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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with historic African-American buildings in Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

The interviewer has made a tape recording of your interview. If Jackson State opts to transcribe your interview, you will have the option of reviewing that transcription. Do you want this option? —

The final retyped and edited transcript, together with the tape of the interview will be placed in the Oral History Collection at Jackson State University and the city of Jackson.

I, Robert H. Clark, have read the above, and in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, in return for a final typed copy of the transcript, I knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University and the city of Jackson, Mississippi, the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all of my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized, or contemplated, to Jackson State University and the city of Jackson, Mississippi.

Robert H. Clark
Interviewee's Signature

Alfred Harrison
Interviewer's Signature

Date Agreement signed

11/15/04

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INTERVIEWEE: Robert Clark
INTERVIEWER: Alferdteen Harrison
DATE: May 16, 1983
O.H. 83.06

Harrison: Today is May 16, 1983. I am in the office of Robert Clark. This is the fifth of a series of interviews. Today we are going to be talking about your military career. Would you tell me about your career in the military.

Clark: I have not had a military career. If I had had one it would have been around 1950 when I was in college. When I went to take the physical examination, the students at Jackson State didn't know about my poor eyesight. At the examination station, they kept calling me from one place to another place. They had me to come back the following day for another examination. The guys with me didn't know what was going on. They thought that I was trying to fool those people. The guys told me that I was going to get sent to the pen because they thought I was trying to fool the people.

When I came back the next day, they called some of the places that I had my eyes operated on to check on me. They had this person of german accent look at my eyes. No sooner than he saw it he said, "Oh yes, there is no sight in that eye." The first person they had looking at my eye couldn't detect that I didn't have sight in that eye.

I remember very well one of the procedures that they use to determine if I could see out that eye. They covered my left eye and struck a match and held it in front of my left eye. I jumped and the examiner asked me why did I jump if I couldn't see out of that eye. I told him that I heard you strike the match and I also felt the heat over my eye. This is the reason that I didn't have a military career. They told me if they would have sent me to the army that I would have gotten a whole batilon of men killed.

Harrison: If you had gone, what branch of service would you have wanted to serve in?

Clark: In combat. When I was 14 years old, if I could have gotten in service, my parents would have let me go. After that time, I found that there were other things I could do. I was very opposed to taking a life of an individual. I think I would have rather gone to Parchman than take part of the service that takes an individual's life.

Harrison: Were you familar with the group called conscious objectors?

Clark: Later I became familar with them. But at the time I was not.

Clark: I would have not objected to going to the army. I realize that as a citizen of this country, that I have a right to defend my country even if it wasn't fair to me.

Harrison: When you graduated from college, you didn't have to worry about going to the military.

You talked to me earlier about trying to be a good teacher. It was my understanding that you really didn't want to teach, do you feel that in some way you may have been over compensating?

Clark: I wouldn't say I was over compensating, I was far beyond the call of duty. If I hadn't been in love with teaching, I wouldn't have put forth the efforts that I did. I had a college instructor criticize me for having other aspirations and telling me that I shouldn't go into the teaching profession. I wanted to make sure that I did a good job, I am glad that I did that.

Harrison: Can you think of any creative kinds of projects that you were able to get students involved in?

Clark: After finishing college I took a job at Louise. It was an eight month school. Very few people came to school during cotton picking time unless it was a rainy day. I just couldn't believe how far behind those students were. I became very concerned when I felt that the children wasn't getting what I was trying to teach. So, I began to use inovated ideas. I began to give each of the 30 children individual attention. I would break the class into about six groups and give them special projects to work on. My objective was to let each student excell to the best of their ability without holding them back. I realized that if students didn't know the basic, didn't they couldn't do anything.

My class was so organized that the students would come in each day and go their station and begin working. Sometimes I would walk in the room and they wouldn't even know I am there. They mainly worked in groups, but sometimes the class would come together as a whole and share their experience with the class.

Harrison: When you started the ability grouping, were you able to bring the students up to their grade level?

Clark: Yes. I was able to do it more effectively than any other teacher using that method.

Harrison: During your teaching career, who were some of your smarter kids?

Clark: My first semester of teaching there was a young lady

Clark: named Jackson. She had two brothers named Sims and James. She was a very smart kid. She would always make the highest score on every test. I was a tough grader. I counted off for everything. I think it was only fair to grade the person's paper hard to let them know where they made their mistake. I believed in test. I taught the children how to take a test. I would never let test scores count more than 1/3 of the final grade. Every student in my class had to do a series of project, daily recitation, etc. I told my students that it was impossible to my class 29 days and failed then come on the 30th day and pass. When I gave a test, I knew what every student would make. The students were fair and honest, I didn't have to worry about them copying.

