

Shirley and Alfred J Whitesides Jr.

Side 1:

[The Haiths told me about the Whitesides] (see Haith tapes)

[6] He was born in Asheville, went to St. Anthony's Catholic School for 8 years, graduated from Stephens-Lee High School in 1962, went to Morehouse College (black) in Atlanta and finished in N.C. Central in Durham where he met his wife. He was in the naval reserve, served and started work at the First Union Bank in 1971 (23 years ago).

[14] She is from a family of 8 in Rocky Mount N.C. She has been teaching Art for 23 years. She was at Hill Street Middle School - now Isaac Dickson Elementary School - and is now with the Asheville Middle School. She is one of the primary members of the Delta sorority to purchase the Delta House.

[22] The Delta group - a national sorority with 85,000 members - found that they could not purchase a house as a sorority and be tax exempt or receive grants. The house therefore is a "Life Development Center." Funds were raised and grants obtained from Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the Janirve Foundation.

[52] The second floor is the last phase in the development of the run-down house on South French Broad. There is a multi-purpose room for arts and crafts, drama, dance and seminars. Lettie started the library 2 years ago.

[60] Depending on the activity, 100-250 children are served and information about activities is spread through schools and the projects. Because many volunteer instructors are also employed, staffing is a problem.

[76] He is the 5th generation in his family to be active in Hopkins Chapel. He wasn't asked whether or not he was going to go to college, but what he was going to major in in college. He was going to a Catholic school (all black with white nuns) but attending a Methodist church. His grandfather was head bellman at Grove Park. When he went to Woolworth's with his grandfather and brother they drank from the water fountain - black and white side by side. He drank from the white side and a white man said "Get away from there" - his grandfather said "He will, when he is finished drinking water." As they walked away he said "Partner - your grand kids won't have to put up with that, and I want you to make sure it doesn't happen."

[123] While in high school, he helped William Rolland, a black man who ran a jewelry store, to boycott Winn Dixie and A & P stores. The stores started hiring blacks. He didn't realize while in Atlanta that the people he was meeting through his uncle, a minister from Los Angeles, would become world famous. His uncle was on the board at Morehouse, spoke at his Baptist Church and stayed with the King family. His first real introduction to integration came when the sister of a man who lived across the hall from him in college was one of the children killed in the Church bombing in Alabama. When he went to Durham he again met important people. Ferguson was from Asheville and is now with a civil rights law firm in Charlotte.

[176] He was President of the student body in college. He didn't realize until later what an impact his generation had on the movement.

[178] She met with Duke students and boycotted. The death of King had an impact on her and it made her aware that the blacks had to get out and help each other.

[194] He was attending a rally when King was shot. He was bitter. The blacks had the material - guns and explosives - to take the place apart. A lot of the students were returned veterans. It was not easy to keep the lid on things. The whole state could have blown up.

[213] Some cool heads kept violence from erupting - they emphasized that King was a non-violent man. However, without the churches there would not have been a Civil Rights movement. Funds were provided to get protesters out of jail.

[235] She spoke at the Rocky Mount High School following King's death. When she came to Asheville she kept looking for blacks - there were 70% where she lived and 10% here. Floyd was a member of Al's church. Until the word "black" was used in a different connotation (black and proud) using it started many fights. "People began to look at the black race and say "We have something to offer - we aren't inferior." Now that schools are integrated the churches don't have the prayer meetings which were well attended in the past.

[268] He said that while the facilities in school were inferior, the teachers were not. They were preparing students for Harvard and Yale. In social sciences and biology he was inspired by his teachers. He sang in the choir with his mother. The blacks were a close knit family. They realize the value of their role models - now there aren't any.

[293] The kids were pushed. Everyone wanted to see the kids do well.

[312] His grandfather said before he died, "Partner, you must remember in this whole movement, you're in the first round." He feels we are still perpetuating a system - we won't let it die - We are just changing the form of it. In the 60's people were honest. In the 90's they are more polite and subtle. When people come to see him at the bank, after making an appointment by phone, they are shocked to see he is black. He looks back and wonders whether it has all been worth it. Their children were not prepared for the prejudice they faced since they were in the upper section of their classes (mostly white). In the workplace, the older daughter had found in the later 80's what he expected in the 70's.

[394] He speaks of the frustration of racism not being faced honestly. When dying with AIDS Ashe said, "Having AIDS is nothing like being born black in America."

