

**The Lemon Street Schools Oral History Collection
Marietta City Schools System, 2019-2021
Sullivan Ruff Jr. Interview
Conducted by James Newberry
February 13, 2020**

Complete Transcript

Interviewer: All right. This is James Newberry and I'm here with Mr. Sullivan Ruff on Thursday, February 13th, 2020 at his home in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Mr. Ruff, do you agree to this interview?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: Well, thank you. Could you tell me your full name?

Ruff: Sullivan Reginald Ruff, Jr.

Interviewer: What's your birth date?

Ruff: 8/28/23.

Interviewer: Could you tell me your parents' names?

Ruff: My mother's name was Sarah Ruff, Ida Ruff and my daddy's name is the same as mine, but he's a Sr.

Interviewer: I'm actually going to sit up here so you can look at it. All right. Could you tell me what your parents did for a living?

Ruff: My daddy worked on the Southern Railroad.

Interviewer: And that was his long-term job?

Ruff: 37 years.

Interviewer: What did he do?

Ruff: Well, he was a brakeman who unfortunately, broke his leg. Then they moved him in a house where all the freight stuff come in.

Interviewer: How did he break when he broke his leg?

Ruff: Out there, what do you call them people, flagging out there on the train and things? I guess he fell.

Interviewer: How did that job pay?

Ruff: Well, railroad jobs was one of the best paying jobs.

Interviewer: What about your mother? What did she do?

Ruff: She didn't do anything. It was 11 of us.

Interviewer: Eleven children?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: Where did you grow up?

Ruff: I grew up in Union, South Carolina. Then, I went down to Columbia, South Carolina with my brother because he was a druggist because he had finished Meharry and had a drug store and I just stayed down there with him until I left and went to New York and came back.

Interviewer: So, what age did you go to live with him in Columbia?

Ruff: Well, I finished high school at 16 and then I went with my brother in New York first, then I came back and went to school. There was three of them in school so I told them I would stay out of here until one of them get out of school. So one of my sisters finished that left too, so I was third one in college.

Interviewer: Why could only three be in school at the same time?

Ruff: They had to pay their way to college, what that was, but I went on a football scholarship. That's what I went on.

Interviewer: Well, what did you do in New York?

Ruff: I'd go up there in the summer with my brother sometime. I had one, was finished Hampton, he was tailor up in New York and then sometime I'd go up and stay with him.

Smith (Daughter): [inaudible 00:02:43] what did you do for your job there?

Ruff: Up there?

Smith (Daughter): Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruff: That was summer. I worked up there a while at that girls' school in Ossining, New York. That's right above where my brother lived, White Plains.

Interviewer: What did you do at the girls' school?

Ruff: I really didn't work at the girls' school. Yes I did. I worked up in the house. That's where I worked. See, my brother was there and he could cook, but I could too. But and he left and I went to spend the summer with my brother and I helped him during the summer. But then when football season time would open, I'd leave.

Interviewer: What was this brother's name?

Ruff: Haskell Ruff, a Hampton graduate.

Interviewer: So how many of your siblings attended college?

Ruff: All.

Interviewer: It seems like education was important in the family.

Ruff: Yes. They didn't have but two didn't finish school. The other brother was up there was Haskell in New York. He went three years at Hampton and then he got married. My other brother, he went to Littleton and then he went to Benedict a while. My sister was living in Spencer, North Carolina and he stayed up there and went to school there at Livingston College. Then they came back and helped my brother in the drug store and went to Benedict College.

Interviewer: Where was Benedict?

Ruff: Right across the street from Allen University.

Interviewer: So, before we go to your time in college, I wanted to ask you about your childhood home. What did it look like? Describe it for me.

Ruff: It was just a regular house. My daddy owned a farm up there and then we had a neighborhood store.

Interviewer: What did you sell at the store?

Ruff: Well, in these neighborhoods, you sell things that people can use in the neighborhood. Then, wasn't far from there it was ... it was a pretty good piece from there, they had to either go out there and buy. So he tried to have in his store, what the neighborhood people need in the store every day.

Interviewer: Like groceries?

Ruff: Yes, groceries, canned goods and sugar and flour and all that kind of stuff.

Smith (Daughter): And the Nehi drink man delivered all-

Ruff: Yeah, they had drinks there.

Smith (Daughter): I liked that strawberry Nehi drink.

Ruff: Then he told kerosene because they'd keep the heat on up there too.

Interviewer: Tell me your full name.

Smith (Daughter): Sandra Ruff Smith.

Interviewer: Just want to make sure we note that Mr. Ruff's daughter, one of his daughters is here with us. So you said your mother worked in the home.

Ruff: Yes. That's all she'd do. It was 11 of us.

Interviewer: Where did you fall in the lineup of children?

Ruff: Last one.

Interviewer: Are you the only one living.

Ruff: That's true.

Interviewer: When everybody grew up, you don't have to tell me where everyone lived, but where did they live across the country?

Ruff: My brother, the one in Columbia, South Carolina, the druggist, was down in Columbia. He had a drug store down in Columbia. My other brother, he was up in New York. He's a tailor that finished school down at Hampton, so he was a tailor up in New York. Then my brother, the one that was in med school, he died his senior year in med school. He got the flu because he had pneumonia one time and not long, told my mother they had good doctors up there but they were a little careless with it and that flu turned into pneumonia. So he didn't get to finish there. But my brother, the one that the druggist, he finished Meharry, in pharmacy.

Smith (Daughter): Your brother that was the doctor, because William found his stuff [crosstalk 00:06:57] He finished Morehouse College.

Ruff: He died in his senior year. He had finished Morehouse and gone to Meharry. In his senior year, he got sick that fall and well he died at Christmas and the other one died in May.

Smith (Daughter): How old were you then?

Interviewer: Let's see. Claude and them finished school a pretty good time ago because he was probably down at Morehouse in his early thirties. See, I was the last one on the list. That was 10 others before me that went to school.

Smith (Daughter): I know Aunt B said she was 25 years older than he was.

Ruff: She went to school first. She went to Benedict?

Interviewer: That's the oldest?

Smith (Daughter): Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: What was her name?

Ruff: Alberta, Mrs. Alberta Rough Daniels. [crosstalk 00:07:42].

Interviewer: So, what sort of social activities was your family involved in?

Ruff: Well, you know back then, we didn't do nothing much but go to church and back then. They didn't have all these ... they weren't modern like they are now. I'd take mine around to playing little league ball or whatever they were doing. They didn't have to do that.

Interviewer: What church did you go to?

Ruff: Cartwright Baptist Church in Union.

Smith (Daughter): It still stands and it's got his parents' name in a stained glass window over here on the left.

Interviewer: Oh, wow. So they were long-term members?

Ruff: Yeah.

Smith (Daughter): Yeah, because papa contributed to making sure that he had a pianist, [crosstalk 00:08:30] he helped build the church.

Ruff: He contributed to the church too, that one and the one down in Newberry, South Carolina, where they came from.

Smith (Daughter): We'd go down to the home church every [crosstalk 00:08:42]

Interviewer: That's out from what do you call them? What it's called down there?

Smith (Daughter): Pomaria.

Ruff: Pomaria.

Interviewer: Did you know any of your grandparents?

Ruff: I ain't see none.

Interviewer: So, they weren't living?

Ruff: No, I was born in '23. They gone.

Interviewer: So, did you have interactions with White people as a child?

Ruff: Yeah. [inaudible 00:09:09] tobacco, that thing because my daddy had to help that boy because his daddy died and my daddy helped him because he wanted to farm and he-

Smith (Daughter): Oh, I wish ... I got that letter-

Ruff: Bartow [crosstalk 00:09:20]

Smith (Daughter): It's in a book I have at home with Bartow Cup when he was a little boy. It's a newspaper article about my grandfather and it said colored man [inaudible 00:09:33] and he said the because my uncle Arts went to school, they were inspired to go to school and he refers to the one in [inaudible 00:09:46] which was his daddy.

Interviewer: About Bartow?

Smith (Daughter): Mm-hmm (affirmative). He always came back to visit.

Ruff: Yeah, because that's who helped him when he was coming along. Their daddy died. That lady had five or six children. He had to help that lady with her children. Now Bartow would always come.

Interviewer: Bartow Cup?

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: This is a man?

Ruff: Yeah.

Smith (Daughter): He wrote for that newspaper down in, what part of South Carolina-

Interviewer: He taught at the College of Charleston.

Smith (Daughter): Yeah.

Interviewer: So, he was a White man?

Ruff: Yeah.

Smith (Daughter): Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: What was the connection to your family?

Ruff: They lived right out the back. I go around, out the back, right up there to their house.

Smith (Daughter): His dad died and so-

Ruff: And that lady, I'd help her with them children because my daddy used to help them.

Interviewer: Did they have money? Where they well to do or were they poor?

Ruff: They were fortunate.

Smith (Daughter): They weren't poor?

Ruff: Nah. Nope. The lady came from Germany and what did that lady's name? She had money and that's was lucky for her because she could send her children to school. That lady had money.

Smith (Daughter): I didn't know that. I always thought Bartow Cup and them were poor because [crosstalk 00:11:03] they were raised up up there coming to visit-

Ruff: They were raised up right there. That's their home.