Harrison: Have you ever administered any standardized test?

Clark: We didn't have standardized test during those days. We didn't get standardized test until in the 1960's. I knew about them because part of my work toward my master's and doctoral degree was in guidance and counseling. I would administer the test or either develop one.

Clark: I had a series of students that were bright while I was teaching. Clarence Cobalt was a very gifted student. He is the principal of an elementary school in Cohoma County. It is tragic how someone with that much talent get tied down to a little ole country school.

Coleman Thomas was an exceptional pitcher. Knowing that he didn't have a chance to finish high school, I contacted someone at Jackson State to give Coleman a chance to tryout for their team. They advised me to let him go on and try to finish school. I told them that he could finish school because he was 19 years old and his mother had 12 children to support. They didn't consent to let him come down and tryout. I am convinced that he had come down, he would have made the team. I wrote to the Brooklyn Dodgers about giving him a tryout, but he would have had to pay his expenses up there which would have been around a \$1,000.00. As a result of that, he didn't get a chance to tryout.

Robert Booker had a great impact on my life. He came from a family of about 10 or 12. He would have to stay home and see about his mother. He began to fall behind in his grades. He had some kind of skin sores. His teeth had rotten out. The teacher was afraid for him to come to class. He found out that I knew his parents. He tried out for football when I was coaching. He got those rotten teeth injured. We were able to get him some teeth put in. I taught him how to clean himself up. He began coming to school regularly. He went on to become a leader in our community and was looked

Clark: upon by people throughout Central Mississippi.

Warren Lewis Montgomery was trying to come into the gym one night and he didn't have any money because he had spent it on popcorn. He was trying to come through the gym window. I caught him and sent him to the office. After I talked with him that he had to clean up the gym for five days. I found out that he could shoot the basketball. There are a lot of individuals today that don't know me as Robert Clark, but as Coach Clark.

Paul Banks was another outstanding individual. I started working with him when he was in the fifth grade. He had great leadership ability. He had a brother, Hurbert, who had a speech problem. Teachers would sit up in faculty meeting and call Hurbert dumb and they would say that he ought to be kicked out of school. Everytime a bus broke down, Hurbert could fix it. I remember one day Hurbert was working on a teacher's car, and he said, "Give me that A-16 wrench." The teacher handed him the wrong wrench. Hurbert said, "You're a teacher and you don't know what an A-16 is." When they were talking about kicking Hurbert out of school because he was dumb, I said that he wasn't dumb, we were just not meeting his needs. He went on and finished school and married a nice looking girl from Louise. The last I heard about Hurbert he was in Chicago working in an electrical appliance plant as a foreman.

Harrison: They didn't have auto mechanics or things that he could do?

Clark: No, we didn't have auto mechanics. We didn't have anything vocational as they called it.

Harrison: You have told me about students who were very bright, what about those students that you just couldn't help?

Clark: I didn't find a student that I really couldn't help. I wanted to let the student know that they had a friend in me. I wouldn't allow any of the students to be afraid of me. I told them if they were afraid of me, this is the sure way you are going to flunk. If a student was bashful, I would do whatever it took to get that out of them. To make the students pay attention, sometimes, I would deliberately put the wrong thing on the board to see if they would catch it. If they didn't catch it I would get on them for not catching it.

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Clark: So that made them watch it at all times. There were some students that I was not able to do for what I would have like to have done. But, there were a very few students that came my way that I was not able to reach out and touch and to do something for that student. Perhaps, I can remember, a young man, when I first started to teaching school by the name of Alfonso Keys up at Louise. Somehow, Keys stayed there in the dormitory but then somehow I was never able to reach Keys maybe that was because he wasn't able to play on the basketball team with the rest of the boys he ran with or something like that. But, I didn't play favorites , I didn't play groups, but I just played ability. I was able to reach and touch students.

Harrison: Now, what about the parents and their relationship with the school when you were teaching?

