

Transcript-February 24, 1992

The following is a transcript of conversation with Llewelyn Perry, Sally Bridenstine, Julia Ray, Marjorie Lockwood, and Una May Lindberg on February 24, 1992, at Llewelyn's home.

Marjorie Lockwood: "...and at that time, Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Eunice Adams, interviewed every person who was nominated for the Board before their nomination was accepted. Mrs. Adams was executive director of the Y in the early 50's. The Public Affairs Committee was very strong and it was through the Public Affairs Committee that actually all the items for social justice originated and were promoted. The Public Affairs Committee was more forthright and progressive on social justice issues than the Board as a whole. The Board as a whole met at the main building, at Grove Street and everybody came dressed up. I remember I think Lyle Schumaker asked me if I would accept nomination, and I said I really didn't know much about the YWCA. I had taught in Louisville, Ky., but I never did go to the YWCA or know anything about it. I grew up in a small town in Ky., and there was no YM or YW or anything like that. I remember Lyle said, 'Well, this is a great honor.' The way she put it, it was a great social honor to be nominated for the board. Lyle was the wife of the editor of the Asheville Citizen-Times. I think at that time Mrs. Bryant was still living and on the Board. She's the one for whom Moorhead House is named. She wanted it [Moorhead House] to remain a girl's dormitory for young women who were traveling. [Mrs. Bryant's father gave the money for the Moorhead House Building.]"

Julia Ray: "...about it [being nominated to the Board] being such an honor, at that time that Board was like a private social club. It met at 11:00 o'clock---that was the time of the meetings---and sometimes they served lunch and so forth. When the Public Affairs Committee started spearheading the merger of the two YWCA buildings, everybody on the Phyllis Wheatley Board worked except me. I was a house person, and so they chose me to go to these meetings because they couldn't get off at 11:00 o'clock to go. For a long time, I was the only person there. Then Frances Owens was able to get excused from school sometimes, and she went with me to those meetings. Although the paper [news clippings from the Asheville Citizen-Times] may give you the feeling that it was a smooth and easy transferal, it was a bitter, bitter battle to the end. This was the late 50's. The Y Board came up with all kinds of excuses. First of all, the black community and the white community spearheaded a fundraiser and built this new branch over on S. French Broad. It was not quite adequate from day one, space wise. We didn't have a pool. So, some of the reasons the main Y Board objected to it was it's location--it was on a black street, a black residential area at that time. They figured that it was a dangerous neighborhood, although it was just one block from the bus line. It wasn't safe for white women to go, was one of their reasons--it wasn't large enough, it didn't have a pool. The desires for Y work, things that black women liked, were not the same types of things that white women wanted. It really was not all that smooth. There were many women on the Board who had the old ideas---I guess we should say--that we had a certain place. 'We' meaning black women had their place and should not be incorporated into anything other than that place. It was a bitter battle. I remember one morning we met, and they were to talk. There was a Jewish member of the white Board, Helen Gumpert. It was her husband who looked at the buildings on Grove Street and said it was a waste of money to do the major repairs on Grove Street because, in the end, those buildings will not be safe. The swimming pools that they had needed so much repair, as well as the window,

the stairwells, and all those kind of things. Mr. Gumpert said it would be a waste of money. So Helen Gumpert was saying we should merge and a fundraiser should be started or the building should be sold and build a pool at the Y--at the present site."

Una May Lindberg: "Several though they should have integrated swimming class, the first one. They were going to try it. It was in 1963 [from Una May's journal---as she said, "From some notes that I have..."] We had three girls, two were black, and three little boys and one was black. This was in the old pool at Grove Street Y."

Llewelyn Perry: "And we had to have an adult with each child. I remember I was with Francine Delaney's little girl. Francine was a young woman and had a little tot. It was in that first integrated swimming class at Moorhead, at Grove Street."

Una May: "I know I said I have to get out; I don't swim!"

Julia: "Thelma Caldwell and you and I and Jo Dutton went into the Grove Street's pool, and they said we had to come out. That was a little before the children's integrated class began."

