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Interviewee: Anderson White  
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Speaker Identification:  
Lareatha Clay: LC  
Anderson White: AW

### **TRANSCRIPT BEGIN**

LC: Okay. This is Lareatha Clay. Today is December 27<sup>th</sup> 2002. I'm interviewing for the second time Mr. Anderson White. The interview is taking place in the Anderson White home in Shankleville community, Texas. This interview is being conducted by the Shankleville Historical Society as part of our oral history project. Okay. Alright. So—

AW: I'm close enough?

LC: Yeah, if you talk up it should be okay.

AW: It's my voice here.

LC: Sir?

AW: As heavy as my voice is—it ought to be pretty easy to pick up.

LC: Yeah, I think it'll be okay. Cause this one is a lot louder than the one we used the last time. Okay.

AW: Are you going say this is Anderson White?

LC: Yeah—well—um—

AW: [Faint audio]

[Laughter]

LC: Well first thing we want to talk about is the Mount Hope Baptist Church. And you can tell us about how it got established and how it is today?

AW: Okay. This is some of the facts supposed to be as the beginning of Mount Hope Missionary Baptist Church and it was established in the year 1870, shortly after the abolish of slavery. At the time, well, Mount Hope Missionary Baptist Church was holding service at the Church of God here in Shankleville Community. And later years, some 14 years later, they decided to buy a piece of property to build a church and it was on the east bank of Clear Creek. And the church that was built, it was, the size of the church, was a 30 by 30 box house and they began to have

service there in this church. And also at this time, this was the first, uh, Sabine Valley Association, this was the first meeting was here there in this church. And it's still going on today. Which is the year of 2002. Reverend Taylor was the moderator of this church and—

LC: What was his first name?

AW: Lee Taylor.

LC: Lee Taylor. And what community did he come from?

AW: He came from Sabine.

LC: Oh okay.

AW: He also was a pastor of Mount Hope Missionary Baptist Church later years. Ask me another question.

LC: [Laughs] Okay. When you first became a member of the church, who was the pastor then?

AW: When I first became a member of the church, it was 1932. 1937, Reverend G.W. Gowlan(??) was the pastor at the church then.

LC: Was the church having church services every Sunday? Or were they like circuit preachers back then?

AW: Pastoral Day—once a month—every fourth Sunday was what we called Pastoral Day. And we have Sunday School each Sunday.

LC: About how many members were there when you got there in 1937?

AW: I'd say roughly we had something like 40 members.

LC: Okay. And then what would you say—when would you say—you had the most members at the church since you've been there?

AW: What occasion are you talking about?

LC: Well—you know—when the membership was at its top.

AW: When the membership was at its top. And the question you asked was when?

LC: Yes. About what year?

AW: Oh, about what year. I would say in the year about 1965.

LC: Oh really? About how many members were there then?

AW: We had somewhere about 70 members.

LC: Okay. I remember that.

AW: You remember that?

LC: Yes.

AW: We had with children and adults alone we had something like approximately 70 members.

LC: Okay. And 1986 was the church's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, right? Was that it?

AW: 1970.

LC: Oh 1970. Okay, yeah. Okay, 1870.

AW: 1970—100 year anniversary.

LC: Okay.

AW: Our Reverend M.C. Bowton(??) was the pastor at this time.

LC: Was he the pastor there longer than any other pastor?

AW: Yes he was. Reverend M.C. Bowton(??), he was there for some 39 years.

LC: Okay. And during all that—from that 1870 to 1970, there was still just a Pastoral Day once a month?

AW: No, it would change in the year 2000.

LC: Oh okay.

AW: Let me correct that, please. There were changes in the year 1996.

LC: Okay.

AW: 1996 we changed it, we had two Pastoral Days.

LC: Okay. What made y'all decide to change it?

AW: Well, we changed it on the choice of—it was the pastor that made the decision to change—he didn't think we were being taught enough about the scripture, and he wanted to bring more spiritual into the church about teaching the Bible and things of that nature.