Clark: I knew every parent when I was at Louise, I knew every parent, we had 850,000 students, I knew where every student lived and I knew everybody that lived in the homes of every student there. I could look at every student and tell the momma, what the momma was named the father, if they had one, and the big brother, the big sister, and the little sisters and the numbers in every family at home. I attended church in the community, when I first got there some of the people told me. We'll you don't church here, if you go here. Them and all those preachers, they going to try and show you up, but, I went on to Sunday School, well when I first got there I was going to go to church down at the Catholic Churches, in Yazoo City. Mrs. Grace Harold, a teacher there, and a student there, Mrs. Melba Wallace, had students there and was a teacher. They came to me and told me that if the parent of the student was not good enough for me to to church with, then I was not good enough to teach their students and I had gone down to the Catholic Churchs in Yazoo City about two Sundays. And that had an impact on me and I started going to church right there, in the community. So, when I started to going to Pleasant Hill, the Sunday School class had about 12 ministers in it and the first thing they did was trying throw after me. And I told them that you're fishing for something that you are not going to find. They said I've gotten a B.S. from Jackson State in education and I didn't get a B.S. in the Bible. I say, " Now if match up with yall, I would bring my father in the adult Sunday Class from my church at home and I'm sure they can match you in dealing with the bible, but I can't. I'm here to learn along with you and to be helped. They threw their arms around me and laughed and they accepted me and I was one of them from then on. I didn't run away from them but some of the teachers wouldn't go to church there because they said they would have to show them up, but, I didn't have to know everything about the bible.

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Harrison: The trustee were they in the place of the Parent Teacher Association?

Clark: You had your Parent Teacher Association, but, your trustee was actually, you know, was representative of the Parent Teacher Association, but, I would say that, but, the trustee had a barron you know, they told the principal something this was it, you know this was it.

Harrison: Did they take the place of a Board Education, so to speak?

Clark: Well, some school got trustee but they are non-existence, they are just there. There's nothing that takes the place of these people today. They are not like the Board of Education. You know the Board of Education, now, many of them don't seem to be interested in the operation of the school, they are going out there trying to do the administrative work, to many of them. That is not their duty to administer the school system there duty is to set the policy. These individuals, were represent the community and they spoke on behalf and the interest of the community. They had authority they had clout, cause the battle we have arrested with the white board and with the white superintendent of education, I guess it had to come back to the principal believing in the community and give that authority. And the principle plan with these people you know if there wasn't something that they didn't want, and it was educating sound the prior spoke, that was it.

Harrison: Sounds like that was an impulsive situation, then?

Clark: When I got back home to Lac you find students coming from Mt. Olive, Holly Grove. In to Lexington, that's 20 miles above Lexington, you find people coming down from Ebenezer, that's 15 miles below Lexington, 16+25 that's 41, that's a variance there that community stretches 41 miles. No input whatsoever, the community participation. You might have one or two parents that come to the PTA from down at Picken, John Malone, President line in Pickens, Pickens is 20 miles from Lexington southeastern way or direction. But all of your community contacted the school completely. We are not going to see education in this state improve until we improve the communication in the home and the school. Now, if I was principal today, and there were a situation like at Lexington where we have throughout the state, these consolidated school district which had been a detorate to basic education in. I would go back example Lexington, we once had Mt. Olive High School out there, big high school, good high school, before the white folks moved it out of the black community. I would have Mt. Olive, Holly Grove PTS, Holly Grove was once a school community within itself and all those people that used to be the PTA at Mt. Olive, those community, I would have a PTA there. I would come down to, on down toward Lexington, Lebenon, Rockport, Pine Grove, I've have a PTA there. I'd come on to Lexington, I'd have one there, I'd come down to Ebenezer, Broadville, I'd have a PTA there. I'd move down to

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Clark: Pickens where the little red school house, Pickens, Richland, Franklin, a PTA there and then every so often, maybe every month then all of these PTA's would come together at a central place. Well, this is what I would do to enhance community participation, I would require my teachers to participate in community activities, I would require them to visit churches and civic activities. Some people might say "Well, you can't do that, that's not on the contract, but, I'm not interested in a contract, I'm not interested in what the law says, if the law is not in the best interest of quality education and that's what I'm for. But, if they would be layed out for them then they would have a chance they would have a chance to plan, they have a chance to input, lay my plan out before, Now, if you get something better, then this then we'll work on it together, then we'd come up with a plan, that would be our plan, not my plan, but would be our plan and every teacher would be expected to support it or follow it. And if they did not follow it, then you know, they would be released. They could be released for in subordination, be released for not.

Harrison: Now, that we've got a very thorough job of your teaching career, your career as a coach and as an administrator, and then you took this job for Director Adult Education and Job Training at St. C College in Lexington. Now was it during this time that you decided to go into politics, while you were teaching there?

