutman, Jr., on that committee. Troutman happens to be a pivotal person in all this history. He became the Father of Plans for Progress. He was in Atlanta at the time of this crisis and started his own investigation as a member of the President's Committee by going into the Georgia plant and talking to various people there. Then he went to California and talked to Jim Lydon who I knew well; he had been my boss at Georgia in the early 50s. He was a Notre Dame grad, one of the top industrial executives in the aircraft industry. Troutman is reported to have said to Jim, "Jim, here in California you have integrated"—ignoring what we had done in the 50s—"You have integrated, you ought to be able to do what you're doing here over in Georgia." And Jim is reported to have said, "To do that, to make that kind of progress, we'd have to have a plan." The term Plan for Progress apparently came right out of that conversation. So Bobby Troutman came back and is reported to have said to himself, "Well, you've got this affirmative action Plan for Progress; what's good for Lockheed should be good for other companies." So he got a list of federal contractors and the contact people in those companies, all industrial companies. Looking back on this, everything being done was pioneering, and there was caution. Then Troutman got permission to contact seven of those companies to persuade them to come to Washington and hear a presentation on Plan for Progress and to meet the President of the United States. That was an offer hard to refuse, and all seven made the trip to Washington. They all signed up to be Plans for Progress companies. They each submitted a PFP plan for approval to make sure it was comprehensive enough.

Working with a partner, Joe Kruse, they signed up 105 companies. They worked the logistics out with the first PFP volunteer staff (which included Howard Lockwood of Lockheed in California) in Washington and the Executive Director of the President's

Committee. Joe Kruse is an important figure in this history. He was from Florida and came to Atlanta to meet with some fraternity friends and met Bobby Troutman somehow. Troutman said, "Joe, we're getting along real well, let's work on this together." And Joe said, "Well, I have a job coming up with C&S Bank." And Troutman said, "Joe that can wait." Probably more discreetly.

Bobby Troutman was a very positive individual about what he was going to do. In fact, he was not respected for his means of getting things done according to Joe Kruse in his statement. What he did, Joe said, "He didn't want any interference as to what he was doing with these companies because he felt confident in what he was doing. He just didn't want somebody second guessing him." Joe said he would put the White House label on everything because of his personal relationship with Kennedy. Bobby Troutman went to school with Joe Kennedy who was killed in the war, and from that he became a personal friend of John Kennedy and when it came for John Kennedy's election in November of '60, Bobby Troutman was the director of the campaign in Georgia. He helped Kennedy get elected, so there was even more closeness.

JM: One other thing we've seen mentioned is the Merit Employer's Association. Can you help us understand what that was?

HG: Yes. Plans for Progress, the first phase was signing up companies to be Plans for Progress Companies with a program of action that was approved. Then PFP went into Phase 2, the programmatic phase which involved starting up local Merit Employer Associations and Vocational Guidance Institutes, and other PFP initiated programs. There was a PFP administrative staff of volunteers in Washington from the business sector. Gene Mattison served a year as Executive Director in Washington. Howard Lockwood, who was the Lockheed corporate industrial psychologist and good friend of mine, spent a year in Washington; he was on the first volunteer staff in '66. He donated all of his recruitment activity records on that assignment to our project collection.

JM: Okay. We've mentioned the C-141s that Lockheed began work on in 1961. How instrumental was that particular program in the integration of Lockheed?

HG: With the passing of time, not as much as the B-47 in the early 50s which was *history making*. That's when the blacks built the aft section.

JM: That's the one that 900 worked on?

HG: Yes. The B-47 Stratojet aft section. Let me go back to your point about, what's the other point that you had?

JM: Was it about the Merit Employer's Association?

HG: Yes, the formation of the Atlanta Employer's Voluntary Merit Employment Association. Every term reflects what we were and were not. Shortened it was the Atlanta MEA. That became one of the programmatic functions of Plans for Progress. I had Region IV

to administer; the eight southern states, that was my assigned area, and those states ranged from West Virginia down to Florida. I didn't have Louisiana, and I didn't have Virginia but I did have Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina. Years later that was also my territory to administer the NAB program. There were ten regional executives of the National Alliance of Business. I had region four of the federal government as with PFP. We copied their regions.

