

William Williams

Side 1:

[1/1] He is a native of Oakley, having lived here all of his life. In his youth the area was semi-rural and was one of the first neighborhoods to be annexed in the late 50's.

[1/14] With the development of the Asheville Mall, River Ridge and South Buncombe High School, Oakley has become a cut-through, causing traffic congestion.

[1/23] The neighborhood organization was formed to address this problem and beautify the area (see enclosure). Residential growth has slowed and the middle class status has "slipped a notch" as companies requesting zoning changes, have been successful in bringing business into the area. It is hoped the Sweeten Creek Road will be widened to 4 lanes enabling the construction of a clover leaf to the interstate. This would bypass Oakley and reduce the flow of traffic. Land is being acquired for this and the construction should start 1998.

[1/43] Young families are taking the initiative in sprucing up the area. The community center is also known as the Murphy Center as it was built on the site of the Murphy home - Murphy and Oakley are names used interchangeably. [Murphy]

[1/56] The new school, in the midst of construction (see enclosure) is utilizing the older facilities and workers, working 7 days a week, will complete the job by August. One of the reasons he went on the Buncombe County School Board was to save the antique building (enclosed).

[1/63] When he retired as principal in Swannanoa three years ago he was asked to run for election to the County School Board. He feels he is an educator, not a politician.

[1/69] Buncombe County is divided into 6 school districts (see enclosure). Each district has an elected member with one member-at-large. They serve for 4 years with four-year staggered terms. He is a member-at-large and Bruce represents Oakley (see photo with other members 1/8/96, enclosed). The Asheville City Board of Education is appointed by City Council. [Bruce Goforth]

[1/90] He campaigned throughout the county, giving talks to groups, going house to house and distributing flyers. Of the 6 school districts he has taught or been principal in three and lives in the fourth.

[1/106] His school in North Buncombe (Red Oak School - no longer exists) had the first Federally funded kindergarten for disadvantaged children.

[1/127] When Roberson retired as superintendent and Martin took over, the middle school concept became a necessity because of increase in student numbers. He was named to be planning principal of Reynolds Middle School. He then spent 2 years in the Glen Arden School and, on the retirement of Smith, became principal of Swannanoa Kindergarten through 8. [T. C. Roberson, Fred Martin, Ralph Smith]

[1/155] He started college as a pre-med student but did not have necessary background in chemistry. In the 50's there was a crying need for teachers and, when he graduated from Appalachian Teacher's College, he was hired immediately - the pay, \$252 a month (38-40 cents an hour). Even though he loved working directly with the students, he had to move into administration.

[1/180] If he were to go into high school administration today he would want a background in educational management as well as a good working knowledge of criminal law.

[1/187] When he started in the 1959-60 school year the teacher used the lecture system. This is not very effective with little kids. There were few discipline problems.

[1/207] Today teachers have to be creative and innovative and they have the least authority they have ever had. Stating that guns are banned on campus is like waving a red flag (see enclosure).

[1/217] There is not much problem recruiting teachers in the Asheville area as 6-8 schools have a highly respected education program.

[1/242] A-B Tech picks up the slack on GED (Graduate Equivalent Degree) and takes the lead in adult education. Fifteen to twenty years ago the average adult in Swannanoa had a 10th grade education (see George Coggins, Bob Smith, Marion Stivers, Harvey Haynes, Michael Sargent tapes).

[1/250] In the mid '50's, twenty-three schools were all Union schools (1-12) but, because of the baby boomers they had to be regrouped with 6 high schools and the other schools divided into 1-8 or 1-3 or 4-8, generally ending with the 8th grade. Grades 6-7-8 and especially 7-8 are the most awkward, difficult and challenging (see enclosure).

[1/280] In the mid 50's a masterful job was done in combining Barnardsville, Weaverville, Red Oak and Flat Creek to create North Buncombe High School (see Edmonds tape).

