

Walter Boland

Side 1:

Walter received his PhD. in Sociology in 1966 at the University of Michigan and came to Asheville where the UNCA Sociology Department was beginning and growing in 1970. [Kevin Stacy]

[22] Although he had tenure at the University of Connecticut, he became disenchanted with big universities when a co-professor was fired because of his political activities. He has written 2 books, wanted to spend more time with his children and he worked hard to develop a good Sociology Department. He felt that Asheville was an open community and, while it had problems, they could be solved and he could make a difference. He became president of the Family Council and basketball coach for the Little League for 4 years. His involvement in "Crop Walk," a community organization to help 3rd world people, led him into politics. He was encouraged to run for City Council. Many people helped and he ran 2nd in the primary, however there was some resistance to professors serving on the council. After serving for a term, he spent full time on university activities but went back for 6 years. [John Lagett, Gene Rainey (see enclosure), Richard Wood, Jr.]

[129] There was an amazing opportunity to do great things with Federal Funding in the 70's.

[138] He feels the city missed a great opportunity when the Strouse Greenberg & Co. proposal (enclosure) was strung out and discouraged. The Historical Preservation group opposed the plan though the Akzona Building (see enclosure) was not opposed. [Norma Price, Ken Michalove]

[181] The development of Wall Street did not work at all - there should be people on the street. [Oktoberfest and new store openings have brought activity - Fall of 1993. Note by D.C. Joynes] The Haywood Street Hotel is working well. [Robert Armstrong, Bill Johnson]

[218] South Pack Square (see enclosure), he considers a good idea gone awry. A lot of Federal money has gone into it but the location is against its success. It should act like a magnet. Health Adventure not going to get financial support of doctors as anticipated though the volunteers are great. The Rock Museum (Colburn Gem Museum) and Art Museum won't draw. Someone like Coggins (see Coggins tape) could have put it over. Interest in the waterfront (see Webb tape) took away from enthusiasm for Pack Place. With a great developer, Biltmore Mall would not have been needed. He feels that the only chance for the square is to change direction and promise parking and quality goods. However, the blacks need a place to shop. The street life is not good. Boat missed. [Roger McGuire, Pat McGuire, George Coggins]

[331] The I. M. Pei [building] became a shrine to Ramsey. Cecil was glad to get a new building but the building does not draw. Aside from the Peterson grill, there wasn't much on that side of the street that was lost. [Claude Ramsey, William ("Bill") Cecil, Chris Peterson]

[430] There is no strong city planning. (see tapes of Moore & Kisiah) [Verl Emerick, William Moore, Ray Kisiah, Billy Wolcott]

[478] In order to get people into the streets, Bele Chere was created (enclosure) and was a family and community success but times have changed. There is too much beer and loud music today. The book sale can no longer be held there successfully (see Parker tape). Drugs and alcohol, not the celebration of the nature of North Carolina, have taken over. [Robin Daniels, Mary Parker, Jim Daniels]

[555] The Goombay Festival is always fun and the kind of activity that helps the city.

Side 2:

[2/4] Advertising signs, according to ordinance, are to be grandfathered and removed but there is no significant decrease. Reasonable plans were worked (see Webb tape) but there are so many compromises. The city, with insufficient staff and funds, has been unable to enforce rules. [Norma Price, Lyn Brown]

[2/50] CEBO and the Chamber of Commerce oppose design review and preservation. A "small hardware-owner mentality" prevails.

[2/71] Asheville's main attractions are the mountains and vistas - these are not being protected. The small merchant can be moved beyond defining the best as the cheapest. [Allene Highsmith, Billy Wolcott]

[2/173] After the Strouse Greenberg plan failed, the people became discouraged and the Downtown Commission was formed. Millions were invested by Green who saw his shop as an anchor for Wall Street but this was not realized. The Downtown Discovery worked with merchants, Better Business Bureau and Downtown Merchants Association to revive enthusiasm (enclosure). [Karen Field, Roger McGuire, Paul Green, Mike Green, Roy Birchfield, Charlie Kern, Jim Pressley]

[2/268] He considers the monthly paper GreenLine, published by Jeff Fobes, son of John (who was with the United Nations) a fine publication and superior to The Asheville Citizen-Times. [Jeff Fobes, John Fobes]

[2/298] One of the major forces in the Citizen-Times was Weir. Lord also played a role. [Weldon Weir, Tony Lord]

[2/324] City needs something like the Discovery newsletter (see enclosed). [Julian Price]