Smith (Daughter): They would come through whenever they were in town.

Ruff: Going to their house instead of coming down, when you get to the bottom of the Stanshill here, you make a right. The last thing for, what's that park around there, is their home. Then that other one, I don't know, Dan, how old he was. He went to Clemson. He played football and went to Clemson on a scholarship.

Smith (Daughter): I have the newspaper article that was written, but it's in a book at my house.

Interviewer: Now see, what did sister do?

Smith (Daughter): If you want me to bring it to you-

Interviewer: That'd be great. Do you have any family group pictures of his family?

Smith (Daughter): Oh, wait a minute.

Interviewer: So, was your family considered well off at all?

Ruff: Well, my daddy worked on the railroad himself. He had a farm and plus he had a neighborhood store.

Smith (Daughter): And he had rental houses.

Ruff: He had rental houses.

Interviewer: Did he rent those to Black people?

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, let's move on. Tell me about your early education in Union. Where you go to school?

Ruff: In Union, South Carolina, elementary and high school.

Interviewer: Do you remember what those schools were called?

Ruff: MacBeth School for the elementary school and Simms High for the high school.

Interviewer: And they were public schools?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: So, you went-

Ruff: But you got to remember now, is back in then, most of your black school were Rosenwald schools, that's what they were, because the state didn't build no, back in then, they didn't want the high school far. So Rosenwald, I didn't know what he did. He was building houses through the schools so we'd have a high school. See they didn't want to do nothing but pay for them to go to elementary school. They didn't want them to bus them to Union and things, so those children, if somebody could not send them there to go to school, they had to drop out of school. They didn't have nothing but elementary schools down in Santo, Carlisle and around in there?

Smith (Daughter): Now this is some of the pictures. That's him and his sister. She died last Christmas. Then this is daddy and uncle Leon. That was one of his brothers there. This is all of them that was left at the time when uncle Otis died.

Interviewer: I'll scan those. So how far was the school from your house?

Ruff: It was a pretty little piece, but it wasn't that far. Now Simms High was way on down, further than that.

Interviewer: How did you get there?

Ruff: Walked. Now my daddy, if it was rain or something, he'd send a taxi to get us so we wouldn't get wet.

Interviewer: Was he working over in Union?

Ruff: He worked in Union.

Interviewer: So, what subjects did you learn in school, elementary and high?

Ruff: Well, I had all the elementary ... you take in elementary school, math, science, English and all that. In high school, then, is where you majored. I majored in chemistry and minored in math and minored in physics.

Interviewer: In high school?

Ruff: No, college. I majored in chemistry in college, minored in math [crosstalk 00:14:43] and also minored in [crosstalk 00:14:43] minored in biology. So I had one major, chemistry, and two minors, math and biology.

Interviewer: Did you always have an interest in science from when you were young?

Ruff: Yeah, my two brothers were doctors. I wanted to follow them. I just didn't get there. I got out the Army and I got married, which I attended two years, I went to school before I went in the Army and the other two when I got out. I got married that first year after I got out and I started a family. So I just decided I'd finish school and go on to work, but I taught chemistry and physics at Rockhill. Then I taught biology and chemistry in Marietta.

Interviewer: So, before we move on, what kind of a student were you when you were in elementary and high school?

Ruff: Well, I made nothing but As and Bs. My caught always somewhere. That's all I made. I went to kindergarten at Miss Tobin. She had a private kindergarten, my sister sent us there. So I left kindergarten and went to second grade.

Interviewer: So, you skipped first grade?

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, you were a smart kid?

Ruff: I didn't have to go. Me and my sister was going and I just went with her every day. So Miss Tobin told, "Let him come on," and we went to kindergarten together, my sister and myself.

Interviewer: When you were in high school, what were your expectations for after?

Ruff: College. All my people went to college.

Interviewer: Where did you start? College.

Ruff: Allen University in South Carolina.

Interviewer: Why did you choose Allen?

Ruff: Allen owed my brother some money, went and get football stuff and things and couldn't pay it. So he told me let my sister start going to school there for the tuition and stuff. So we just went on to school there. Now, my brother went to South Carolina State first, the one right above me, but he transferred because I was playing football. He transferred there so he could attend the games and things. So I don't know what to because he stayed in the Army a long time.

Interviewer: Right.

Ruff: They registered, I believe, in 1940 I think it was. The reason I knew that day was because I was in the drugstore helping the drugstore and that's when they bombed Pearl Harbor. That was the 7th of December, I think. It was the first of December.

Interviewer: It was a Sunday.

Ruff: Yeah, on Sunday. I was helping him on the drug store on a Sunday and that's when the radio came on about something they said about they had bombed Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: So how soon after did you enlist?

Ruff: That was in '40, I was a freshman in college then, because I finished high school to 16 and then I just kept moving on.

Interviewer: So, Allen, how old was it?

Ruff: It's a church school and came in, but it's old. It's way back in one of the ... for Black students to go. Benedict and Allen right across the street from each other. Morris College we had there. Well they tried to start South Carolina State when they integrated, but it didn't match the University of South Carolina, so they lost again because they had to open the doors for them. They wasn't spending money there, they spent it at the University of South Carolina. The master's degree there were not good as some places. So that's when they built the other schools.

Interviewer: How long were you at Allen before you went into the Army?

Ruff: Two years. That's where I started my junior year and I didn't due to start because I had to go to the Army.

Interviewer: Did you live in dormitories there?

Ruff: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Always stayed in the dormitory.

Interviewer: What's the town called where it's located?

Ruff: Columbia, South Carolina.

Interviewer: So, did you leave campus go off campus to do things?

Ruff: Yeah, went around to my brother and helped him in the drug store and around his house, he built at the end of the football field. I'd go around there and went to church there and all. Then, now during football season, I couldn't hit my brother but a little. But when football was over, then I'd help him all the time, then. So I'd go probably five o'clock in the afternoon and work maybe 9:30 or 10. Then on the weekends, I'd helped him all the way on the weekend because it was right there, had five churches in that area and we had pretty good business.

Interviewer: What were you doing in the pharmacy?

Ruff: I could fill prescriptions. The only one I didn't fill was the narcotic and stuff, but I can fill every prescription that came in there.

Interviewer: Did you do other jobs, besides filling prescriptions?

Ruff: Worked with my brother. You'd sell ice cream and things and drugs. We had a fountain in there and that stayed pretty busy on the weekends, especially starting on Thursday.

Interviewer: What was it called, the pharmacy?

Ruff: Ruff's Drug Store. Ruth's Drug Store. Ruff's Drug Store.

Interviewer: What was this brother's name?

Ruff: He was named Roland. Roland, let me see? What is his first name? But his name was Roland Ruff.

Interviewer: Was he one of your much older siblings?

Ruff: He was second. My sister, oldest sister, the one that taught school was first and he was second to finish school.

Interviewer: Did he have a family there?

Ruff: Well, he got married sometime after he got out of pharmacy school and started running the drug store, but then not at first.

Interviewer: For those two years, your first sort of freshmen, sophomore year at Allen, tell me what you studied again.

Ruff: Science, as a matter of fact, major chemistry. I minored in biology there and then I took math all the way through calculus.

Interviewer: You mentioned you were planning to maybe go into the medical field?

Ruff: That's where I was going, but my wife got pregnant and then I said, "No, I'll just finish college and go on to work."

Interviewer: So, finished two years, then you went into the Army. Where did you complete your training in the military?

Ruff: I went to [inaudible 00:21:34] Chaser School in Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Interviewer: What was it called?

Ruff: Fort Belvoir.

Interviewer: And what was the school?

Ruff: What was the question again? What did you ask me about? What question did you ask me?

Interviewer: You went into the Army and where did you do basic training?

Ruff: Oh, I get it, down in Alexandria, Louisiana where they had a camp. What's the name of that camp? Camp Crowley, Camp something. I can remember the other one, Polk. Let me see if I can remember it. Camp Claiborne, that's what it was. I did basic training there. After basic training, they sent me to the water purification sewerage up in Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Interviewer: Water purification?

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: What were you expected to do with it?

Ruff: Purify water for the whole company and things. I set up a shower for them and everything. You got the people who was doing the welding and do the tank and things for me. Sometimes in the Army, I'd help them with the payroll and things, the young fellow, would help him.

Interviewer: How were you selected for that task, water purification.

Ruff: Because I had the best scores in the company?

Interviewer: Do you remember the name of your company?

Ruff: I put it in the signals on all the trucks and things for them. I think that was Camp Claiborne, I believe. It's been a long time.

Interviewer: After the water purification school in Germany, or excuse me, in Virginia. Where did you go from there?

Ruff: Went back to the folk where I came from, down in Louisiana. About that time, that was about September or something. I believe in November or somewhere along there they started getting us ready to go overseas. So I went in the Army in March of ... was it '44? Yeah, I believe it was '44 because ... wait a minute, let me back up, it was '44. Wait a minute. Back up, [inaudible 00:24:03]. Yeah, it was '44, because we stayed in New Orleans til ... I went to school up there. I didn't get back on time because I got sick, but I didn't stay in the hospital long. Then, we were supposed to ... Where were we ... Oh, I was going to that officer candidate school. That's what happened. That old [inaudible 00:24:28] told us we were on alert, and they said I couldn't leave being on alert going [inaudible 00:24:33] after I [inaudible 00:24:33] wanting me to go to school. You know how they did back in then, some of them.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Ruff: Yeah I [inaudible 00:24:49] ... I forgot what I started saying. What were we talking about [inaudible 00:24:51] right quick. I was telling you something but I forgot it.