LC: So, what are the two Pastoral Days now?

AW: Second Sunday and Fourth Sunday.

LC: Okay.

AW: Second Sunday and Fourth Sunday every month.

LC: About how many members are there now?

AW: Well we have about something like 30 members

LC: Okay, that's good. Okay. I'd like to also talk about your activities with politics in Newton County.

AW: Oh well—

LC: When did you first run for an office?

AW: I first ran for office in 1969.

LC: Okay.

AW: I ran for Trustee of Burkeville Independent High School. And I—

LC: Okay. And did you win that election?

AW: Oh yes.

LC: Okay.

AW: I had—

LC: What was Burkeville Independent High School? What was that?

AW: When is what now?

LC: Yeah what was it?

AW: It was 1969.

LC: No, was it a—like a school district—or was it high school?

AW: Oh, oh yeah. It was high school.

LC: It was just a high school?

AW: High school. Yes, independent high school.

LC: And what did they do? What did the trustees—what were they responsible for?

AW: Well they were responsible for, well, for the church—well, the education part and—

LC: Of the church?

AW: Of the school [laughs], excuse me. It got switched to the school. The business part of the school.

LC: And who were the people who were able to vote for you?

AW: You mean nationality of the people?

LC: Yes. What area did they come from? Or was it—

AW: Oh they came from the Burkeville Independent School District.

LC: Oh okay. So it was—

AW: It was in the district.

LC: So it was Black people and it was white people?

AW: Yes, yes. Black and white.

LC: Oh, okay. And so who ran against you?

AW: Probably around seven whites.

LC: And you beat all of them?

AW: Yes, I won in the first primary.

LC: Oh okay.

AW: Yeah.

LC: So how was that? [Laughs]

AW: I'm fine [laughs].

LC: I know, but how did that—

AW: Mr. Rayford, Mr. Otis Rayford [inaudible]. Well somewhere along that time, it's kind of a long story, that was the year that, well, about three years before then, Martin Luther King got assassinated. It was a lot of things going on. We lost president Kennedy a few years earlier, he got assassinated. And my wife was kind of fearful for me—of public movement at that time—but I replied to her, “somebody got to take a stand.” And so I didn't have no fear. And Mr. Rayford—Mr. Otis Rayford—he was superintendent and he was the principal of the school at the time and he related to me. I told him I didn't think I was qualified for the education part of the work and he said, “Mr. White, since you have proved what you stand for, and the work that you do in the community,” and he said, “and what I understand about your education is I'd as soon have you in my classroom than the employees that I've got.” And they kind of got together and I told them at the time I had a lot of work going on—and I told them—I say, “well,” I say “I might not be able to do no, no kind of campaigning,” and he said, “don't worry about that, if you put your name on the ballot and the people see your name, we'll get you on there.” And sure enough that's why I didn't do any kind of campaigning and I was voted in.

LC: So was that the first time a Black person was voted?

AW: Yeah, the very first. Yeah, right. The Burkeville School District.

LC: So how—when you went to the first meeting—what happened? How was that?

AW: Well, the guys that were on the board, we kind of grew up together.

LC: The white guys?

AW: Yeah.

LC: Oh okay.

AW: You know, we had a lot of things in common. And we knew one another and so we talked about—one of the white guys told me after one meeting—he said, “Mr. White,” he say—one of the white guys, one of the board members—reflect on saying, “I don't think it's time for the Black and the white to integrate.” And so after this meeting, we—they discussed this during the meeting—and after this meeting one of the white guys came and called me and say, “I'm sorry

that this kind of conversation came up,” say, “see I feel real bad, see, how you feel about it?” I said, “I don’t have a feeling, see it’s just neutral for me because I been dealing with white and Black all my days,” I say, “I know some be for Blacks and some of the Blacks be for white. And so, it’s no problem.” So I served there three years. I didn’t seek for reelection.