JM: Let the record show what we're looking at is a letter dated September 12, 1975 from Hugh Gordon to Robert J. Wilson who was the NAB Executive Vice President of Administration.

HG: Yes. Bob Wilson was older than everybody else in the permanent NAB staff, a most experienced individual and wonderful person. I had a problem down in Miami with my metro down there and—do you like stories like these?

JM: Absolutely.

SB: That's great, thank you.

HG: Anyway, I had a problem with the metro chairman and the director who said that they didn't think much of the jobs program. Really? And we'll never get a replacement. That meant the program would be dead. I didn't want that to happen because we probably had others that felt the same way and if they could get away with it . . . so I called Bob and said, "Bob, let's go down and rescue NAB down there." He got a staff member named Bill Ross, who was their statistician on the staff in Washington, to put together all the key stats in the Miami area like welfare and unemployment insurance and things that spend tax dollars we don't need to spend if we can get these people off of welfare and unemployment and that sort of thing. He put together a real good package, and we flew down to Miami, and Bob made a presentation to another company down there that we picked out and they said, "Okay, we'll continue Miami." So we rescued Miami, mainly by the efforts of Bob Wilson.

JM: That's great.

HG: Yes. That's a good story, I'm real proud of that. Because we had three other metros in Florida. One in Orlando and one in Pensacola that could have followed suit, but didn't. One of the things important to know is how NAB went about getting replacements for Metro Chairmen and Directors when needed. It was by USA Presidential appointment. NAB had a staff person, Bill McGowan, whose his job was to go over to the White House and make the appointment calls on behalf of the President. This was a standard procedure that kept Bill busy. At Lockheed for example, I was called up to the Georgia President's office, and he said he just received a call from the White House, and they want me to be the regional chair of a program called National Alliance of Business. Larry Kitchen was the GELAC president at the time. He said, "I called Dan Haughton in California, and he said he thinks that it would be a good idea. Let's do it. And I want you to be the regional executive and run this program, and I'll be the chairman." And

that was my start with NAB. Let's see. I am backing up. Much earlier, it was when PFP was starting its programmatic stage. In 1965 we got a call from Washington whereby we were asked to consider starting a vocational guidance program informing vocational guidance counselors in the public school system and others in the public system, teachers and others, as to what's going on in business and how to better prepare students to

JM: Succeed in the business world?

HG: Yes. For the jobs that are opening up, particularly in the black community, black students. It applied to whites but it was centered on blacks. So in '65 we agreed and the program was turned over to me. We needed a College to administer the program, and I called and I asked a friend at Southern Bell to discuss this. Southern Bell had funded a Chair for Private Enterprise with Dr. Mike Mescon at Georgia State College. So I went down and discussed this with Southern Bell VP Bill Thompson whom I knew. We asked Mike Mescon if he would like to run this program and it would be funded. He was not available but a GSC sociologist took the program and ran the program. That was in '65. Nine business friends of mine with Coca-Cola, Southern Bell and Trust Company, and six other firms put up \$13,000 for that first two week Guidance Counselor Institute. We got going, and we thought this was so good and important that we ought to create a permanent structure to continue these kinds of programs. Four of us had lunch at the Top of the Mart to establish the Atlanta Employer's Voluntary Merit Employment Association. I have mentioned. We're private employers, there are no public members and so forth, it's all voluntary and it definitely is about merit employment. Then they asked "Well, what else do we need to do, Hugh?" I said, "Well, we need a president, a vice president, a secretary and a treasurer. Charles Adams, who was the senior vice president of Coca-Cola said, "Well Hugh, you started this so you be the president." I said, "No, I'm just a guy back in Cobb County like a hick or something. You guys are the movers and shakers." No Hugh, you don't understand, you do this, and we'll back you up. Twenty years later I went to a MEA meeting and told them about this story and I said, "You know what happened? They supported me and the program for twenty years, and that's how the MEA became successful. Without the support of those leading companies we wouldn't have an Atlanta MEA today.