Interviewer: Officer's training school?

Ruff: Yeah, officer's training school. He told them that I couldn't go because our outfit was on alert to go overseas. That's why I didn't get that, because my scores [inaudible 00:25:10] ... They take your scores you make on that test when you come in. Then, I missed a few points because I had took them shots and the shots make me fever like. Then, when I got up to Fort Belvar, I took it again. Then, I made [inaudible 00:25:29] up there then.

Interviewer: You said Fort Belvedere?

Ruff: Fort Belvar.

Interviewer: Belvar.

Ruff: Up in ... Well, I guess [inaudible 00:25:40] it's right out of Washington D.C., because we'd go there on passes during the weekend. I just didn't want to go down there. I thought if other people can go, I could, too. It didn't bother me.

Interviewer: You were prepared to go to officer's training school.

Ruff: That's where I was going. I was going to go to officer candidate school.

Interviewer: What happened?

Ruff: Well, that commandant said, when I got back, we going on alert to go overseas and I couldn't go.

Interviewer: Did you go overseas?

Ruff: Yeah. Stayed over there 15 months.

Interviewer: Where did you go?

Ruff: India, Burma China. No, at the border of China. We didn't get on through China because the war ended. Most of the time was India and Burma. On that [inaudible 00:26:36] Road, you might've heard it over ... Talking about the [inaudible 00:26:38] Road thing. The soldiers built that [inaudible 00:26:43] Road and fought at the same time. That guy told me they do sometimes whole battalions of people overnight. They [inaudible 00:26:52] mountain and things and putting that road in was a tough job, but [inaudible 00:26:57] guys can put in there, though. They had to use some platoon boats. I think that's what they call it, because they had to put the bridges in so they used those. I think they called them platoon boats to do that. Then, when I got back, I got back a month late because I had to go to the hospital. Then, when I got back, it was in September, I believe. Then, I had already passed it ... I missed a few points when I took it down in ... I had them shots. Them shots bothered me a little bit. When I came back there, I had [inaudible 00:27:38] enough, it's good to go. When I had to purify all the water for them, but let me tell you something. Over there, you couldn't get it out the creek and things because it had [inaudible 00:27:53]. Chlorine wouldn't kill it itself, so you had to filter that. You had to turn it through them filter before we could give it to anybody to drink. They add the chlorine to it so they could drink it.

Interviewer: That's what you were doing throughout those 15 months?

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: For your company?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: I assume it was an all-Black company?

Ruff: Well, that's all they had then.

Interviewer: Did y'all interact with White soldiers at all?

Ruff: Everybody. We didn't care. We all go there to see the movies and things together when they had the movies that you had to go see. They'll really tell you too, they started integrating up at Fort Belvar when I was up there. We went to the same movies, everything. Ate at the same mess hall and thing.

Interviewer: I see. When were you discharged?

Ruff: April 26th, 1946.

Interviewer: Did you immediately go back to Allen?

Ruff: Yeah. Went on back that summer.

Interviewer: At that point, how much time did you have left at Allen?

Ruff: Well after two years, it was two years before and two years after. [inaudible 00:29:16], I could've finished at the end of '47, but I wanted to play my last football year so I stayed there [inaudible 00:29:24] the middle of the year and took some more courses.

Interviewer: You were playing football all throughout your time there?

Ruff: Yes. I played three years in high school, four years in college.

Interviewer: What position did you play?

Ruff: Guard. I like to play guard. I liked [inaudible 00:29:36] and do the blocking for them.

Interviewer: Who did Allen play?

Ruff: We played Morris Brown, we played [inaudible 00:29:45] Smith, played Benedict, played South Carolina State, played Virginia State. Let's see, we played somewhere out in Florida, but I can't remember who. We didn't play no Rattlers, though. [inaudible 00:29:59] play some other team. Them Rattlers was too much for us.

Interviewer: You'd already been to Atlanta by the time you started working.

Ruff: Yeah. I'd say I used to go over ... Yeah, we'd go down to Atlanta. See, traveling wasn't no problem with us because you get the pass and travel where you want to go. If we going to New York, somebody [inaudible 00:30:22] with him. Then, we still get the other part of the pass going from Washington D.C. to New York.

Interviewer: What do you mean "the pass"?

Ruff: You get pass. My daddy worked on the railroad, so travel, that's what they called it. You got to get to the pass to travel to that city.

Interviewer: Like, it was free?

Ruff: No, he didn't pay [inaudible 00:30:43]. No, he got it free.

Interviewer: You were able to travel a lot.

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. You finish up at school. At what point did you meet your wife?

Ruff: In freshman class together.

Interviewer: All right. Were you already serious with her before you left?

Ruff: No. Before I went in? Yeah, [inaudible 00:31:05] but then we picked it up a little bit. She played basketball and I played the football. We were freshmens.

Interviewer: What was her name?

Ruff: Gardenia C [inaudible 00:31:19] Ruff, but she was a Canty, C-A-N-T-Y, Canty.

Interviewer: Where was she from?

Ruff: Sumpter, South Carolina.

Interviewer: When did you marry?

Ruff: Let's see. Fall, I believe, after I got out the Army. '47, that was '47. I got married in '47.

Interviewer: You mentioned that rather than go onto medical school, you finished up about the time you got married and went straight to work.

Ruff: I had a child on the way, I had to go to work.

Interviewer: Where did you go to work?

Ruff: I worked [inaudible 00:31:57] and went to summer school. I'd take probably two classes in the summer [inaudible 00:32:05] work, help him.

Interviewer: Was this still undergrad or Masters?

Ruff: Undergraduate. Well, I didn't go to Masters. I stayed out one year [inaudible 00:32:15] and then that next year, I went back to Atlanta University.

Interviewer: Did y'all move down to Atlanta?

Ruff: Mm-mm (negative). No. I stayed in a dormitory.

Interviewer: By yourself?

Ruff: No, it was other people there.

Interviewer: I mean where was your wife?

Ruff: She back in South Carolina, up there with my brother [inaudible 00:32:36].

Interviewer: You came down and-

Ruff: Went to school. Then-

Interviewer: She stayed up there.

Ruff: Yeah. My two brothers was there and they were [inaudible 00:32:49] to help [inaudible 00:32:51] something, about 45 miles from Columbus. That's all. She go down and see her people, or go up to Union and see mine.

Interviewer: You had your first child by then?

Ruff: In my junior year. See, I got married before Christmas. Let me tell you. My sister-in-law is a [inaudible 00:33:15] you [inaudible 00:33:18], you ought to marry. I follow them and go married. Didn't plan to do that until I got out of school. Then, my first job out of school, I worked up in Rock Hill, South Carolina. I taught chemistry and physics, so [inaudible 00:33:33] help with the football coach.

Interviewer: You started after the Masters program?

Ruff: After I worked one year, then I started a Masters program.

Interviewer: I see. What was the school called at Rock Hill?

Ruff: Emmett Scott. Emmett Scott.

Interviewer: Emmett Scott.

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: That was a high school?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: You taught there one year.

Ruff: I taught there three years.

Interviewer: Three years.

Ruff: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Interviewer: What grades did you teach?

Ruff: Juniors and seniors because I taught ... Yeah, I taught biology, but I taught physics and chemistry. Yeah, because I had two chemistry class and two physics classes. Then, [inaudible 00:34:15] I taught a biology class [inaudible 00:34:16] too.

Interviewer: Did you like teaching?

Ruff: It was all right. I didn't hate it. It was all right. I see some problems people have with teaching that I just didn't have. I ain't have no discipline problems because when they come in there, soon as I call the roll, we going to talk chemistry [inaudible 00:34:34]. Then, the same thing for physics. See, most time I tell teachers, "If you give them some time, they not going to sit up there and do anything. You got to have lesson with them and keep the children working." They [inaudible 00:34:55]. We had a good time with chemistry and physics.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to get a Masters?

Ruff: Well, we just kept getting on up. I had a G.I. Bill, too.

Interviewer: What did you use that money for?

Ruff: Go to school. Of course, I didn't use it because they paid my tuition and stuff. That's why I could go so long. When I got back and I was on a football scholarship. Then, I had the G.I. bill, too. I didn't have to use it since I had so much left for graduate school. Of course, I didn't have to use it. I didn't pay anything to go to school because I played football.

Interviewer: Did the Masters increase your salary?

Ruff: Oh, yeah. You move on up there. Really, how I get to get the two Masters, let me tell you. I didn't take any education, because science students, we don't have time for education. They told me I had to get a certificate to teach, which I had to take some education. When I finished with the education, my advisor look at me and said, "Take two more classes and write another thesis and you get another one." I just did that.

Interviewer: You had two Masters?

Ruff: Yeah. One in chemistry, on in education administration.

Interviewer: Wow. That was while teaching?

Ruff: Yeah, [inaudible 00:36:19] the summer.

Interviewer: That Masters came from Atlanta University?

Ruff: Yes, both of them. Both Masters from Atlanta University.