Una May: "It was about that time. The first thing I remember about the Y was when Emily Lloyd was president, and we did Unicef cartons for the first time. We made little milk cartons and delivered them. The churchwomen and the Y co-sponsored it. That must've been about 1963--it was one of the first projects I remember as a member of Public Affairs. We delivered them to the different churches, collected the donations, and counted the money."

Lew: "It was very extensive, that program was."

Una May: "Someone who moved away from her and was very active in Public Affairs was Ann Boyce. In 1964, the Integration Workshops brought people of all backgrounds to work directly on problems with schools, on the job, and housing."

Lew: "I remember there was great to-do because the rest rooms at Ivey's -- the manager if it got very upset when one of the young people said they weren't integrated. He said he wanted to know how she knew about it. They were really uptight about that kind of thing."

Julia: "W. Roland---when integration first began---owned a jewelry shop. He had the concerned children--black children--come into his jewelry shop. That's where they had their meetings and planned their strategy. The first thing that the children did was to integrate the bag boys for the local Winn Dixie stores. They met at Mr. Roland's shop. My son is 44, and he was one of the teenagers that walked that line. There was an elderly black man along the line who lived up on College Street. This elderly black man picketed every morning until the children got out of school. Then the children picketed from the time school was out until the stores closed. If it rained, my son, because we were living at the funeral home and there was a Winn Dixie near your church--remember Una May--they would call up and say, "Momma, take an umbrella and raincoat because it's raining for the elderly man." Each child's parents were responsible for taking him [the elderly man] his lunch every day. Trying to integrate the bag boys was hard; none of the stores would let any black teenagers work. At that time, you see, the ladies would get their groceries in bags and the boys would push them out or take them out and load them in their cars. They don't do much of that anymore, but they did it for everyone back then. The boys broke Winn Dixie---they finally hired some blacks. The next store to integrate the bag boys was the A & P." [The elderly man was Mr. McCoy, per Julia later in the conversation.]

Una May: "...without any turmoil -- Mr. Roland didn't want anybody to get upset, but he never quit trying."

Marjorie: "Don't forget Florence Stradley."

Lew: "Oh yes, she was there when I was there. Florence was in charge of, was Chairman of Public Affairs, when I first went on. Ann Boyce was the one who asked me to come. That was between 1959-65."

Una May: "People who backed integration were Bishop Henry, Rabbi Unger, Robert Bucey, Father Wilson, and I can't remember the one from St. Joan's---they all came to the Human Relations Council, Church Women United, League of Women Voters, American Society of College Women, from business was Mr. Harry Winter, Charles Kern, Frank Leopard from out in West Asheville. Then we contacted, I can remember, managers at Sears, Penney's, Belk's, and Mr. Lipinski at Bon Marche at the time--about their policies for hiring people. The first thing they said to us, which was very logical, was what does your husband do about hiring minorities. Fortunately, my husband did--not just in the service jobs, but in places of authority. We had a black woman in charge of our greenhouse, production and things. Florence said, 'Well, my husband only has a couple... Gee, he kind of got to me!' I guess it was the fellow at Belk's that was rather upset with our questioning them about their hiring practices."

Lew: "We went up to Kearfott, I remember. They were very upset about it. The City Council and the School Board, too. City Council, I remember, said, 'Oh, there's no problem.' 'We don't have a problem in Asheville' I remember that. You were probably with us, then. I know Florence was. It was interesting about the Board at that time, as Julia said. With the Public Affairs, we almost felt as though we were in an adversarial position with the Board because of Florence and these other people that had gone before us. The Public Affairs Committee was far ahead in thinking about social action--very active."

Q. [Mary] Did you report to the Board? Did they try to slow down what you were doing or did they just ignore you or what?

Lew: "They would object."

Una May: "They were opposed."

Lew: "From there, some of us got on the Board---more of us got on the Board from Public Affairs. That was the way I got on the Board. I never have been a Board-type person, but it was through the Public Affairs that several of us--I guess you did too, Una May? --became Board members."

Una May: "Yes."