Clark: During the time I decided to go into politics, however I really made the decision to go into politics in 1965 or '66, before I left Lexington Attendance Center. Well, I was at St's at the time, when I made the decision to go into politics. The original position, that I was going to run for Superintendent of Education, appoint him, then I decided to run against them. That's the reason why I'm a legislature, after I couldn't run for Superintendent of Education, made that appointed I was going to run for sheriff, but, when I finally got to the meeting, got back from out of the state making a meeting for the ability adult education program that I was working with they had selected some else to run for sheriff. I took the position that was left open running for the State's House.

Harrison: When you were going to run for sheriff, that was against Andrew Smith, did you tell me early that he had a habit of striking people and that he struck you once? On what occasion was that he struck you? What was the situation?

Clark: When I walked into the sheriff's office and talking and I said yes to one of the white ladies.

Harrison: And so he just turned around and curve?

Clark: He struck me and threw his gun on me and threatened to put me in the face and threatened to blow my brains out. And then a couple of years later, when I went back to him before at St. Junior College, when we had a program carrying the young men

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Clark: up north to do migrant farm labors and I was trying to get the correct license for the bus to carry them there and I had to go before him, it was again that he pulled his gun out in a little room and threatened to blow my brains out and then I just walked on out and turned my back and then he told me don't move. And I just walked on out and went on over to the unemployment office and sent them back over there to pick the permit up. But, he and the Superintendent of Education at the time took me as a problem.

Harrison: Now when you were at St.'s what were your relationship with Dr. ~~Myricks~~. Mallory (A)

Clark: It was a relationship that would never be duplicated. I meet some smart and an outstanding individuals, but, I have never met a person that was as smart or and more dynamic and had more to offer than Dr. Myricks. ~~She was infavorable, she wasn't doubtful she had weakness just like everybody else, but, when true gestures is done to the history of this country, Dr. Myricks is gonna have to go down in history of being one of the greatest persons that ever lived in this country. You know, I had been to school, I had good home-training, I had a good background, and I had been to some of the best Universities in this country, and I considered myself to be a well-read person, just read, read, read, well, a lot of philosopes,~~ ^{→ Mallory} but my meeting was certainly the icing on the cake or the shinning of the polish on the shoe. That's what she meant to me. Dr. Myrick was critical individual, very dictoral. She was not going to allow you to fail. You were not going to do a sorry job working with her, because if you did, she was gonna take over and do it for you and you were'nt going to be anything but a puppet, but you had to prove to her that you could do a job, and if you proved to her that you could do a job, she'll leave you alone. Never going to forget about it, but, you know, you are going to have to be accountable. Thing is we are talking about today, in education, if we just had a reamalery, a states superintendent's we of education 20 or 25 years ago, we would have been there. Because, of this lasdez-faire leadership, it wasn't what we know as democratic type of leadership where people thing that simply means just leaving you alone , thats a laissez-faire but, you know, you had to do it, you had to produce, you produce or they made you. You didn't go to St.'s and stay there and do nothing. You were going to be either excellent or you were going to get away from there. You didn't leaver many alternatives. or fair or poor. You had to be good to excellent to stay there, you know, she was beautiful person, I'm glad I got to know her, I'm glad I got a chance to walk slowly, but, surely with her for 12 years, because, many of the things that people said about her I would not have known, and possibly would have believed some of it. But, 99% of the bad things they said about her, you know is not true. If they wanted to say she was bossy, you can say thats if they want to say she was demanding, you can say that. She demanded that you do a

