

## **A Community Remembers**

### **Interview: Daisy Weaver**

Daisy Weaver: Middle school, especially during elementary school, we didn't venture out a lot... from my neighbor—from that neighborhood. Um, we played in the neighborhood, we went to church in the neighborhood, we went to pretty much school in the neighborhood until, of course, until high school. So a lot of what we got came from, um, what we saw on TV. Um... [phone begins ringing] did not go downtown—didn't go to the movies a lot. Um... it was... uh... I think the Booker T... was a movie theater. The Hippodrome was a theater downtown, but my—[answering machine]—I'm sorry.

Laura Browder: Oh, that's ok. We'll just wait a second.

DW: No, don't leave a message...

LB: [Laughs.]

DW: Great... [laughs]. So, but we didn't go to the movies, you know, with nine kids, going to the movies was a luxury. I think our—our outings, um... might have been when my father and mother piled us into the car on a Sunday afternoon and we maybe went to Byrd Park or went to Maymont Park and maybe had a—got to get an ice cream cone or something [laughs]. But that was—that was probably the extent of, you know, real young, of—of our outings as a family. We didn't do fast food. Um, a lot of it didn't exist, but even about the time when, you know, you start to see fast food restaurants—I remember there was a restaurant called Fat Boy's (?), which used to be on the corner of Leigh Street just across from the Bojangles. I remember that opening, um, but that's not a place we were permitted to eat. Um... we did, I know—I remember in Gilpin Court we used to walk down to the old Sixth Street Market to get vegetables...

LB: Mm hmm.

DW: Um, and my mother did permit us to go with her, that I think... when I—round about fifth grade, I remember going with my older sister and walking across the bridge to Sixth Street Market place, um, to get—to get collard greens, and that was a big deal cuz we got to do that—do that on our own. Umm... but I do remember a little bit of shopping downtown. Um, especially, I think, during high school, we used to... I remember shopping in the—in the basement of, uh, Thalhimers. Um, there was a—a bargain basement store and then would—you know, we'd shop there a little bit. But my, you know, I pretty much sh... what we did was in my neighborhood. And I'll say even after moving to Northside, even, uh—and I—just grew up on Hanes Avenue. I never ventured, I'd say... West... of Brook Road... cuz I didn't have a reason to come this way. And I didn't realize it until I—I left Richmond for about seventeen years. I never really thought about how close in I was and what a small path I followed growing up... until I came back, you know, seventeen years later and

realized, "Well, you know, I never really went west of Brook Road very much." Because even after we moved to, um... Northside and I went to Armstrong, I would take the city bus, I took the GRTC bus... which, course, took me to Broad Street, and then I'd get a transfer and take the bus from Broad Street over to Church Hill. And that was the direction that I knew. And that was the neighborhood that I knew.

LB: Did you notice your neighborhood changing very much as you grew up?

DW: Didn't change as I grew up—

LB: [Laughs] yeah!

DW: In the period of time that I grew up, I didn't notice it changing very much. Um, the only change I'd say is when uh—you know, families, um, didn't move from the projects... as—as we referred to them then—to Northside. I remember my neighbors, even, on Hanes Avenue – I knew them when they lived in Witcomb Court... Um, because you see, now, typically you would stay in the housing projects three to four years... um, either—and if your family got too big or if your income got a little bit better, you moved on. And so a number of the families that I knew in Whitcomb Court came to the Northside as well. So I knew—knew some of, you know, some of those people. But I didn't notice, um... I do remember when we first moved to Barton Heights, which I would say... let's see, I was probably... in middle school... maybe fourteen or fifteen? There were still a few white families in Barton Heights. You could count them... on one hand. Um, and they vent—eventually moved out, but that was probably the extent of the change. There was a little neighborhood market near Hanes Avenue... um, that a white man owned, had been there for years, and eventually that closed down. But that—that was the only change that I, you know, really noticed.

LB: So it was really complete—complete segregation.

DW: Well, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, for the most part. I remember in high school when we started, the integration probably started in '68... um, thereabouts. I remember my junior year, thereabout, we had—Armstrong was integrated by bringing in a few white teachers. There were no white students, but a few white teachers started to come in, um... around that time frame. And my first, um... experience with white students—I attended, I think, junior year? Which bee—would have been... my junior year of high school, which would have been around '67, I... went to—I participated in a science program at Virginia Union University, and it was a national program so students came in from other places, and we had about five students out of every about thirty to forty—but—forty or less (?) in this science program. And we had five to six white students, and that was my first [laughs]—first interaction with—with white students in '67, that was about my junior year of high school.

LB: So it was a very, very separate world.

DW: Very separate world.

LB: What are your memories of your education during this time?

DW: I enjoyed school, see, I was the nerd... kind of the nerd of the family. I enjoyed school. Um... I liked the teachers... Um, I thought that—I felt teachers cared a lot about us and wanted to see us do better. I looked up to my teachers, too. Looked up to the teachers a lot. Um... I think they had high expectations of us and, you know, we wanted to live up to them. I don't recall... at that time, um, there were, you know, a few discipline problems... um, but nothing to the extent that you hear today. Um... the class were pretty much in terms as far as the ability of students, especially in elementary school and middle school, students were not segregated necessarily by ability, you know. I—we weren't necessarily tracked as some (?), so you would have... cuz I remember, um, students helping students as well. I mean, if someone got a subject they would perhaps work without the students to help them get that subject. Um, but I re—I—I remember en—enjoying... um, my school years. [Laughs.] It was kinda fun to me [laughs], um... and I didn't know—I didn't feel that I was missing anything. Because I—that—it was... what I knew. I always had expectations that I would go to college and I don't know—for me, that was... for *me*, that was, um... I just had expectations that I would go to college. I had—didn't have—didn't know *how*... um... but, um, luckily things did work out for me. It—it was about that time in the late '60s that we did take national achievement tests, and I was a finalist of the Merit Scholar, in fact I, um... I remember getting the—the letter... saying that you're a National Merit Scholar. And there were, you know, about sixty negro kids [laughs] who had been selected for this honor. And so, we—we did, um, get scholarships, um, to go to—to—to good schools.