LC: Who—who was elected—what Black person was elected after you left?

AW: While I was there I got four more Blacks on—three more Blacks on.

LC: Who were they?

AW: Brother James Hersh(??)

LC: Okay.

AW: Marvin Mitchell

LC: Yes.

AW: And Wille Hubbard

LC: Okay.

AW: And we had a control of the—

LC: So what would you say—or let’s say two—of the main things that you got accomplished when you were on the school board the first time?

AW: Well, some of the things that we accomplished—I think we were in the making of bringing the whites and the Blacks together by visiting the whites and the Blacks both and relating to them about what, what the future would be if we went about it the right way. And I think we accomplish in all of that, we didn’t have no killing or too much fighting, if any, as I know of. And I think that was the main goal right there. Is to help bring the whites and the Blacks together. And uh—

LC: I remember Wiergate was the school—was the Black school—and Burkeville was the white school. Did they integrate while you were on the board?

AW: Yes. Right. That same year.

LC: Oh okay.

AW: That was the year that they did integrate.

LC: Oh okay.

AW: Yeah. Oh, Lillie! Excuse me. Lillie—

LILLIE WHITE: Huh?

AW: Bring me a swallow of water in a glass—

LC: Okay so during that time they integrated, what was the percentage of Black kids versus white kids that year when it integrated?

AW: I would say percentage wise of each—I would think about 70/30.

LC: Okay.

AW: And 70 is Black.

LC: Okay and what would you say it is now? Oh, 70 Black in '69?

AW: Yeah about 70%. Well, a little bit. I'd say 65 or 70 percent Black. Yeah.

LC: Okay. So when it first integrated, it was already a mostly Black school?

AW: Right, right.

LC: So Wiergate was a bigger school than Burkeville?

AW: That's true. By population, yeah.

LC: And those were the only two schools in the Burkeville Independent School District?

AW: Well, before then Shankleville Enterprise High School integrate with Wiergate. Jamestown integrate with Wiergate. Mallos(??) integrate with Wiergate.

LILLIE WHITE: You want a soda?

LC: No ma'am, thanks.

LILLIE WHITE: You want anything?

LC: No ma'am [laughs].

LILLY: Oh.

LC: Thank you.

AW: Thank you, there—

LILLY: Yep. I'm looking at Days of our Lives now, that's a terrible show [laughs].

AW: Yeah. Now, okay.

LILLY: [Laughs]

LC: It's okay.

AW: I have sinus trouble and when I get to talking, stuff start draining down and I drink some water—No, I was wrong. Those schools integrated with Weirgate School—they consolidated with Wiergate—before they integrated with Burkeville School District.

LC: Oh okay. That's why it was so much bigger.

AW: Yes.

LC: Oh okay. Is it about the same now as far as Blacks and whites?

AW: Majority Blacks.

LC: Still about 65%, or more?

AW: Well I would think about 60.

LC: Oh really?

AW: Yeah.

LC: So there are more whites that come to the school?

AW: Yeah. I think about 60% Black.

LC: Oh okay. Okay so then after you got off the school board—you served there three years—then what was the next position you ran for?

AW: Well I was on the Chamber of Commerce here in Newton, I was on the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce.

LC: Of Newton County?

AW: Yeah. I was elected for—on the Board. And also I was one of the advisors of First National Bank. Me and Reverend Foster at this time.

LC: This was in '69, too?

AW: No, no, this was in '82, '83.

LC: So from 1971 to 1982 you didn't hold any public office?

AW: Yes—in a way I did, in a way I did. I was—after I was off the school board, then the next job I was [inaudible] being on the Board of Directors for the Chamber of Commerce. And then the next one was at the bank and then the next one I was—oh, I don't think I was. I made two or three different contributions of my own.

LC: Okay. So when did you run for County Commissioner?

AW: I ran for County Commissioner in 1990—1979—1989—I'll get it right, 1989.