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Clark: a good job, demanded that you performed. And if you didn't perform, she'll boss you. She looked over your shoulder, you know, she didn't turn you loose out there to do nothing and so far as I'm concerned, it was simply capability and that's what it's all about. But, in and beyond all of that, she had, as strong a person as she was, she had an inferior complex towards men, she always felt that men was going to undercut her. It was very hard for her to trust a man and by her not building, this was 20 years ago, a platform with people around her and giving them delegates certain responsibility to them and then when she got in her elder years she was able to do it. Then her ideas, people got closer around her and associated with her, was not able to carry on some of her ideas, but, she trusted me, I would think, more than she did any other male, but, there were some males she trusted with responsibility that she should have entrusted a person of my talent and my ability too. Some of the trust she put in some males who wasn't able to do it. I guess that why she put trust in us, because she knew that they were just only be able to do the things that she said, and she would'nt have to worry about them overthrowing her. Always a threat of a man undercutting her and overthrowing her. I guess with the struggle that she had had in the church, she came down here when she was 19 years old and in 1926, Bishop Mason brought her down as a 18 or 19 year old girl from a very wealthy family in Illinois. By being a female and having to custom that big value and complete with the men of the church through out the United States. I can see fairlywell why she had to develop that inferior complex towards men. When I went to St.'s, we had Early Childhood Education, Adult Education, Elementary Education, High School Education, Junior College, and we had Adult Education, 2 levels. We had a project what was known as the Project Second Start, where individuals didn't get a chance to read and write, individuals didn't know how to dress, individuals didn't know how to put screen on the doors, could come back to school and learn how to do that. We had a group of ladies of nutrition who could come back to school and learn how to prepare food balance food diet for the family, take what they had and learn how to use. Then we had an additionally Adult Education class, for those people who were working in government programs, who wanted to further their education, they could come to school at night and they could towards a high school diploma or they could work towards a college diploma. When it got beyond two years, we would have instructors coming in from others schools, maybe Dana State off the coast there, maybe Mississippi State and that way, those ladies who were mothers to maybe 10 or 12 kids and was working as aides in the headstart programs that could'nt drive to Jackson or Starkvilles or Valley State to go to school, she brought the school to them. If they were able to get up and get their children off to school, go work in the headstart, come back home, cook supper and then come out to Lexington 2 nights a week, and get her college training and continue on with the job. So, we were really a university and sometim we had students in school at St.'s from age 3 to

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Clark: 80. We had some real old ones coming back.

Harrison: Well, when did she die? When did she pass?

Clark: She died maybe, I can't be specific, maybe '76 or '77.

Harrison: What happened to the school since her death?

Clark: Before Dr. Myrick deceased, Clemmon became dean and we had some problems and conflicts with him not turning in certain reports and they got into accreditation problem. He came in and immediately he did away with the grammar school he did away with everything except the high school and the Junior College. And in some respect that took away St's right there, being the biggest little school in the world. All of those out weeks program that she had had was gone. Brother King left and carried all the records with him. And after Dr. Myrick retired, then they took away the Junior College. And they restricted the enrollment to 100 people.

Harrison: Now who is this "they"?

Clark: The Church of God in Christ or official of the Church of God in Christ. They restricted the enrollment and as of this year, I don't know, this might have been the last year, but, the school is going on down and down.

Harrison: Who's in charge of it now?

Clark: Well, we have a board of education of the Church in Christ International, which Bishop Davis, here in Jackson, is the chairman of the board. Bishop Patterson is the presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ as you know. Dr. Philoz I'm not certain in decision making, but, it appears at this time, that if everything goes well then the school will be moved to Memphis. Just sickening that somebody in the church don't understand the history of the school and what the school has done for the church. Many missionaries and bishops, and leaders in the church today, got there start at St.'s Mass, inspiration at St.'s. Many of them stayed out in the sticks, but, St.'s was an environment and a community within itself. When you came there, there was not anything intellectual to do. All of your cultures and everything you taught was included right there on campus which was 300 some acres. People was just inspired to leave there, and once they left there, they held their heads up and they were somebody and they went to be somebody. You want that uniqueness, if you don't operate as a private school you are supposed to be unique.

Harrison: O.K. What's going to happen to the facilities once they move?

Clark: We don't know the facilities there worth a million dollars. We don't know what's going to happen to it. In those adults, some of those adult education classes are selling there project. Second Start, during the time I was director about a 1,000 people

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Clark: came through the program. We taught the basic reading and writing on all levels. From beginners to 8th grade and in some cases through 9th grade. For people strictly who hadn't made it, giving them a chance to go on and get their BEOG's giving them a chance to be able to communicate and make out budgets to be able to write their own check, for the first time we had people who had kids from up north, and for the first time they stand up with tears in their eyes and able to read a letter from my child for the first time in my whole life. The lady said, "I was able to write my son in Las Vegas, La. for the first time. I didn't have to get someone else to write the letter for me. We taught brick masonry. We taught people carpentry. We taught people plumbing, we taught people electricity, we taught people upholstery and we taught sewing and we started to get into comestology, but, we didn't. Some of the other members in the community objected, said we would be teaching without a licesne. We were not interested in creating any scandals, we were interested in teaching people has to do something for themselves.

Harrison: What about the competition of St.'s, today, as it compares to the public school up there, I mean as it relates to public schools?