[1/300] Swannanoa community is one of the first settlements west of Old Fort Mountain. Davidson is buried in Sky View Memorial Park Inc. Jean is a descendent (see her tape). [Samuel Davidson, Jean Webb]

[1/330] Beacon Manufacturers, the largest blanket manufacturers in the world, settled in the Swannanoa Valley and built houses for workers as did Sayles Bleachery and Martin Textile Mills in Woodfin. He went to Swannanoa to teach, which was only 7 miles from his house in Oakley. He taught 8 years, was gone 6 and returned to be principal for 17 years. [In 1990 the school was named for him (see enclosure). He mentioned this as I was driving away!]

[1/377] Carver, an all-Black school was closed when schools were unified. This was "no big deal" - "no problem," probably due to students' young age.

[1/385] Changes came out of court decisions. Paddling students who misbehaved was no longer allowed. Discipline started to slide.

[1/395] In the mid 60's and 70's if a family was to make it economically the mother had to work. Mother had to be at work at 6:30 and Daddy before that. Schools started serving breakfast before school and then lunch.

[1/419] Initially meals were not needed but children started missing meals.

[1/440] Hunt is interested in starting a "smart start" program for 4-year-olds. With 2,000 students per grade, no school system can accommodate this increase. Some churches and even some businesses provide facilities for this age group today. [Governor James Hunt]

[1/455] "Head Start" is scaled down now. It was a very successful Federally funded program for disadvantaged students. North Carolina started kindergartens in the early 70's (see Jane Craig tape). It could not be started all at once but had to be phased in on a lottery basis. Within 3-4 years the program became state-wide. It is not mandatory.

[1/486] There are good privately operated Day Care Centers and the YWCA is big in helping. There are community schools which care for children after school hours and until 6 pm. Rates vary depending on ability to pay.

[1/527] When he had to dismiss students early because of snow, he used to worry about how many children were sent home to empty houses.

[1/539] Two parents working for minimum wages are just coming up to the poverty level.

[1/550] Thirty-eight percent of the children live in single-parent families.

[1/566] When he was teaching, the teacher was the counselor. In the last 10-12 years, more emphasis has been put on counseling in general.

Side 2:

[2/1] In the beginning, counselors worked with high school students, then the middle school and now there are counselors for K-12. Kids today have more to sift through and cope with (see Stiver's tape).

[2/12] He is proud of the city and county schools. The Oakley School will be open in August. In Swannanoa the Buncombe County Community School caters to people with problems such as the pregnant teenager who otherwise would drop out of school and not receive an education. The school is located on US 70 East just before Jo Bells store (see small clipping Xeroxed).

[2/39] There is a women's correctional center with minimum security five miles this side of Highland Farms. There is also the Western Carolina Center for drug rehabilitation in this area along with the Marjorie McCune Memorial Center (a nursing home for the blind) and the North Carolina Veteran's Cemetery. Davy Crocket's second wife Elizabeth is buried in that cemetery. [Davy Crocket, Elizabeth Patton Crocket]

[2/64] Yesterday he read of the death of Mabel who was librarian in Swannanoa, and worked with the media program at Mars Hill. Her husband was an artist (see enclosed). [Mabel Moser]

[2/71] Students were bussed before the "magnet" schools were created. Parents could choose the school for their children according to the discipline emphasized (creativity, etc.) and this is to balance out the races in proportion to the percentage in their area (see enclosure).

[2/77] Both city and county schools are chartered. He lives in the city (Oakley) but this is in the county school district. It is inevitable that the two systems will ultimately merge (see enclosure).

[1/80] Originally the property base for taxes was in the city but this is not so anymore. The county would like to be part of the city because of better facilities and wider curriculum.

[2/96] Plans for bussing were devised by the inside but dictated by the outside. Asheville schools have a balance through the magnet concept. In submitting its plan, the county said that it has 6 distinct geographic areas - they can do no better. Some sections have few minorities. This is one reason the city and county don't want to merge.