Interviewer: Where did you go from Rock Hill?

Ruff: To Marietta, Georgia.

Interviewer: How did you get the job?

Ruff: My friend was down there that played football with me in college. He was in Rome, Georgia. His principal was looking for somebody who could teach since. Burrell told me, "You can get in and do it, but you got to go [inaudible 00:36:52]." I did take the job there on Lemon Street and got them started. See, when I went to Lemon Street, they had four students, I believe, had gone to college before I got there. That's all. See, Lemon Street didn't have much of a school when I went there to help them because I started to leave. My brother told me, "No. Just work it out [inaudible 00:37:14] with them." The superintendent was [inaudible 00:37:17] what I needed to do for teaching. See, they didn't want to fix up the school. The principal, he wasn't really qualified to be principal. He went to Savannah State. I believe he majored in brick mason. They didn't have much of a school.

Interviewer: Who was that?

Ruff: The principal that was there before I got there.

Interviewer: Tell me his name.

Ruff: Woods. [inaudible 00:37:43] Mr. Woods' name [inaudible 00:37:44].

Interviewer: MJ Woods.

Ruff: MJ, yeah.

Interviewer: Your friend in Rome knew MJ Woods.

Ruff: Yeah. Burrell, I guess they met down there in summer school.

Interviewer: What is the man's name in Rome?

Ruff: Burrell.

Interviewer: How do you spell that?

Ruff: [inaudible 00:38:02] I forgot how to spell his name.

Interviewer: Burrell?

Ruff: Yeah, Burrell.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ruff: [inaudible 00:38:08] B-U-R-R something. [crosstalk 00:38:12].

Interviewer: Do you remember when you first met MJ Woods?

Ruff: By Burrell. We did summer school together and he say, "I want you to meet him." He say he want a science teacher. He told me, "Well, you know you can ... Atlanta not that far. You can [inaudible 00:38:32] a year." I listened to him. I didn't have time with football and stuff to go to school, so I just wait til the end of the year.

Interviewer: What-

Automated voice: Front door.

Interviewer: What did you think of MJ Woods?

Ruff: Well, he was all right, but he just wasn't so smart at [inaudible 00:38:53]. He majored in brick masonry in school. I don't know if he had [inaudible 00:39:00] he was in the school [inaudible 00:39:02] say it again, but I was in class with him and he wasn't so smart in class.

Interviewer: You mean he was taking the Masters program at Atlanta University?

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: The same time as you?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: I see. What about his personality?

Ruff: He was all right. He's nice. Mr. Woods tickle me. [inaudible 00:39:25] tickle me. When the football game going on and he [inaudible 00:39:30] be there, right there on the sidelines. His son [inaudible 00:39:35] had two boy and one girl, I believe. One of the boys finished Morehouse. This other one finished Savannah

State and I can't remember where that girl finished school. She might've gone to Spelman.

Interviewer: He has a son named Lorenzo.

Ruff: Oh, I forgot about him because he [inaudible 00:39:54] Scott. Lorenzo went to Savannah State, I believe.

Interviewer: I just saw him yesterday.

Ruff: He got sick a while one time. He almost died with his lungs. The thing about it he wanted to go ... We were going down in [inaudible 00:40:11] Georgia for the basketball tournament. He was on the team-

[crosstalk 00:40:16]

Ruff: Yeah. [inaudible 00:40:17] talking about not letting him go. Mr. Woods said, "You know he can go with him because he going to see about him." I put him in the room with me down there so I could. He was about to die because he couldn't get to go. Something happened to his lungs and he had a time for a while.

Interviewer: What was your first job at Lemon Street?

Ruff: I taught chemistry, biology, and coached.

Interviewer: That was at the high school?

Ruff: Yeah. [inaudible 00:40:47] elementary school.

Interviewer: Where was your classroom in the building?

Ruff: Mine was up on the top floor. What do you call that court out there? In the middle of it, [inaudible 00:41:03] classes out there. We had [inaudible 00:41:07]. Then, we decide to do some [inaudible 00:41:10] because I told the superintendent, "I need the lab for chemistry. I can't teach biology and chemistry without a lab for the children. You can't do it effective." That's when they built them rooms out there in the middle of that court. Then, the superintendent [inaudible 00:41:25] he ain't going to put no air in there. I told him, "Well, you're not going to have no classes in the fall and things because it's too hot to have." That was true. I just called him down there to see it. Them children couldn't stay in them room. It's too hot. Wasn't no air out there in it and they wouldn't put the air conditioners in it. How you going to build something and don't put no air conditioner in there?

Interviewer: Now, these rooms, you're saying they're in the court?

Ruff: Yeah. Just like this, the court [inaudible 00:41:53] like that. He decided ... The Southern Association got us. They said some things we need to do. I said, "Well, that's what the Southern Association said, then that's why I'm going into it so we can improve the school." [inaudible 00:42:14]. I never had no problems with [inaudible 00:42:21] in class by some of them either because we just had a good understanding.

Interviewer: Do you remember your first year at Lemon Street?

Ruff: Yeah. I taught the biology and chemistry [inaudible 00:42:33].

Interviewer: Do you remember what year that was?

Smith (Daughter): I was two years old.

Ruff: Let's see. Yeah, I know.

Interviewer: 1950?

Ruff: No. Let's see. I finished school in '48. It was in '48.

Smith (Daughter): I was two years old.

Ruff: Fall of '48.

Smith (Daughter): No, I was two years old, so it had to be 1950 maybe, because I was born in '48.

Ruff: Uh-uh (negative). I graduated in '48 and I went on up to Rock Hill to work that year.

Smith (Daughter): Then, you went to Marietta. That's what he's talking about.

Ruff: Yeah. I worked in Rock Hill three years and then went to Marietta.

Interviewer: So '51?

Ruff: Yep. That's the ... '51, '52', and '53.

Interviewer: '51 was the year they built the new elementary school, the-

Ruff: I believe that school was built when I got there.

Interviewer: Right, because it was built in '51.

Ruff: Yeah, and I came-

Interviewer: It was there when you got there.

Ruff: Yeah, that's right.

Interviewer: You didn't teach in that building?

Ruff: No, [inaudible 00:43:26].

Smith (Daughter): Well, I thought you were principal for a while. There's where you got your first-

Ruff: Oh, yeah. That's right.

Smith (Daughter): He had a couple of Masters [crosstalk 00:43:31] go back [crosstalk 00:43:32].

Interviewer: Please tell me about that.

Ruff: The superintendent out-talked me about being principal. "You can be principal [crosstalk 00:43:41]." I said, "I can't be principal unless I take some administration course to prepare for it. You just can't walk in them classrooms be no principal." He laughed [inaudible 00:43:50], so I went on and got what I needed.

Interviewer: From where?

Ruff: Atlanta University.

Interviewer: This was the education administration?

Ruff: Yes. Well, I got two degrees from Atlanta University. One in chemistry, one in education administration.

Interviewer: Right, but did you do them at the same time?

Ruff: No. I finished one first. Then, I told you my [inaudible 00:44:10] said, "You could do two more classes and I'll take that third class off of it and do that [inaudible 00:44:19]." [inaudible 00:44:20] had no problem.

Interviewer: Were you already at Lemon Street when you got the second Masters?

Ruff: Yes. I used to take [inaudible 00:44:30] Scott, take all them to school with me, much as the car would hold. He get it. [inaudible 00:44:36], "Ah. Get yourself up, come on. We going to leave for school." He still didn't want to go. "That's early." [inaudible 00:44:43] get up, we got to go.

Interviewer: What day of the week would that be?

Ruff: Well, it was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

Interviewer: Were those summer classes?

Ruff: Yeah, this summer classes. I ain't have time to go during the fall now. I told [inaudible 00:44:58] let Burrell fool me. "Oh yeah, you can teach." I ain't going to have time to teach no [inaudible 00:45:02] course and then teaching science classes. See, some people try to teach [inaudible 00:45:07] chemistry and physics without the [inaudible 00:45:11] lab. You can't do that [inaudible 00:45:12]. You got to have the lab work to go with it.

Interviewer: When did you become principal?

Ruff: Let's see. The elementary school, look like to me is probably '57, '58 [inaudible 00:45:28] '59. I think it was '58 and '59, I believe.

Interviewer: Did MJ Woods retire?

Ruff: Yeah. They retired him.

Interviewer: Did they retire him?

Smith (Daughter): He went over to the high school, didn't he?

Ruff: They retired Mr. Woods [inaudible 00:45:42].

Smith (Daughter): Oh, they retired [crosstalk 00:45:44].

Ruff: You know Mr. Woods got mad because ... I said, "You go-"

Smith (Daughter): Oh, yeah. You can't put that in there, then.

Ruff: No, you can't do that. I told him, "Go see the superintendent. He the one that signed me." Mr. Woods, he really [inaudible 00:45:57] in there neither, as a high school principal. They wasn't offering too much when he went there.

Interviewer: You were made principal?

Ruff: Yeah. He asked me, called me one Saturday morning. I asked him, "What do you want on a Saturday morning?" He said, "Come on over here. I need to talk with you." He asked me would I take the schools. He said, "We'll get somebody else to teach this chemistry [inaudible 00:46:25]."