Clark: Well, St.'s is an alternative to the public schools. St.'s customary existed as a school that could give one on one, and a school that can give special attention. It has existed down through the years as teaching student whether than teaching books. We've had students who had this and that problems at other schools had to come to us and make A's out of that course. We'd find, sometimes, we'd get students there and I know, I been to public schools, teachers sit up in the lounge, smoking and they say child you know such and such somebody ain't doing nothing and he ain't going to make it. I mean they get out and quick teaching and they teach them all of a sudden and he just have a run-in with them and it's not necessarily the students fault. We've gotten students there that have been doing poorly in the public schools, may come there passing and may sometimes make the president list. People sometimes said you are giving him grades. It's not that because it a student comes to St.'s sometimes if we offer a physics or a chemistry class, we might not have but 10. Well, if we had more than 3 students in a chemistry class and it ain't but one instructor that instructor can give a hell-of-a-lot time with 3 students through there everyday, than he can with a class of 35 or 40, and 15 or 20 are not there. Well, he ain't going to do nothing in a basic class like that. Thats the same thing you know, English language arts small class or any other subject. We have been able to, down through the years, to curve our staff and sorry teachers, who get by, be gone and we would keep the very best teachers. Did'nt keep a sorry teacher. The teacher had to be interested in students, the teacher had to know his or her subject matters, the teacher had to know how to teach you know, we just didn't have violence in the classroom. Well, people said yall getting along great. Hell, that wasn't it you know, we were just meeting the

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Clark: needs of students and it was very unique in that respect. Notice to that respect, immediately students to one on one and inspired those students. Putting inspiration in them, making them read. I'd make them hungry to want to do something, you know. We try to help you, we take a lot of them in what you might call down from all of the country. Some we had to send back home couldn't help it, but, most of them we did. Ain't gonna keep you there and let you ruin the rest of the students, you know you see you don't want to be helped, we are 'nt gonna twist your arm a little bit, but, we ain't going to wring it off. We are going to put you on the plane or train and send you back to where you from, Detroit, or send you on back to Pickens or Ebenezer, if you don't want to be helped. Same thing about teachers. If a teacher don't want to teach, you know, let the teacher gone somewhere else. Go find somebody thats gonna teach the way I like the way you teach, if we don't like the way you teach you don't have no right to work here.

Harrison: What is their enrollment there now?

Clark: Enrollment is maybe that of 100. Enrollment, like I told you, for the pass, since Dr. ^{Mallory} Maverick the enrollment have been restricted, because there's only so much money that's put in the school and we do have the highest rating that any school can have in the state of Mississippi. For the amount of money we are getting the classes have to be a certain size, and we know if we are going to offer quality education, we can't have classes that are too large for our budget, we had to restrict enrollment to stay within our budget, because, quality is what we are interested in not cause if our budget had been larger than our quantity we could have been larger and we could have maintained our quality.

Harrison: So, how many teacher do you have?

Clark: The faculty of 10 to 12. One of the things that have affected quality education at St.'s, in 1974 when we enacted the law on state level, requiring that you had certified by the state where a lot of little things that really wanted to come to St.'s for experience maybe they might have been a retired college couple that maybe had taught social studies, the wife and the man, had probably had taught physics, and maybe they wanted to come down and give us two years. We would have the daughter of somebody who attended St.'s, 35 or 40 years ago. maybe she finished at Univ. of Pennsylvania or NYU and there's a contribution to the school on behalf of father and mother they might want to come down and give the school two year at a salary free board and 7,000 dollars a year, and we was able to have choice and be chosey. But after we passed these laws, we could have Phd that want to come down and teach, but, they couldn't meet their requirements in the state of Mississippi. When we had a selection of people, we never used all out-of-state people. But, we was able to bring this confusion of people in that had been highly trained in a different environment. We were able to be selective and bring them in and then definitely they would set a standard for the local folks that we brought in and local folks would have a