[2/115] The city has a supplemental education tax, the county does not. Internally both systems have superintendents and assistant superintendents - merging would cost jobs.

[2/125] Hendersonville schools have merged and it seems to be working.

[2/131] Integration worked smoothly in Swannanoa. The Blacks missed what they had but they were few in number and there was not much prejudice at that age level. There was a lot of preliminary work done in preparation.

[2/146] For a week he was principal of an all-black school with 150 students. This was in Shilo and is now the Community Center. The school merged with Biltmore, then Estes and Oakley (see enclosure).

[2/164] When the city eliminated the slums, projects were built. This was not the way to go. It is better to have single or two-family units.

[2/174] His wife gave him Colin Powell's book My American Journey for Christmas. He highly recommends the book and feels Powell (a Jamician Black) has not shut the door on politics (running) for office - he was suggested for President (see enclosure). [Joyce Williams, Colin Powell]

[2/194] The schools have a long way to go on sex education and, while it is taught in the schools in detail, it is not mandatory and parents have to give signed consent. It should be taught in the homes and when it is not the young girls are gullible and many become pregnant. This used to be a disgrace (see enclosed).

[2/216] Family programs are being encouraged. Quayle was right in objecting to the TV program "Murphy Brown" (who had a child without being married) but came off looking foolish (see tape)

by Glenda McDowell and Minnie Jones). His niece thinks that the rerun of "I Love Lucy" is a cute new program. [Dan Quayle]

[2/239] We are going through a transition time in education. He entered the field at the right point in time for him. He grew into the job of school principal.

[2/264] There have been many charges against male teachers and they must back off from the affectionate touch which can be misconstrued. This hampers teachers. With the advent of AIDS he no longer pulls baby teeth. Teachers don't dare to give anything orally. Threat and distrust have reached the impersonal stage (see enclosure "We Are Vocal").

[2/297] He has taught three generations of students. When he first started teaching if a student got out of line he "busted his tail." The student would say "Mr. Williams, I deserved that but please don't tell Mama." With the second generation Joe would bring in his son and say, "Johnny, this is Mr. Williams. He was my teacher and he busted my tail and he will yours too." It worked effectively. Then the third generation came in and physical discipline was no longer allowed. He never punished to hurt but, without discipline there isn't going to be any learning. Even the best and most enthusiastic teachers need to use discipline.

[2/329] Parents still want their children to learn. When he had a problem he would call and say, "I know you make Johnny mind at home, now let me tell you what that rascal has done here." He gave the parent credit. This works with the little ones. Schools must come up with something besides suspension, which only works a small percent of the time. Principals must support the teachers. Counselors work with students and parents. The important thing is to get the child's trust.

[2/371] It is rare that students drop out of school to financially help their family as they did 50 years ago. Today they work to keep their cars going and have a social life. Various attempts have been tried to lower the drop-out rate - expanded curriculum, lower student/teacher ratio - but the big reason for leaving school is lack of motivation and disinterest (see Whitesides tape).

[2/413] "Drop-outs don't know color barriers." Peer counselors and tutors help in the high schools. Older students act as role models to the younger ones (see Glenda McDowell tape).

[2/488] His youngest daughter is at Gardner-Webb, a Baptist college, on a music scholarship. She will probably wind up in religious education. His oldest daughter has a family of her own. [Amanda Williams, Dianne Williams]

[2/490] When he was in the 11th grade he quit school with no intention of ever returning. One day, when he was hanging out in Pack Square, he ran into his old principal. He had been out of school 56 days, was 16 and knew it all. There were 9 in his father's family, none had finished college, Nesbitt said, "Why don't you be the first, why don't you show you can do something?" He went back and even after missing 1/3 of the year, was allowed to get back to sports and graduated. When he graduated with a teaching degree, Nesbitt offered him a job at the Oakley School. [Martin Nesbitt, Sr.]