Interviewer: Is that the superintendent?

Ruff: Yeah, uh-huh (affirmative).

Interviewer: What was his name?

Ruff: Schuler. Yeah. He from ... Where is he from? He went to Citadel. That's where he went, and [inaudible 00:46:34] went to the Presbyterian school. Let's see, I'm

trying ... Well, he was there when I got there and they had made him a superintendent.

Interviewer: What was your regular working relationship with him?

Ruff: Fine. He from down there ... He's from Union, I believe. [inaudible 00:47:05]. If it wasn't that close, it was close to Union. No, I ain't have no problem with the superintendent. I'd out-talk him, though. I'd get my conversation started on football. If I wanted him to sign something, then I'd give it to him and ask if he's sign it. He'd sign it and say, "No, that's why I got [inaudible 00:47:22] he done got me again." He used to tickle me. I get [inaudible 00:47:30] he played football, too. I'd get him on football and stuff. We'd just talk. While we're talking, I'd just ease over there to him what I need him to sign. Then, he'd get to thinking about it, he'd get tickled. He didn't mind doing it. That's when they started helping all the schools to get better. [inaudible 00:47:48] Then, I know if I took him in the Southern Association that most people go, they want to do those requirements that they say you need to do. That's how we got to improve the school.

Interviewer: This Southern Association, what is that?

Ruff: For school and college [inaudible 00:48:06] high schools and colleges.

Interviewer: Because Lemon Street wasn't accredited.

Ruff: Oh yeah, not when I got there. It was accredited when I left.

Interviewer: Okay, but when did it get accreditation? The early 60s?

Ruff: I believe the early 60s.

Interviewer: Okay. So when you became principal in '57, '58, was that both the high school and the elementary school?

Ruff: Both.

Interviewer: And where was your office?

Ruff: [inaudible 00:48:32] in both places. Sometimes I'd go to the elementary school and I had an office right inside the door to the left I believe. And then the high school we didn't have much of an office, but a little something to call an office.

Smith (Daughter): Across from the library, wasn't it?

Ruff: Yeah, right across from [inaudible 00:48:47].

Interviewer: Just inside on the left?

Ruff: Yeah, right on if you're coming in, it's on the left.

Interviewer: The library was straight ahead.

Ruff: Well it's the first thing when you come in the door and make a left, the office is right there.

Interviewer: And then on the right was the teacher's lounge.

Ruff: No, the library was on the right side.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Okay.

Ruff: Teacher's lounge was on, as you come in the door, to the right of the door.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. So, overall how long did you serve as principal, do you remember?

Ruff: Let's see two years with the elementary school, six years with the high school, eight years.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ruff: And then I got a job, what's the name of the plant? To the TNT plant making TNT for the Army. So then yeah, I got on with them and worked until they closed there.

Interviewer: Where was that?

Ruff: Here in Chattanooga.

Smith (Daughter): Yep, you probably passed it if you came in the new way. It no longer exists, but they made a road through there, and the board of education is in their central, [inaudible 00:49:56] Hamilton County central building that they had. See they had guards, and if you didn't work there you might get to the main office. But y'all worked down in the ground though didn't you?

Ruff: No, that's where the TNT was [inaudible 00:50:13] down in the ground, hide it down there and put something over it, little trees over it and around it and everything. And it's [inaudible 00:50:22] sometimes you had to go back there and pull it back out to be sure they're right. Because you know you can't give the Army anything wrong, you got to get it right. If we had any question we'd just run it over again to be sure it was right.

Interviewer So this is explosives?

Ruff: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Interviewer May I ask why you took this job, why did you leave your other job?

Ruff: Well, really I decided I wanted to move on. I was living [inaudible 00:50:54] somewhere, and they had advertisement for a chemist up there in Chattanooga at the TNT plant. And then I said I was going, but I changed my mind, [inaudible 00:51:04] went anyway.

Smith (Daughter): And then that's when they started allowing blacks to work, if you had a degree. [inaudible 00:51:11] and my aunt said that before then if you had a degree you couldn't work in your field. Because you remember when you got out of school you were trying to, college...

Ruff: [inaudible 00:51:24] education. [inaudible 00:51:26] classes.

Smith (Daughter): No I'm talking about working for industry.

Ruff: Well I was reading-

Smith (Daughter): Not that a long time ago when-

Ruff: Oh [inaudible 00:51:35] yeah, that's right. [inaudible 00:51:37] worked for what's the name of the place in Columbia? I can't think of the name of it now, [inaudible 00:51:46].

Interviewer That was before Marietta?

Ruff: Yeah. [inaudible 00:51:50]. Let's see how to do that.

Smith (Daughter): You couldn't be anything but a custodian a lot of times no matter how many degrees you have.

Interviewer Right, well what was the-

Ruff: I always had a teaching job.

Interviewer What was the name of the TNT company?

Ruff: [crosstalk 00:52:11] All I know, [inaudible 00:52:15].

Smith (Daughter): Atlas.

Ruff: No Atlas had a contract for them, but the name of it was the TNT plant where they made TNT. But Atlas [inaudible 00:52:21] had to contract out of New Jersey. They had to contract for it.

Interviewer And it was explosives for the...

Ruff: That's right.

Smith (Daughter): Oh yeah, the war [crosstalk 00:52:30].

Interviewer Was it for the military?

Smith (Daughter): Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah.

Ruff: [inaudible 00:52:35] started it back up for.

Smith (Daughter): Yeah, and [inaudible 00:52:36] military people and guards there. And you couldn't go in there. And now that they have started building and tearing down some of those areas they're finding there's nothing in there but where they hid stuff.

Interviewer Well did you make more money there?

Ruff: Yes. What happened [inaudible 00:52:56] that's when they opened it back up, and we'd go in there and help them with opening up and everything get it going. So we'd get the TNT [inaudible 00:53:07].

Smith (Daughter): And then what did that superintendent tell you and Mr. Kent. They tried to say you all were conspiring on the board because [inaudible 00:53:21]-

Ruff: [inaudible 00:53:24] y'all are conspiring on the board because we told them we need a new wing and everything. And I said [inaudible 00:53:32].

Smith (Daughter): It was the board that told you all that, remember?

Ruff: Oh yeah, that guy [inaudible 00:53:38] board member told that [inaudible 00:53:40] what I say that word he used?

Smith (Daughter): Conspiring.

Ruff: Conspiring on the board.

Smith (Daughter): Yeah, they wanted to get rid of them. And Mr. Milford had a bookstore. He was on the board, I remember him being on the board.

Ruff: [inaudible 00:53:53].

Interviewer Wait, so what were you doing at the time that made them say you were conspiring?

Ruff: Because we asked for things and they didn't want to do it, and that's where your problems come in. So I said well you spent money on [inaudible 00:54:07] why you can't spend it over here?

Smith (Daughter): And then they sent him some old books [crosstalk 00:54:17]. It's a picture of that somewhere was taken from the newspaper because Mr. oh he was coach Dr. Angie.

Ruff: Angie.

Smith (Daughter): Yeah, [inaudible 00:54:28] mother said she was afraid they were going to kill daddy because they were throwing those books back and [crosstalk 00:54:34]-

Ruff: Shoot throwing them right out the door. Right back out the door, you take them back out of there and tell them I don't want them.

Interviewer So you're talking about textbooks?

Ruff: Textbooks. All they sent me was what they had in Miller High and I throw them back out the door and told them, "Take them back over there."

Interviewer What condition were they in?

Ruff: Some of them were in pretty bad condition. Don't send me all their old stuff up there. The state gave us money to buy stuff with.

Smith (Daughter): [inaudible 00:54:57] would be missing.

Ruff: No you ain't going to buy it for me, I'm going to buy it for myself. Then I knew I'd be spending on the money on Lemon Street.

Smith (Daughter): And that was the conspiring.

Ruff: Just what they were going to do, send a two-and-a-half ton truck of books and wasn't nothing but old books. And I told them, "No, not going to take them." You take them on back out the door and take them back out there. I told them I don't want them.

Interviewer Was that a constant issue, the money?

Ruff: That was the first time, that was because I wasn't going to take them old books. When I got to be [inaudible 00:55:36] bring me all those old books [inaudible 00:55:38]. I said the state, see I had that too how much the state gave us in books and things and how much they got. I said I got money [inaudible

00:55:46] you ain't going to spend no more on Miller High. [inaudible 00:55:47] I had it that day. And then [inaudible 00:55:54] my office.

Smith (Daughter): And then when they took your science equipment that was another episode, you stayed on the radio but still.

Ruff: [inaudible 00:56:03] when they integrated in '67, the first thing [inaudible 00:56:05] all that new science equipment, tables, labs, and things. And they got there first. [inaudible 00:56:11].

Interviewer Who took it?

Ruff: [inaudible 00:56:12] Miller High that's what they were going to take it for but I didn't let them do it. [inaudible 00:56:31]. Now, the superintendent got mad at both of us. [inaudible 00:56:37] they said we was cahooting on the board. We ended up [inaudible 00:56:45].

Interviewer Were most of the school board members tough to deal with when you were trying to get what you needed?

Ruff: I hardly ever said anything to a board member. I didn't see the board. That's [inaudible 00:57:01]. But they just didn't want to spend any money.