[431] He has spent one and a half years with a Task Force which works with members in the community - getting families involved and creating role models. His daughter, in an accelerated group, found she was the only black in her class. She helped some friends get into her group and they went on to go to college. They hope "tracking" will be eliminated.

[473] She said students show no respect for teachers. Black students are labeled as dumb and she gets angry and pushes them to achieve. She teaches about culture and African history so they can feel proud. It is necessary to go back to parents and get them involved.

[555] The system is not working. Rather than giving blacks equal opportunity they have been given programs to pacify. A generation of people are growing up on welfare.

[579] His father worked 3 jobs for 10-15 years. Janitor at 1st National Bank (forerunner of 1st Union), part time for Asheville Federal and, on weekends, waited on the tables at Mrs. Coggins dining room on Tunnel Road. His mother stayed home to take care of the kids. Later he and his brother helped his father - when they goofed off he gave them hell and said that someday they should be "working behind desks - not cleaning them." (He is).

[600] He was active in the Junior Chambers of Commerce. He went to Craggy Prison and saw 5 young men inmates he had grown up with. They had not been fortunate in having parents like his.

Side 2:

He is President of the YMI Board. He said a lot of time is spent talking about unwed mothers, drugs and robbery. The whole focus must change. People can't be written off any more.

[2/26] The church was the heart of the Civil Rights Movement - they aren't attending any more. The people will have to go back to basics - work one-on-one. The young people should hear some services started. It isn't necessary to go to college when they can get technical training at A B Tech.

[2/52] The groups for change are in place - the YMI, Churches, YWCA, YMCA, Salvation Army, United Way - but the sources need to be re-channeled to get to the grass roots - the lower income people must be included.

[2/82] We don't have leaders anywhere from White House to our court house. The problems confronting us are long term. They didn't get this way over night and won't be corrected over night. People get caught up in their own egos.

[2/116] She feels teachers need more training in handling the students, as the ones who used to be called emotionally handicapped are now the average. Teachers, faced with "drug babies", have to be guidance counselors. No one knows which students might have AIDS [In art class students work with tools which could draw blood.]

[2/125] He feels there is denial everywhere. If politicians can't see results in 2 years, they sweep a problem under the rug. When he was in J. C's the Oak Knoll Housing Project was built with a \$58.00 outlay and sold for \$300,000. "People have to say 'We can do it and just do it.'"

[2/139] Retired teachers feel as she does. The churches, schools, community and parents must work together.

[2/154] He hopes that the YMI will be able to bring the 25-30 city programs together. There will be more success if they are not splintered. "We have created a monster. Parents say "I don't want my kids to go through what I went through. That's a mistake. Kids need to be brought up with responsibility. They don't work in the community or have consciousness of community relations. They don't care."

[2/231] The older group of JC's were expected to be movers and shakers. Today young lawyers and bankers, doctors and lawyers don't want to get involved. She is shocked to see how few people vote. He was president of the WNC Chapter of Easter Seal Society and then on the State Board of Trustees of NC Central and, with the JC's, started the boy's club.

[2/283] She is concerned about safety. Another teacher told her about the list of gangs (in the papers see enclosed) and she, in her class, saw an 8 ball (gang name) with blood running out of it. Through her art work she sees many unhealthy expressions such as satanic worship.

[2/306] The gangs are given publicity in the paper, which gives them credibility. Hayes works with the groups.

[2/320] We must stop being polite. Get the movers and shakers around the table - get commitment from the City Council.

[2/355] Too much time has been spent on making the YMI a financial success. It is time to bring in the politicians - get some publicity and get out a drawing board.

[2/400] Companies must be encouraged to offer jobs to qualified workers. However, he has been told by boys selling drugs, "I make more that you do" - \$2-\$3,000 a week. The drug problem could have been handled in the 50's, but since it was only in the black community, no one cared. Then came Vietnam and the total community is involved. He has stood on the 2nd floor of the YMI and watched people from Biltmore Forest and North Asheville come to buy - and the police station is 1 block away.

[2/460] Many "legitimate" people are making money - for every seller picked up there are 20 more.

[2/500] Pre-kindergarten children in Jones Elementary School can't cut paper - she taught their parents. (Drug-related incapacity.) Kids could pull a gun out any time.

[2/505] She feels that the downside of the Delta House and the YMI is that people burn out. It took 40 years to get the Delta Chapter working. Sometimes she feels she is wasting her time and not getting her own art work done.