LC: You weren't the County Commissioner when Big Mama was alive? She died in 1987.

AW: No I wasn't.

LC: Oh okay. I thought you were.

AW: No I wasn't, no. I could have been back in the 60s, but I just didn't want it.

LC: The first time you ran for that, did you win that election?

AW: Yeah. Five whites ran against me, I win in the first primary. And then two of the whites went on after the first four years—two of them ran again—and it was a landslide.



LC: Oh you beat them in a landslide?

AW: Yeah, the second time.

LC: So how many terms did you serve?

AW: Two. And I'll tell you the truth, I'll tell you, I had some people get angry with me because I retired. Wasn't there but a few Blacks.

LC: Oh really. Why? What did they want you to do?

AW: They wanted me to stay out there until, a lifetime you see.

LC: [Laughs] Then why did you retire?

AW: Well it was for the sake of my health, and my wife, and some of the kids, so. They thought I just, all I think about is work. But my health thing—I had a artificial hip and I had a artificial knee. You know your mother's age—I'm just a couple days older—so it was time for me to retire. I'm just a few days older than she is. Retirement, yeah, retirement. I shouldn't have brought that up!

LC: [Laughs] That's okay.

AW: You erase that part!

LC: That's okay! When you were County Commissioner—it was a four year term, so you were there 8 years—what are some of the things you thought that you were able to get accomplished during that time?

AW: Oh it was a whole lot. I rebuilt, I rebuilt a lot of roads. Improved a lot of roads and bridges—and where it had wooden bridges, I put in concrete bridges.

LC: Some in Shankleville?

AW: Well, in Jamestown. And the reason I wasn't taking out all the bridges in Shankleville and not put any in what you call it—covers—which can't take cars, ain't no bridge. You know. And I had it preset(??) to Sabine County, clean down below Newton. I had something like, I had something like 330 miles of dirt road. And every year I butchered, which I was proud of. I had—most of the time—I had the most money from my butchering that the rest of the other three commissioners being left from over that year.

LC: So as County Commissioner you were able to oversee—you didn't have to go to a commissioner's court and y'all vote on it—you just had a budget and then you were able to get things done within your district—that's the way it worked?

AW: Oh yeah. Commissioners oversee everything, everything, yeah.

LC: Oh I didn't know that. So did y'all ever meet?

AW: Oh yeah! We had regular meetings, once a month.

LC: What did you talk about when you met?

AW: Well it depends on what be on the agenda. You know, all the rest of the officers—see everything comes through the commission court. All the rest of the offices bring their complaints into the commissioner's court and all this be on the agenda. And we discussed this and made decisions about it, you know.

LC: But as far as roads are concerned—

AW: Well I assumed I'd go out for the first time and look at it. I done more of my work on the phone and in the truck and at home and other places—I had informers where I sent out to do the job you know. But I'd go down there and inspect the job and tell 'em what to do and I order the materials you know. There's nobody to tell the commissioner who buys your own pickup, or if you furnish all of the equipment—if you want to trade or buy new equipment, everything. The Commission needs full control.

LC: Man that's pretty—

AW: Yeah it's something—you got to have a lot of experience about business, you know, which I had picked up. And I had picked up a lot of experience down through the years all over the country—started from Mexico, came back across quite a few states. I worked for the federal government a long time in the inspections.

LC: What kind of inspections?

AW: Over here as folk go—in the inspections putting in pre-catch door steps and stuff like that, yeah.

LC: Oh, okay. When you were—now I'm gonna go into a touchy subject [laughs], when you were County Commissioner—was that then when Anthony Peacock was killed?

AW: Oh no. Anthony—I'm trying to think—Anthony was running secretary, he was my secretary, yeah, yeah, at Sunday school [inaudible].

LC: Okay. I just wanted—I know that there have been rumors that the investigation was not looked at, and I wanted to see what you knew about that.

AW: I got involved to a certain extent, but—

LC: How did you get involved?