Interviewer Did you feel like the superintendent was helping you or not helping?

Ruff: [inaudible 00:57:12] they got him too. Talking about we cahooting on the board, you're talking to him too.

Smith (Daughter): He went on back to wherever he came from.

Ruff: Who?

Smith (Daughter): Mr. Kent, didn't he leave after that?

Ruff: They made him something for the state. He worked for the state then. [inaudible 00:57:33] the guy used to be [inaudible 00:57:35] he got on down at the state department because see sometimes they be heating both of us hot. We would take it though.

Interviewer Say that again.

Ruff: I said they heating both of us hot sometimes because you know [inaudible 00:57:52] all together because I told them we need to remodel and do some things because we had about that-

Smith (Daughter): Football field.

Ruff: Yeah, about the football field at first. Walking from the extension they put on over there. And I told them no them children shouldn't have to go out in the rain to come to class. We had over ... now how are you going to have [inaudible 00:58:16] and don't connect it to the school and you got to walk over to other school in the rain or whatever it was doing. [inaudible 00:58:24] most times you put that [inaudible 00:58:27] over for them to go, they ain't put nothing there.

Interviewer: Was this the annex behind the elementary school?

Ruff: No, no, no, [inaudible 00:58:34] one where they [inaudible 00:58:36] because we had to put the-

Smith (Daughter): Oh yeah, the high school had an annex. Yeah, a long [crosstalk 00:58:41].

Ruff: Yeah, yeah, but [inaudible 00:58:42] back there for [inaudible 00:58:46] seventh, eighth grade teachers I believe back there.

Smith (Daughter): Yeah, I went to school in the annex.

Ruff: So we didn't have enough room. See we had all the students [inaudible 00:59:35] about 10 to 12 miles [inaudible 00:59:35] and all that. And it was just crowded.

Interviewer: So what about the annex off the high school? When was that built?

Ruff: Yeah, because we was getting [inaudible 00:59:35] again so it helped the school. So, I went to him and I said well here's the thing that so and so said we got to do. I said here are the things we got to do to improve the school. And they went on and spent the money and did it. Now, they didn't have [inaudible 00:59:35]. I put the chemistry in, I put the physics in for them and those that couldn't do that had physical science for them. So they'd have science courses when they went to college and wouldn't have any problems. And most of them didn't have any problems. Because that first I got about 12 of them to go to college, you know football scholarships, and scholarships and things. So I got 12 the first year.

Smith (Daughter): Oh, I remember when we came I remember them saying that only two people from Marietta had every gone to college.

Ruff: Well four, Ms. Scott, James, Ms. Garrett and one more, four.

Interviewer: James who?

Ruff: His last name is James.

Interviewer: Do you know his first name?

Ruff: John James, [inaudible 01:00:30] he and Scott was two teachers and Ms. Garrett was a nurse and [inaudible 01:00:37] college, and that's all.

Interviewer: Who were the 12 you got to go, or some of them do you remember any of them?

Ruff: William Harrison, [inaudible 01:00:52].

Interviewer: He's a football player, right?

Ruff: Yeah. Let me see, some girls was in that group too. [inaudible 01:01:06] she went to pharmacy school. Who else?

Smith (Daughter): The Avery girl.

Ruff: George's sister Annie, she went. Avery went because she went to [inaudible 01:01:17] Brown because [inaudible 01:01:23].

Smith (Daughter): No, William when he was in [inaudible 01:01:27] my son graduated in 93 he went back down to work, and so he was friends of this young man, I can't remember-

Ruff: Avery his name Avery.

Smith (Daughter): Yeah, but it wasn't Avery then. Her married name is something else.

Ruff: Oh, I don't know.

Smith (Daughter): And they had this big house, and so he had a room for her in there and they said you don't have to pay since you're a friend of my son. And the boy's daddy was vice president down there at Western Electric.

Ruff: Somewhere.

Smith (Daughter): His name was [inaudible 01:02:00] something with a T.

Ruff: [inaudible 01:02:03].

Smith (Daughter): Yeah, because he finished [inaudible 01:02:06] but she was talking about, we was talking about something and he said Marietta. And she said well who is your granddaddy? And he says [inaudible 01:02:17] and she said he gave me my first job when I finished.

Ruff: Got them all jobs.

Smith (Daughter): And she told them you don't have to pay for nothing in this house.

Interviewer Who was that?

Ruff: One of my students.

Smith (Daughter): Her name was Silvia-

Ruff: Avery, Silvia Avery.

Smith (Daughter): Avery was her name when we were in school, because she was ahead of me. And she was just [inaudible 01:02:39] and she could go on stage. And I remember when I was in maybe the ninth grade, Mr. Scott and Ms. Reid had trained her, and she did this thing, we were all fascinated before kindergarten. In school she would turn around and she would come back and be that person, all the way to her PhD.

Ruff: I got her a scholarship to [inaudible 01:03:00] Marks Brown. I got [inaudible 01:03:02] a scholarship to go to school, either football scholarship or either academic scholarship so they can go [inaudible 01:03:08] college I got that.

Smith (Daughter): And we had one basketball player that finished, and he played in the pros for awhile.

Ruff: Yeah, that's I'll think of the name in a minute. Tall about seven feet.

Smith (Daughter): Yes. [inaudible 01:03:27].

Ruff: Key, yeah.

Interviewer Oh, I've heard that name. So, what was your relationship with the students on a day-to-day basis?

Ruff: Oh, I had fine students. I ain't never had a problem with no students. If you [inaudible 01:03:38] my class and you not dressed right, go back and dress and come back to class.

Interviewer What did they need to wear?

Ruff: Dress right.

Smith (Daughter): Clothes.

Ruff: I wouldn't let you come in there with no [inaudible 01:03:52].

Interviewer With no what?

Ruff: [inaudible 01:03:52] you couldn't get in the door, I don't let you come in here.

Interviewer Why is that?

Ruff: Because you do your hair right. [inaudible 01:03:59] jungle somewhere. Get dressed right coming in there.

Interviewer And what about your relationship with parents of students?

Ruff: I ain't have no problems with parents, they always backed me with whatever I needed to do. One day in my office-

Smith (Daughter): Excuse me I got to go to therapy. This is-

Interviewer Is that the booklet.

Smith (Daughter): This is the article there.

Interviewer Okay, I'll take a look at this. Thank you so much. [crosstalk 01:04:26]. Oh, this is great. All right, I'll look at these right when we're finished.

Smith (Daughter): Dad, you going to be all right until I get back?

Ruff: Yeah, I'm fine. I'm doing all right now.

Interviewer He's on a roll.

Ruff: Yeah, I'm good, I'm fine.

Interviewer Tell me about the parents again.

Ruff: Oh, I ain't had no problem with parents [inaudible 01:04:40] they help with whatever they need to do. See, but [inaudible 01:04:44] football trip we run [inaudible 01:04:50] for them to go if they want to go, and they have a good time [inaudible 01:04:53]. Because sometimes [inaudible 01:04:53]. As soon as the game over, of course [inaudible 01:05:04] was in there I would have told him [inaudible 01:05:06] come here. And they out there fighting, so we had to stop the fights. We beat them 59, nothing. Oh. Let's see, [inaudible 01:05:20] on somebody first and second year. Everything else is on up there.

Interviewer And who were the coaches?

Ruff: I was myself, and then I got a young fellow, two from [inaudible 01:05:32] came down with me. So we just had good teams.

Interviewer Did you coach Ager?

Ruff: No, he finished [inaudible 01:05:43] about nine years behind me.

Interviewer What about Wilkins?

Ruff: [inaudible 01:05:51] I can't remember exactly. He was young [inaudible 01:05:54]. And I had another one I got him up there Jackson he was there with me, he was young. So I had my coaching staff came out [inaudible 01:06:06] because then I know they could play.

Interviewer And where was the football field?

Ruff: [inaudible 01:06:14] where they put that extension onto the high school, that was where we practiced, no grass or nothing on the field.

Interviewer Where did you put it after they built the extension?

Ruff: Well we went out to [inaudible 01:06:33] street, out there on [inaudible 01:06:36] street by that big church out there, we put the football field there.

Interviewer At Turner Chapel?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer Okay. The addition that's still there now, was that built during your time?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer Okay. And how did you go about getting that built?

Ruff: Well, I invited the superintendent [inaudible 01:07:01] was down with him. [inaudible 01:07:03] afternoon the band and the PE class was trying to go in the same thing. And I asked him can you hear yourself in there? [inaudible 01:07:13]. That's what he said, [inaudible 01:07:20]. And then I got the school accredited. But when you get that accreditation, you going to do all those things that you need to do for the school. And then we got the accreditation. But you know schools now, I ain't going to say most schools are behind before World War II. The schools and things started doing better, most things, after World War II. That's when their money started going. And it helped a lot of kids too, even though that was going on, they had the opportunity to go to college, to move on and build houses and things. Because they didn't want you [inaudible 01:08:08] black people [inaudible 01:08:09] again. My friend, he was my friend but [inaudible 01:08:14] he's from he just went over the [inaudible 01:08:16] and got the thing for them to build my house with. That's where we got the lawn from. See, and I used to tell teachers when I was principal, be sure that you be familiar with whatever subject matter you're teaching, I said because you can't fool them kids. They know. So I tried if I'm going to teach you chemistry, I just about [inaudible 01:08:45] chemistry, physics, whatever I teach. So that when you got to the next phase you won't be behind. You can't teach them two or three chapters and expect them to do well when they go to college. You got

to cover the book for them. And go to the board and explain to them exactly what you're talking about so they understand it. Chemistry [inaudible 01:09:07] but you got to understand it first. If you don't, you can't get it.