Q. [Mary] Lew, why did you feel so strongly about this? You said you'd never been on a Board before, but you would go on the Board because of your work on Public Affairs--"

Lew: "Because I felt very strongly that what they were doing was the right thing. I just didn't see any other way we could go."

Una May: "And the merging of the Y's really caused opposition. I can remember even to the last day when we took the vote, we wondered if we would have enough to pass a vote to merge."

Lew: "One interesting thing I remember, Julia, one of the objections was that they didn't want to meet at night. These were all socially prominent women, most of them, and they said they had to be home at night -- they had to meet in the day. Those of us who wanted them to merge urged them to meet at night because of the working people -- there was great opposition to that, do you remember?"

Julia: "Even at that time, they didn't have many white working women. As I said, it met at 11:00 o'clock in the day."

Q. [Mary] More a social function than a working social action group?

Marjorie: "It was what I call the 'lady bountiful' image. You know, like you take baskets to the poor at Christmas time -- that sort of thing -- charity work. You don't work for social change."

Julia: "My family always called them the do-gooders."

Marjorie: "Do you remember the day that CORE [Congress for Racial Equality] sent word that they were going to come into Asheville? Mr. Roland and Florence met often on this thing. I guess Mr. Roland called Florence and Florence called then Mayor Eller really early--about 7:00 o'clock in the morning, I think--and said, 'Mr. Mayor, you'd better get down to City Hall and have a City Council meeting right away because CORE is coming in here to integrate restaurants. If they are not accepted, of course, there will be trouble.' Then they did have a [City Council] meeting. The mayor hotfooted it downtown. I don't know who called me--maybe it was Florence--and said to go out to a restaurant out on Highway 70, a new restaurant, because they were coming there. She knew where people were coming. So we were assigned different places to go."

Julia: "Jesse and I went to Howard Johnson's on Tunnel Road, my husband and I."

Una May: "We went to Howard Johnson's on Tunnel Road -- Mr. & Mrs. Roland and myself."

Marjorie: "Well, I went by myself and nobody else was there! I thought they'd never get there! Then, a young black couple, a very attractive young couple with a child about 10 years old, came and sat down in the booth next to me. I just couldn't drink any more coffee or eat any more...but, anyway, they finally came and nothing happened. Nothing happened anywhere."

Una May: "The day CORE came, I may have gone at a later date. I know, there was just a number of us getting together to try and see if there would be any problems. We just went it and ordered a cup of coffee."

Lew: "I thought Woolworth's was one of the first, was it not?"

Una May: "We sat at the counters at Woolworth's."

Lew: "At the counters...I was away at the time, but I remember hearing about it."

Una May: "I don't remember who was with us at the time."

Lew: "I think Phyllis Frans, I think. She's dead now."

Marjorie: "I went to Woolworth's. I don't know if it happened on this day or not, but I had stopped at the counter at Woolworth's and a seat was vacant and some black people came in. The woman next to me--I guess I don't know what to say..a countrywoman, I would guess--and she said to me, 'I don't like it, do you?' and I said--I don't know what I said--you know, it's fine with me. She said, 'Well, where do you live?' I usually don't like to say because so many people are prejudiced, but finally I said--I knew if I said Stuyvesant Road that wouldn't do any good--so I said, 'Well, I live in Biltmore Forest.' 'Well,' she said, 'I guess if they can pay for it they can eat it!'"

Julia: "I'll tell you just a little funny story. It's not related to the Y, so you don't need to tape it.... [I decided to tape the story after Julia began so I missed the first of it]...a Japanese family...My aunt was a caterer. There were some Japanese young people that were at Adrina College where her daughter was going to school. These young people would come home with my cousin for the weekend, and my aunt would let them work to help her with her catering. So, when the Japanese invaded, you know, they took all the Japanese families other than those people who could find a sponsor. If you could find a sponsor, you didn't have to go to the camps. My aunt took this Japanese girl named Ruby. Ruby and my cousin came to visit me at Christmas time when the segregation was going on. We went in Newberry's. It was cold; we