AW: Well, I would question—and then I was, yes—I was on the grand jury on that same case. I was on the grand jury. And you know the grand jury is six months. And I didn't want to go up over the questions. Them whites acted like hadn't been nothing done. And when they called sister Peacock and brother Peacock up to the hearing, well I was the one—I had picked up a little something here about how the girl had been writing the boy and I would ask them—

LC: Just for the tape, let's give a little background in what happened to Anthony Peacock. So just tell me what happened to him.

AW: Well I really don't know. I tell ya, we got the news that morning—one Sunday morning—and I spoke to brother James and—

LC: James Lewis?

AW: Yes. I said we won't have Sunday School this morning. And we called brother Odom and we cancelled Sunday School. Brother Odom was behind it so. Me and brother James were over at the scene—which was over on 87, something bout three quarters of a mile from Mr. Waddler's(??) store going towards Newton. That's where it happened, of course. And they had picked up the body and everything. But they showed us the spots where the body was laying at. And then they showed us the tracks where this guy got blind in the car and he got in another car, and Anthony came across the highway running cows—

LC: He was running cows?

AW: Yeah. That his daddy's cows had got out, they said. And that's the only reason they realized he was in that area.

LC: But I thought he was driving a car?

AW: No. It's been awhile now, it was so much rumor about that—and I think I'm relating that right—that's how he got there. But anyhow, they pretend that it was a car hit him. And they showed us the place where his body was laying up on a hillside. But somehow it didn't—to me and to the one that we was together talking about this—Savere(??) Allen, that's [inaudible name] husband, he was the first who came on the scene and when it was daylight, when me and Brother James got out there. But see this happened that morning before day, as we were told. And, they had picked up the body, and they assumed that the young man was running the cars back off the highway, something of that nature, as I'm thinking. And when this car hit him—but it wasn't so scars or anything like that on him as if a car had hit him—

LC: Well what kind of scars were on him?

AW: Well not any that we know of. And all of this stuff didn't blend, you know. And speaking on—as I'm thinking—what happened—you know, was related to us because we didn't see the accident. We got there after the accident. Of course, you know the story about how they say that did happen.

LC: So why don't you tell it.

AW: Well I was told that the young man was dating a white gal from up around Wiergate. And they were seen together at the schoolhouse up in Burkeville that night. And also, that the chief deputy's son was dating the same girl. And I understand that he could have been involved in making this happen. And when they left the school up there, when this boy left the school and he was—I don't know where he was going—I do know where they said he was headed, but anyhow, shortly after he left the school—you know the school ain't too far from the distance(??) I just made mention—and then the next morning before day they found his body. And they say that this deputy sheriff—they all come to the scene and say something as if the deputy sheriff's

son had been there and went home. Well now, I'm speaking on heresy. And we were trying to get the facts of that and I don't think we ever did. And I understand that Brother Cecil—

LC: Peacock?

AW: Yeah that's the boy's daddy. Him and his mother were so upset—which you know they was. And after a period of time didn't nothing happen. Wayne Powers—Wayne Powers was the sheriff at the time—and they told me they couldn't get no understanding out of him, as he didn't know what happened.

LC: Mr. Peacock couldn't get any understanding out of the sheriff?

AW: Yeah. And I understand that they wanted to say that the sheriff didn't want to relate to understanding—he, off what he said, it was just a lot of talk. I'm sorry. And of course I understand that Mr. Colman—Dorie Coleman—take an autopsy of the body. And I don't know if Sister Peacock asked to go over there and see the boy. And I don't know—I was told that they did not. But anyhow it's been awhile ago, and I just can't think about at this time all of the things that I was told. I was told two or three different things. But it was a shame that they didn't get to the bottom of this thing and find out exactly what happened. But I was on the grand jury during that time. You see, the grand jury had a six month session and I was on the grand jury down when this case came up. And the eleven grand jurymen who were on the grand jury with me, more or less, I was the only Black.

**TRANSCRIPT END**