Interviewer Well, how many students, what percentage of the students, were lower achieving?

Ruff: You couldn't get any chemistry and physics with that, you had to be a good student. I didn't take nobody that's not making good grades.

Interviewer But as principal, what did you do for students who were not-

Ruff: Oh we had [inaudible 01:09:37] special ed [inaudible 01:09:39] Chattanooga. We were called [inaudible 01:09:42] but here they call it special education [inaudible 01:09:46]. Where nobody in the class but those kind of students. See I don't think it's right to store the good kids [inaudible 01:09:54] with some of those students in the class. So we did a class of them [inaudible 01:10:01].

Interviewer And what were they expected to do when they finished school?

Ruff: Well, at least get a job, some kind of job. They either get a real job working, because they had to go to work. That class they had to go to work in the afternoon somewhere. And you got to get the working experience so we did that for them.

Interviewer What about kids who were in poverty?

Ruff: We helped them in the elementary school when I was principal we had a clothes room and we had clothes in there for children to wear. So in case they get wet, we have something to put on.

Interviewer Did kids come to school hungry?

Ruff: Yeah, we finally started putting breakfast in for the kids so they'd have breakfast. And I said well they not going to do so hot on an empty stomach, but if you give them breakfast and everything, they have breakfast in them then they should do all right, and they did. Now I had another thing [inaudible 01:11:01] school now. I gave you opportunities to come. But you still going got act a fool, you gone. You had to go, couldn't stay there. I don't think it's right to let two or three fools or whatever you call them disturbing the other students from getting a good education. Some of them all they want to do is disturb class and I couldn't put up with that.

Interviewer Did you expel them?

Ruff: Yeah, out you go.

Interviewer So, I wanted to go back to the thing you said about the books that they sent you, and you rejected them.

Ruff: That's right, threw them back on out the door.

Interviewer Did you get new books?

Ruff: Yeah, I got them. I got new books for the whole school.

Interviewer And it was because you said, "I'm not taking those old ones?"

Ruff: That's right, I wouldn't take them. I wouldn't take them old books.

Interviewer Well how did that play out? When you said I'm not taking them, what happened after that?

Ruff: I just threw them back out the door, told them to pick them up and take them back over there.

Interviewer And what did the superintendent or the-

Ruff: He came down there and I told him I wasn't going to take them old books. He came down there. I told him I wasn't going to take them old books. You can have your job if that's what you're going to do. I'll move on. Is it right for them to take all the old books and the whites who sent them over to any school. The state every year, when they give money out, they give money for folks' schools to buy books and supplies and thing, but see, if you don't watch some of them, they'll take all the money and go to one school with it. You got to start and be that man by being the principal, but you got to require them students to do what they're supposed to do, too. One thing that I tell some teachers, you've got to let those students respect you. If you do that, you'll move along all right.

Interviewer: Who were your best teachers?

Ruff: Well, high school or where? Half of my chemistry teachers were good in high school. I didn't like French, didn't want to take it, but didn't have any problem with it. I didn't like French.

Interviewer: Do you remember any teachers particularly?

Ruff: That taught me.

Interviewer: No, no, that worked for you.

Ruff: Oh, yeah, quite a few. I see them from time to time. One of the young ladies, she was in '80, I don't know if she's coming today, but she would come... since she's been back... No, she'll be back on the 20th of the month, and she'll stay

two or three hours, but I got some, what do you call them people, caretakers? Caretakers. Let's see, I got one been in here already. Another one will be here this afternoon, another one tonight. That's five, I believe. There's five of them.

Interviewer: What about the teachers back at Lemon Street? You remember any?

Ruff: Yeah, I see them from time to time, the ones living there. Yes.

Interviewer: When you hired a new teacher, who all was there to interview them?

Ruff: Sometimes the superintendent. Sometimes I interviewed them myself. He had to do it in the summer because in the summer, I be in school in the summer. He had to hire them. But if I'm there, it had a... You'd go talk with the students and them and then we'll go to the superintendent's office so we can get the contract. School and thing is [inaudible 01:14:33], but you need to... One of the things that people made a mistake in the school, you can't give nobody just had one class, freshman, whatever it is, in a college and come back and expect them to teach. No. They need to finish their major, whatever their major, and then teach school. She's got to be familiar with what she's teaching. You don't, you got problems with the students.

Interviewer: How often would y'all have parades related to the sporting events and other things?

Ruff: We done had a Christmas parade, and I believe in the spring they'd have something else. May Day? What is it called? May Day? Yeah. They'd have those, too.

Interviewer: Were you involved at all?

Ruff: I'd go. I couldn't tell the students to go and don't go myself, so I'd always be present, too. I was there for them, other than just at school.

Interviewer: What about the Fort Hill Homes?

Ruff: No problem.

Interviewer: Did you have to visit families ever?

Ruff: Sometimes I would if it was necessary. That wasn't too often because most of them would come. I didn't have too much problem with those students down there as far as going over there into the [inaudible 01:16:01] the city, to tell them children that we [inaudible 01:16:03] because you've got those city children coming in. It's not like as large as they are now. They tried to get me to teach, the chemistry department, pull people out. I wasn't going to teach no school. Coached his dad, coached in his school, and it really fits with when I was

down there in chemistry. I didn't want to go down there to work. If I wanted to be a police, I'd have gone joined the police force.

Interviewer: They were recruiting you to schools in Atlanta.

Ruff: Yeah, they had a job, but I didn't want to work in Atlanta.

Interviewer: Booker T. Washington High School.

Ruff: Yeah, and I would teach chemistry there. Then at, what's that, David? I can't remember the name of one of them other high schools. I just didn't want to work in Atlanta. Them children was bad. In '51 when I was down there in schools, they had police in there at the school. [inaudible 01:16:58] The problem, I think they put too many students at one place and have too many other classrooms for the teachers used to handle. That's why they passed at the state department you can't have over 28, I think. It's 28 or something.

Interviewer: How many were in your classes at Lemon Street.

Ruff: I didn't have no real large class. It was chemistry and physics. Probably about 20 or 22-3 or something. You don't have a whole lot of children want to major in chemistry.

Interviewer: What about when you were principal, the other classes. How many average students?

Ruff: The state department say you couldn't put... Used to have larger classes, but they cut that out. You can't have but 25 or 30 at the most in a class.

Interviewer: Okay. You said you were two years principal at the elementary school.

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: And six years...

Ruff: Six years at the high school.

Interviewer: And those did not overlap. You weren't principal of both.

Ruff: Yeah, I was principal of both of them.

Interviewer: Why do you say two years at the elementary and six years at the high?

Ruff: Oh, you asked me how long I worked. I said I spent two years as principal at the elementary school and six years with the high school before I moved on.

Interviewer: Okay, but you weren't principal of both of them at one time.

Ruff: You had both at the same time.

Interviewer: Okay, so you went back and forth.

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you remember the year that you finished and left to come up here?

Ruff: January of '66? January of '66 because I couldn't come... I could've come before Christmas, but I wanted to finish, take my time out, so I stayed until January. Then I moves on up here [inaudible 01:18:50].

Interviewer: What did you know about the efforts to integrate the schools?

Ruff: I knew all about it because I was here when all that was going on.

Interviewer: What was your involvement? How did you...

Ruff: I didn't do too much [inaudible 01:19:08] because I didn't have time. You had to take people not with teaching and things to do that. You had to have jobs where they can't do nothing to you, because some jobs, they wanted to fire people. They fired this teacher, what, Ms. Sadler. Ms. Sadler's husband died, and they came to the funeral and everything, but when they saw what kind of house she lived in, they fired her at the end of the year. I had to help her get a job in [inaudible 01:19:42] Tennessee. My friend was up there, [inaudible 01:19:47] at A&M, and she got on up there. They fired both of Houston. Of course, I wasn't there when they did the firing. That was after I'd left because we'd had a battle.

Interviewer: Why did they fire her because of her house?

Ruff: Because she integrate. Her child integrated school. That's why they fired her.

Interviewer: Who fired her?

Ruff: The school system fired her.

Interviewer: In Marietta.

Ruff: In Marietta.

Interviewer: Who was her child?

Ruff: I don't know her child's name. Let's see. That might have been... What's that child's name? I can't remember her name, but that's their oldest child.

Interviewer: And she integrated the schools.

Ruff: Yeah, sent her child over there to one of those schools, and they fired her. I had another teacher, he be up in right before you get to Atlanta in... What's that place? No, I mean [inaudible 01:20:42] right before you get to Atlanta. Anyway, he bought him during the summer, an Oldsmobile. They fired him down there. They just do such as that.

Interviewer: Because he bought a car?

Ruff: Yeah, he bought a car and they fired him. I made room for him to work at Lemon Street.

Interviewer: Why did they fire him over...