JM: You mentioned you were just a guy from Cobb County. I'd like to ask you in your experience just living in Cobb County, how do you feel Lockheed compared to other Cobb County businesses as far as hiring processes and employment opportunities?

HG: Cobb County, the big picture, was just a microcosm of the South. Everywhere we had problems with segregation and attitudes such as not treating blacks as human beings who were capable and that sort of thing, looking down on them. That just existed everywhere. And it existed in Cobb County as well. In fact, as an example, of the feelings about Atlanta and blacks concerned MARTA, the Metro Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. When that was established in Atlanta, the MARTA officials offered a line coming out to Cobb County and Cobb County said: "No." It said they saw it as a means of blacks coming out and living in Cobb County which they just did not want it. Later, I don't know if it was the Marietta City Council or the Cobb County Commission; they voted to

have the transit extend to Marietta. Before MARTA came to Cobb County, I talked with our Plant Protection Director at Lockheed, who has the security guards and control of entrances, about the lack of transportation for black employees who lived in SW Atlanta. A lot of them car pooled, but with their shift changes and lack of cars, reliable transportation was still a problem. So we got a contract with the Atlanta Transit System, which preceded MARTA. We would bus blacks from southwest Atlanta to work at Lockheed and-back. This was unheard of—

JM: Was also some of that compliant with what was now law and order to remain . . .

HG: I may not fully understand. However, it had nothing to do with law. This was Hugh Gordon's decision. The reason that the director of plant protection became involved with me was because he controlled the entrances and parking. It was quite successful but like every other good thing, it eventually outlived its use. Actually it was cut off by the Atlanta Transit System because they were crossing county lines, and there were other areas in Atlanta that wanted buses and those people said, "You're bussing into Cobb County." So the Transit System said, "Politically we can't do it. We have to discontinue it." So that was that.

JM: We've discovered through this process that during the '60's, after the Civil Rights Act of '64, a lot of black owned businesses shut down because there was no longer the economic support and structure needed to keep them open. As a citizen of Cobb County, what did you notice during that time as far as business ownership with regards to race?

HG: That was not in my scope of the things that I was doing. I did have contacts with an organization called the Atlanta Business League that was a black non-profit organization. I worked with them in funding training programs for black clerical people. In fact, I found something in my notes, I have three spiral bound note books where I made note of phone calls and things that were happening. One note is particularly interesting. . . In 1959, *before there were any civil rights laws*, I was working with the Atlanta Urban League and their directors Harold Arnold and Grace Hamilton who was a wonderful lady. They were both black, and she was on the legislature somewhere. There was a complete absence of black clerical workers in mainstream clerical jobs. I set up with them funded clerical training programs for black females. In the collection are extensive records of programs conducted, how many trainees were recruited, how many showed up, how many quit, how many were hired, etc. This opened up the field of qualified black females that could pass minimum typing standards when they applied for clerical jobs. The minimum typing standard wasn't high but prior to that we didn't have a source of any blacks that qualified. This changed that.

JM: So would you say you were situated at the forefront of the civil rights movement?

HG: I don't associate myself with the civil rights movement. It's like we're walking down the street, I'm on one side and the civil rights movement is on the other side. We're going in the same direction in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. My project is about historical breakthroughs in workplace integration and race relations. And black/white partnerships in public

education. So we really had no association with the civil rights movement. If you look at books that are written about the civil rights movement and you go back to the bibliography, you won't find anything about the private sector. I've researched, I've bought many books about the civil rights movement, and I can't find anything that relates to my history project.

JM: So in your opinion the "civil rights movement" was it one more of the working man's influence or more one of government intervention?

HG: Oh, the civil rights movement was a powerful movement and they used every technique imaginable to prick the conscience of America and make racial discrimination unlawful.

JM: By "they" you mean . . . ?

HG: The civil rights leaders.