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Clark: tendency to move up there, but, when we got where we had to compete right here in Mississippi, with the salary that we are paying there is no way that we can compete for the best with what we are paying. Even if we could compete our university in Mississippi is not turning out the people in the area of math and science you know school city public schools in Jackson can't give quality not enough of it. We were able to go on the outside of the state and get them and that have fascinated them. I think the quality of education and we haven't been able to adjust to that. When they cut you off to get them not on parts of St.'s. I'm advocating this state wide if we are to improve the quality of education in our public schools in Mississippi, we are going to have to away from the systems we have now in certain areas. We are going to have to co-operate with interest. Example in a rural area, if you want a highly qualified person in there to teach your advance business your advance chemistry, advance pathology teach it the way it is supposed to be taught. You are going to have to get away from this working at LAC TAC, when I say LAC, I mean Lexington, Tchula or Durant. The county is gonna to have to hire a person the person is going to have to be a private person. Or either the school you've heard me talk about the school and the community get to cooperate or either this person is going to have to be hired down at the hospital, part-time or Lexington. Product and worked down there 4 hours a day, work for the school 4 hours a day, because this is the only way we are going to do it, we are going to have to forget about all of this junk that you got to have, you know. Miss. History and all like that that doesn't have anything to do with the person's ability to teach chemistry, or physics, advance literature, composition our religion, you know a person with a Ph.D in biology and couldn't get my religion because we hadn't had all of this junk in Mississippi. And I'm a religious school, and this person wanted to come down and teach for me and I can't hire them. And we are going to have to get rid of all of that funny stuff, and get back to that persons ability to do what they are supposed to do and that they are certified.

Harrison: Well, maybe we can go into another area, but, I do want to talk about some about your family life and all. I wonder if it would disturb to have you talk about some of your dreams as a young man? As you grew up about the kind of family you would have?

Clark: Well, you know, I never really dreamed about the kind of family I would have. I just had dreams and aspirations of my own. What I wanted to do. I just thought everything else would fall in place. I grew up a lifelong, of wanting to be a minister, and a lawyer, and as I told you, this was all of my work was directed towards it and I joined the church at an early age, maybe about an age of 3 or 4 years old. I prayed for about my early childhood/school life and my church life and they type of family I intended to have. Mrs. Watts, again in a sociology class out at Jackson State, during my freshmen year, maybe and we had to write definitely about our type of family life. Students had been taught and laught at the big family, some of the big family, they

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they laughed at them. But, I could always say I'm from a family of three just three of us. Well, people looked at me like I was crazy, because it isn't but three of us in our family. We didn't have to but names on there. I put on there I want a wife and five kids, no six kids, 3 girls and 3 boys. And boy when the teacher read that she made all kinds of fun of it, and the kids laughed in the class, they didn't know who wrote it. The teacher said, "God, in heaven you girls in here find out which one of these fellows wrote this, cause six kids you ain't going to do nothing but have babies all of your life. But, they never found out who wrote it. After I got out of college, I found myself sewed up in my work, teaching, coaching, everything doing administrative work and it broke into my social life to the extent from the time I should have been socializing, I was practicing football, and delivering football kids home and the ladies would want to know who was more important, me or the athletes and they never wanted to accept my job, they wanted to take me away from my job, and I wasn't going to let anything come between us and for that reason that I never really became real tight with anyone. I remember very well when I was going to school at Michigan State, the principal of Drude High School in Tusculusa, Alabama was in school with me and he was real impressed with me and Drude was one of the largest high school in the U.S. at that time and he wanted to hire me down as coach, but, I would have had to get married, and he didn't care what. I wanted to go to Drude High School. But, he told me point blank, that I had a single coach and every time I would leave school, if he was on the football field he'd leave the football field chasing some woman and so I made a vow that I would never hire a single coach. Well, I told him "Sir, if you hire Robert Clark, you wouldn't have to worry about. But, that was his reasons for not hiring me, but, I never had lost of, you know, ladies, but, it wasn't that the ladies wasn't nice and I wasn't interested, but, they just didn't care to fit the mold of life that I was living and finally when I came back have home, the first year I started to teaching, there was a young lady that started to teaching there and she told me she was from Belzoni and I knew her parents, her father, and her mother, didn't know her but, I could see the features. I spent a lot of time in the principal office and worked with the principal and she talked business with the principal's secretary. When I would go into see the principal because I had had administrative experience and the principal had had a case with tubercalosis back during the year when I was born and it was an arrested case, and a lot of people were afraid to get close to him and all like that, but, by me having a background in Health and Physical Education, I knew if the case was arrested it was not contagious. Therefore, I could spend a lot of time with him, because, I could not only talk with him about school problems and give him my ideas about a certain situation, but, I could just talk to him. So by me being around his office a lot I got a chance to, you know start talking to her and I found out the kind of person that she was. She was the kind of person that was considerate and willing to and it was not going to have no person that was a dictating boss, I'm not no dictating boss. But, no person or