[2/336] The French Broad River is a real asset. People want to move back to nature and, when he started talking about the issue, the paper picked up on it. A River Front conference was held bringing the best riverfront architect from Pittsburgh who came free of charge. Several architects developed plans but the project lacked "heavy hitters" - the timing no longer right. The money of the 70's was gone (see Webb tape). [Jean Webb, Bill Cecil]

[2/455] The last year he was on the Council interest in the river wavered. The Chamber of Commerce didn't give support and Michalove said that "every city needs the dump." He was instrumental in hiring Cragnolin (see Webb tape). [Kenneth Michalove, Karen Cragnolin]

Tape II, Side 1:

[II/1/3] Regarding integration, he said there is some integration in Kenilworth. In Montford, with urban redevelopment, blacks were relocated in that area with a lot of ill will. The situation was handled poorly (see Robert Brunk tape). However, this program was better than the projects. Asheville Housing Authority tries to monitor and for a while a police substation was located in Hillcrest. Programs such as dance, child care, clean-up (through Parks and Recreation) were helpful but a lot of things go on there that shouldn't, (see Holt and Walton tapes). There are good family relations in many of the black families in the projects and residents are interested in building on this. [Larry Holt, David Jones, Carl Johnson, Johnny B. Hays, Minnie Jones]

[II/1/138] The Hill Street Baptist Church and the Mount Zion on Eagle Street are strong but exclusively black. He considers the diversion between blacks and whites worse than in Mississippi and Alabama. [Nilous Avery]

[II/1/162] John White, a black, was president of his graduating class and at present is on the Admission Committee of UNCA. The Bratton sons were leaders in tennis and cross-country skiing. He helped get Haith appointed on the School Board, but she never took a stand on the unequal treatment of blacks. There is still bussing with loss of children's time and funds. Children, whose parents can afford it, go to Asheville Catholic School or Carolina Day School. The attitude is "out of sight, out of mind." [John White, Kevin Boland, Wilhelmina Bratton, Charles Bratton, Harriet Haith]

[II/1/216] County schools don't want to consolidate with the city system. He gave many speeches on this. "Magnet" schools in high school specialize in specific areas - this does not work well. The blacks are relegated to the "status of second-class citizens." The leadership over the years has been poor, though there are some excellent individual educators. [Charlie Wykle, Douglas Pearson, Woodie Griffith, Dwight Pedas]

[II/1/359] The city hasn't been able to find opportunities for bright blacks. The UNC-A chancellors have tried to interest them to attend but they go to any other school predominately black - even though they could get a better education here.

Tape 2, Side 2:

Regarding integration: The intent on the part of the Chancellors was good but Asheville is a segregated city. He tried to talk to Highsmith (see Dr. Louis Highsmith tape) but he was ill. His plans for encouraging integration never got off the ground. He feels that the only solution is in getting blacks and whites to know and trust each other through creating opportunities - have occasions and joint projects. (see Caldwell tape). A few "token" blacks go to private schools (see Winters and McCabe tapes) and Charles Bratton graduated on full scholarship - but he was brought up "white" in Kenilworth. He asked Avery whether he would go to UNC-A and he said,

"No!" [William Highsmith, Carl Johnson, Thelma Caldwell, Nilous Avery, John White, Dave Brown, Eileen McCabe, Charles Bratton, Wilhelmina Bratton]

[II/2/98] He helped the black community establish a minority loan pool to be used for starting black businesses. [Wanda Henry Coleman, Director of the YMI until Oct. 1993]

[II/2/150] He discussed the possibility of a worthwhile project when he retires. One of his closest friends, a black, who was suspicious of him at first, learned to trust him over the years. Boland feels that he could get a group of blacks and whites together and start at the grassroots - not a gesture like the Martin Luther King breakfasts. While the breakfast is better than nothing, it has gotten a bit phony - it glorifies the man but not what he wanted to do. [Carl Johnson, Oralene Simpson, Nancy Boland]

[II/2/202] He was on the YMI board for years - this is the black community center along with the fraternities and sororities. He is interested in getting Eagle Street rejuvenated. The parking garage was to also house shop areas but now the remaining shops are white.

[II/2/280] Urban redevelopment destroyed the black community. [Mathew Bacote]

[II/2/308] Coleman, as executive director of the YMI, told him she was drained - her job was "too much." The UNC-A board has newly elected Francine Delany, a good move. [Wanda Henry Coleman, Francine Delany]

[II/2/339] The council needs a new vision and new goals with outspoken people. He would like to get involved again but not as an official.

[II/2/374] He would like to start a committee on Race Relations. He feels he owes the blacks something. They grew to trust him and gave him 90% of their votes at the polls - they know he goes to them to listen to what they have to say.