JM: Individuals.

HG: The individuals. From my view point, the civil rights movement's strength was in its leadership.

JM: Okay.

HG: They weren't well organized but the movement had great leaders... Martin Luther King, Whitney Young and A. Philip Randolph, and other people that were active in the civil rights movement. And then you had the young people from Morehouse College and other places who came out and demonstrated and there were riots and people were hurt and injured. There's quite a history about the power of the civil rights movement. They made headlines. It was very dramatic. Unfortunately a lot of people were killed. Lynching occurred during that period of time too, which was a constant threat; the segregation culture was so strong but the civil rights movement was successful in pricking the conscience of American people including representatives in Congress. With President Johnson's leadership, a bevy of civil rights laws were passed including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with Title 7 which banned employment racial discrimination.

JM: Discrimination comes in many forms, not just racial discrimination. In your personal experience what is at the root of workplace discrimination regardless of the type?

HG: Well, okay, several things come to mind. There were more than one manifestation of racial discrimination that came into play, in particular with the NAB program. The basic policy, not just of business but of non-profits and government is to discriminate in a way that you hire the *best qualified person*. That's common and universal, like I say, government, business, non-profit. Always hire the best qualified person.

JM: Efficiency first.

HG: Right. Whatever best qualified meant. Sometimes there was a clear delineation of qualified and unqualified but a lot of times it was judgmental. That came into play with the National Alliance of Business. When NAB came in, and Lyndon Johnson started that program... in effect, he was asking us to hire economically disadvantaged persons, ex offenders, Vietnam era veterans; there were four categories including needy youth for summer jobs. Johnson in his State of the Union message, before he cemented this with business, he cited the program targets—I've got it here somewhere—100,000 jobs by June 1969 and 500,00 by June 1971. That was really a reverse of the traditional policy of hiring the best qualified. In effect it was hire lesser-qualified applicants. We had three targets: you hire them, you train them, and you retain them. That was the byword of the National Alliance of Business. Hire them—and that doesn't mean pre-hire—you hire them and train them on the job and retain them. Every NAB Company would keep statistics on those goals and results which would be reported to Washington. My Region IV statistics are in the collection; how many we hired and then trained and how successful we were in retaining them for at least 6 months. We, meaning the NAB volunteers, who wanted to make sure the program was a continuing success.

JM: And a sense of pride too.

HG: Yes. I would like to add, this challenging voluntary program ultimately resulted in over 3,500,000 jobs for the four categories of applicants I have mentioned.

JM: I'd like to ask you your feelings now about the current general manager at Lockheed, Lee Rhyant. He's an African American. In your opinion, have we come to a point where race in the workplace is unnoticed and that discrimination is a thing of the past?

HG: I would say no. If it was, the EEOC would be out of business as I imagine they still get a lot of race discrimination charges. I met Lee Rhyant coming out of a meeting of retired Lockheed employees over at the Windy Hill Center for Senior Men, and I just got to speak with him as we walked out and I said, "I'd like to visit with you." He said, "Give me a call. I'd like to talk to you." Time went on, and we never got together.

JM: Do you think racial discrimination in the workplace is a thing of the past?

HG: Not at all. It's still present. It's not as overt. The *main thing* is that the successes of workplace integration have overwhelmed workplace segregation. Lee Rhyant is just one of a great multitude of blacks and females in senior executive positions everywhere in this country. It is now a given. The process of making that amazing and wonderful change is the crux of my history project. This day when racial prejudice lifts its ugly head, it is recognizable. I knew being responsible at Lockheed for affirmative action was not a very popular thing. But I never had a problem with that. It was my job. And I had the complete support of my management, the Vice President of Industrial Relations and the President. They were indeed glad that I was doing this, and I was called upon to make presentations on our affirmative action plans to the President's Committee so we were all on the same page. Is that it? Are we done?

SB: Yes, we're just running out of tape right here on the second side.

JM: I guess I'd just like to conclude by saying thank you very much. You've provided us with a lot of wonderful information.

HG: Glad to do it.

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