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Clark: to change Robert Clark. Robert Clark is born, molded and not going to try and change you, so I find out that you've that kind of person you know, eventually we started dating and after that I was elected we got married. It wasn't anything that was planned, or anything that I was looking for. I dealt with that time, like some fellows out in Jackson State, before we left there. Hey, man you know we getting to be seniors now and you know we better get us a wife because we are here where the best minds is in the state. Some of them would start grabbing girls that would marry them, because they were seniors. However, there was one girl, that I met when, I was a senior and she was a freshman and after I left Jackson State, we dated for some time. But, her mother and father was up in age. She lived in Montgomery County, between Kirmicheals and Franks Camp. She was going to never leave home and I wasn't going to leave home. So, if she wasn't going to leave home and I wasn't going to leave home, well, it isn't no need for us dating anymore, because she wanted to stay there so she could be near her people. I definitely had made my mind up that I was going to die at Ebenezer. It wasn't no need in us getting married and then seperating because she wasn't going to move to Ebenezer I wouldn't move to Kirmicheal. So we just broke off in a friendly way and that was that.

Harrison: O.K. This lady that you married, what kind of person was she really?

Clark: Well, she was a person that was considerate, and a person that was not bossy or fussy . A person that was not jealous, and I certainly wasn't jealous of her. She wanted to go out someplace, I kept dress her and help her get her gym ready and you know, help her get ready to go. She went when she got ready and she came when got ready . And I did the same thing. She tended to the business. She worked too, for a while, but you know, I stopped her from working, she ran the business, my business, we did all of the bookkeeping all of my book work. I ran every penny. I made through the books so we keep records of it. And you know, when I gave her money, she put in the bank what she wanted, and did what she wanted with the rest of it. I never questioned that. If I was going out, like we all do sometimes, if I told her to write me a check for \$500 dollars she cut the check, never questioned, what you going to do with it. She never said nothing to me about hanging up clothes. I never said nothing to her about get up out of the bed and cook breakfast or something like that wash some socks for me, I never did. Sometimes, she'd me. 'Why you didn't wake me up this morning, so I could cook breakfast for you, I see you washed your socks why you didn't tell me. Well, I tell her long as I been without someone to cook for me if I couldn't cook for myself and had to wait for you came here, I'd been dead. I don't have to have nobody to do those things for me. Long as I had stayed single, I would never make it with nobody, but, I wouldn't have made it with a grouche, bossy person. I wouldn't have made it with that kind of person. Thats why I hadn't gotten married in the first place, because of my lifestyle and it's no need for somebody to go ahead and get married and knowing that you and the person don't agree before you go ahead and get married and then have to seperate.

Harrison: So, how did you decide to have a family, or did you decide to have a family? Some people plan families and some don't.

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Clark: Well, you know, we planned a family, because I knew at the time, you know, I needed somebody around to try to carry on our family tradition, because suddenly I wanted to do some of the things that my father and grandfather had wanted to do and had talked about. I definitely did not want nobody to be around to not try to carry on some of the things that I believe in. The best way to do is to have somebody young to do that. I feel like today I'm doing what my grandfather William Clark, who was a slave, and he tells me about he never had shoes on until after slavery and had never had a pair of pants on always wore Lois dress. They ate slop from trott, just like hogs, come out and pour the slop and little boys had to get up and race for it. The things that he wanted and aspired for, thing that my father fired for teaching people to register to vote, and participating in politics I feel today like I'm doing what they wanted done. And that's why some people don't understand me. People I'm in politics with say you're suppose to be wrong, but, I will not knowly under no conditions do wrong such as I live by principles and whatever conquences living by this principle, I would have to do it. I'm not going to throw stones, I'll fight you to the last. I'm not going to get down in the ditch, I'm not going to get in the gutter, I'm not going to lie and I'm not going to follow nobody that is lying. That's one of the things about the black race of people, we are going to have to , we leaders are going to have to put the train in motion of other black folks, train upon their motions, creating the situation that doesn't even exist. We need to get really sure and we don't need to create issues that are going to affect other blacks unless the issue is a real issue. But we'll create fictitious issues to further our on cause, but, hurt other blacks. And out here the struggle I know individually is important, the individual seizes to exist when it come to what is good for the causes of the entire group. I despise a power-boss. And as was sais the other night, Dr. Ike quoted quite a few of the things that I said. That our strength rests with us doing something for ourselves and our power rests with us working together and not us going in induvidual directions. The causes that no one black leader supersee the causes the majority of the black people.

Harrison: Well, I guess on that note, we'll close it for today.

Clark: O.k.