Ruff: That's the way they did. You're young, so you just don't know anything going on. You do them jobs, they fire you. Yeah, they fire you if you go buy you a car. There's been something. See, you're young, friend. You don't know. I've been there.

Interviewer: Was it because he bought a car and...

Ruff: It was because he bought a car. They didn't want you to have no new car. You going to [inaudible 01:21:26] with a used car.

Interviewer: Do you remember Daphne Delk?

Ruff: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you know her?

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: Were you principal when she was at the high school?

Ruff: Talking about that girl they're going to bury tomorrow, Saturday? Sunday, I believe it is. Yeah, I believe she was with me two years. She finished in '53, '52 or '53.

Interviewer: I'm thinking of the girl who was the first one to go to Marietta High, the first black student, Daphne Delk. That was '64, 1964.

Ruff: Yeah, it was four or five of them. Ms. Sadler's daughter was in one. They were smart students. I said yeah, you know, they're smart students. All of them should be required to do the work.

Interviewer: You said that Ms. Sadler's daughter, when she...

Ruff: She was in that first group that they integrated in Marietta. At the end of the year they fired them, fired both of them, her and her husband both. He taught the shop and she taught biology. Fired both of them, but I went and left when they were doing that firing. We just [inaudible 01:22:35] over there. That's what they did, not only that, but other jobs, too.

Interviewer: Was their daughter in high school?

Ruff: No, the elementary school, just starting off in school.

Interviewer: Do you remember what school they entered her into?

Ruff: Well, they was one elementary school she could go to in Marietta. Now, we had it on Wright Street, too. No, they have two, but she didn't go there. She went to Lemon Street.

Interviewer: What was the white school she went to?

Ruff: Now she went to... Let me see now. They had quite a few white schools around there, but you only had one high school. That's Marietta High. I'm trying to think. I can't remember which school she went to, but she was at that there. She was one of the ones.

Ruff: Now that Delk girl with to the high school. They had about five of them that went to Marietta High in the first go round.

Interviewer: And Traville Grady?

Ruff: Yeah, she's one of the girls. She's a smart little girl. Let's see. Who else went to school over there? There were about five or six of them that went over into Grady high school.

Interviewer: What did you think about their choice to go, to do that?

Ruff: I think that you, from the first beginning, that you ought to be able to go to any school in that city that you want to go to. That's been my thinking about it all the while. But they didn't want to do right by it.

Interviewer: Were they firing the Sadlers because they were employees and they thought they shouldn't be trying to integrate the schools?

Ruff: They didn't want them to integrate. That's what they didn't want to happen.

Interviewer: Okay, and they didn't have any control over parents who were not their employees. Is that what you're saying?

Ruff: Who?

Interviewer: The school board or the schools system. Firing the...

Ruff: Well, they couldn't fire nobody else. Only ones they could fire were the ones who worked for the school system. Now, on some of them other jobs, a few of them would do the same thing.

Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me the Sadlers' first names?

Ruff: Janie Sadler.

Interviewer: Janie?

Ruff: Janie.

Interviewer: And what was the husband's name?

Ruff: Jewel.

Interviewer: They were both fired.

Ruff: Yeah, fired both of them. My friend up in Smyrna that's [inaudible 01:24:48], he was the principal up there and he got them on up there. Let's see, what's his name? See if I can find it right quick. I have Ms. Sadler's number here now. I haven't seen her in about a year or two. [inaudible 01:25:09] so I can move it. Let me see. I'm trying to find it right quick.

Ruff: I have a new address here. I haven't had any time to call her. I need to redo my book.

Interviewer: Getting pretty stuffed.

Ruff: Yeah. I got a new address in Atlanta, because they're down there with her daughter, but she's got a house herself. Now that school, her school, they went on and finished school. I believe they had, I believe, one boy and three girls I think. I don't see it now. I'm looking for it.

Interviewer: Are either of the Sadlers still living?

Ruff: No. All of them are dead.

Interviewer: You weren't there at the time, but...

Ruff: I think she dead now. She may not be. I know he's dead because I went to his funeral, but I'm not quite sure about her. No, it looks like she's down staying with her daughter. That's where she is.

Interviewer: Was the school system really resisting any sort of effort towards integration?

Ruff: Some of them places had a bad hard time when they integrated, fought and did some of everything. You ever heard of down at the University of Georgia? You know how they went on down there. But the president of Georgia Tech said they wasn't going to put up with that. Same thing they said up at Clemson. They wasn't going to put up by that. That's the law of the land and you're going to have to abide by it.

Interviewer: What about Marietta, the schools?

Ruff: They had some problems there. Now, I told you, those children got mad. Now, they couldn't hurt the [inaudible 01:27:06] because that lady was a hairdresser, so they couldn't hurt her.

Interviewer: Who?

Ruff: Delk, the little Delk girl that was there. Then two or three others were their, but I can't remember their names now. Places, yeah, they fire them. Mr. Watson, I told you, bought him an Oldsmobile during the summer because he worked for something in farming or something. I don't know what they call that. I can't think of the name they call it, but anyway, he bought it over the summer, bought him a new car. Shoot, they fired him down there in Greensboro, Greensboro Georgia. Yeah, Greensboro. Is it in Georgia?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruff: I made room for him because his wife was taught the home economics, so he'd have a job.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Ruff: Watson. I'm trying to think of Mr. Watson's first name now. She taught the home economics for me.

Interviewer: Where did you attend church in Marietta?

Ruff: Zion Baptist Church.

Interviewer: Do you remember when the preacher there...

Ruff: Reverend Johnson was one. Let me see if I can think of the other one. He was preacher there for a good while.

Interviewer: Wasn't there an effort by the church in 1960 or so to request integration of the schools?

Ruff: I'm not quite sure. The biggest thing that came on that drive for integrating schools was Martin Luther King and them group. Let's see. I don't believe they

had too hard a time in Marietta doing it. Back then, some of them people [inaudible 01:28:59] they move on. I don't know if they had any problem after then when they really integrated. The children that went on in '67 on to Marietta High or wherever they was going.

Interviewer: You left in January of '66.

Ruff: Yes.

Interviewer: Your daughter, Sandra, who's been here, she graduated in...

Ruff: From Lemon Street.

Interviewer: In May.

Ruff: May of '66.

Interviewer: Did she just stay there and you...

Ruff: They all stayed. I didn't move them to the schools right then. I moved on to Chattanooga. I didn't want to interfere with their school.

Interviewer: Okay. Then pretty much the next year the schools were fully integrated.

Ruff: Yeah, '67.

Interviewer: So the last class was '67.

Ruff: Well, the last class, I believe, it was '67. They integrated all together in '67, one of the two. I can't remember now.

Interviewer: They demolished the high school.

Ruff: Yeah, they tore it down.

Interviewer: How did you feel about that?

Ruff: [inaudible 01:29:56] because we got a lot of things... Where she got it? I don't know where she's got it, whether I wrote that in or not. See, Southern [inaudible 01:30:13] is an accreditation for us, schools and colleges. In order to get in, you've got to do those things they say you need before you can get in. That's how you get [inaudible 01:30:26]. Then you've got to keep it going after you get in. All your teachers got to be certified and teaching in their field.

Interviewer: Was the building in bad condition when you were there?

Ruff: Yeah, it was in pretty bad shape. It was old. He put out there, and I say that center court we call it there, he put them four classrooms out there with no air conditioning. I tried to tell him to start with. You can't have no class where you don't have no air. In the fall, I had to find some way to say some of them classes is too hot. Same thing for spring. I told him when they was putting it in there, and I don't know if it was [inaudible 01:31:06] or not, that you need to put some air conditioning in the places. He started about January.

Interviewer: Well, we'll go ahead and finish up. I do want to ask you what do you think the legacy of the Lemon Street Schools is?

Ruff: Well, they [inaudible 01:31:25] some good students there, good students all around. I see them from time to time because some of them, oh yeah, I got about three of them. They come regular to see me. Then sometimes more than that will come. I think they're coming. They send me Christmas cards and things. Tried to help students in school go to college and move on up because you can't hardly do anything without an education. If you can't finish high school, they don't hardly give you no job anywhere now.

Interviewer: Well, and for black students at that time...

Ruff: They didn't get them here. That's why the integration came about. Then everything's moving on pretty good now, looks like. Everybody was all right. Now, down in Georgia, I be... University of Georgia gave them a harder time than any college I know. They went [inaudible 01:32:22] then. The governor's standing in the door and all kind of crazy stuff. It's changing. Some of them can't, but now you don't have any problems with students. Most people have been to college and things, the ones who got educated. The ones you have problems with is those that don't have no education. Most of them get along fine.

Interviewer: I appreciate your time today.

Ruff: Yeah. You said history is your major?

Interviewer: It's my interest.

Ruff: It's your doctor's.

Interviewer: That's right.

Ruff: Oh, yeah. Mr. [inaudible 01:32:57], he could teach that history, too. He went to... What's the school up in Illinois' name? He finished Atlanta University when he finished. Then he went to Illinois. I can't name... I can't remember which one of those schools, but that's where he went.

Interviewer: I think he ended up teaching at Tuskegee.

Ruff: Yeah, he taught there 10 years.

Interviewer: Well, let me go ahead and conclude here, okay?

Ruff: Okay. All right.