LB: Where did you end up going?

DW: Um, undergraduate school, I ended up going to Duke. I've, uh, I think I was pretty much—I applied to five or six places and I accepted, um... scholarship from Duke. And—and—and finished my undergraduate work there.

LB: It must have been such a different world.

DW: Oh my gosh... [laughs].

LB: [Laughs.]

DW: Ohhh my God, it *was*. It was such a—like I said, in junior high school... I mean, in—in—in high school, I started to work with white students. When I got to Duke, it was pretty much... I mean, it was really a shock. Because there were classes where, um, and we were spread out at that time, I think my class, we maybe brought in about forty to forty-five students, um... um... in undergraduate class, we were really, really spread out. So you may end up with the class by yourself without a—without another black person in there. Um, it was... it was shock. I do—I do remember one—

one of the biggest struggles for me was, um... um, freshman literature and writing. Um, I always thought I was a pretty good writer. Um... and... but I really struggled in freshman English. Um, there's something about interpreting what you [laughs]... interpreting what was read, that was kind of foreign to me. Um, and, yeah, I felt a little bit isolated. But in the dorm, luckily there were three... I had two good, um, um, minority friends in the dorm. And we pretty much stuck together, um, in the dorm. Um... but that in terms of actually being involved in things going on, that's when I really kinda, you know, really became involved. Because it was my freshman year... when I got there, course you had the Vietnam war protests on campus. My freshman year, the, um, black students participated in the takeover of the administration building and I participated in that, as well. Uh... I will tell you I was scared to death. But I did go into the administration building. Um... we had demands - things such as, uh, books in the library, um, black professors... um, we wanted to see the—and at that time, there were still maids in, um, in the dorms, who actually came and emptied the trash and cleaned your room. Um, we want—we wanted to see them treated a little better, it was—and you could imagine it, my father was a custodian, so I—I did not feel comfortable at all... to have this lady come and clean my room [laughs]. That is not—it is not something I was comfortable with, so, I—I didn't—you know, I treated them with a lot of respect, because... you know, it was the same thing my father did. I just thought, it was just—it was just different [laughs]...

LB: I can't even imagine going from a world in which, you know, you're growing up in the projects and then you are at Duke where everyone seems to have been born with a silver spoon in their mouths.

DW: Yeah. Yeah. And I—yeah, I—I felt out of place, because I, um... you know, and after freshman year, kids had cars on campus. I never had a car on campus. When I wanted to come home, I took the Greyhound bus or the Trailways bus. My father and mother would make... course, they carried me there on the first trip. Um... they would come at the end of the school year to pick me up, but there were never any visits in between. Unless, you know, I came home... um... on the bus, or, you know, happen to catch a ride with somebody. But they were always there to take me, the beginning of the year and to pick me up at the beginning of the year... Um, and I remember... my parents, you know, it was—it was different for them, too, when especial—the first time they came to Duke... um... in this, you know, I could see there was a little bit of awkwardness, but, you know, we got through it... helped to make them comfortable.

LB: Did you stay involved in the protests? Did you—did you get your demands met...

DW: We—ye---well... Uh—things changed... we could see some change... during—I did stay there in time, four years... and we did get more professors. Uh, we actually ended up getting, uh, African American Studies program. Um, we got, um... a student union. And we started to—we got space in the building where we could meet. Um, so we—we were—we were listened to. I will say that the folks at Duke at that time did make an effort to, um... um, to try to meet some of the demands. I think one

thing that helped the group out... when we went into the administration, we all expected to be put out of school. And I called—I remember calling my mother that night to tell her... that, you know, what we were gonna do. Scared her cuz she really—I don't think she had a—any idea what I was talking about, but, you know, she just kinda said, "Well, if—" you know, "if you have to—if you that's what you have to do," but we were really scared. Um, but they didn't have the name—luck—they didn't have the names of all of the kids who participated.

LB: How many were there?

DW: Um... I think—

LB: About.

DW: ... who—women—I think there were probably about thirty who actually went in the building.

LB: And—and was it forty-five students total at Duke? Forty-five black students? Or was that in your year?

DW: Uh, well... that was in—in my class, we supposedly brought in the largest class... of minorities at that time... And... I'm thinking it was probably in the neighborhood of about sixty total. At—at that time. And my class, they maybe brought in forty, forty-five or something like that. Um... but remember, now, in '68, when I went as a freshman... the first black ever to graduate from Duke, um... uh, graduated in, um... in '67. So, just one year previously was the first time they'd ever had a black student that graduated from Duke. So we were still, um... and—and then, I think in that graduating class, there—I think there were four or five. I just went to my... um... fortieth reunion, and they—they honored that... there were three of them left who—who were the first in the first graduating class. Uh, so it was just a, you know, just a year before. But pretty much throughout my freshman year, we stayed involved in protests and so forth that was happening in the—in the Durham community. Um... there were several, um... community organizers who stayed—stayed on campus. And we made a connection with North Carolina Central University which was across the, um, across town... and so we pretty much stayed involved in, you know, little protests here and there, and—and—and throughout the four-year period I was there.

LB: And you said that you hadn't done that when you were in high school, right?

DW: Right.

LB: So, when you were in high school, did you talk about civil rights issues with your friends and family?

DW: Only... I don't recall talking about it a whole lot. Like I say, I was in another world. I was happy [laughs]. I don't—I really, what we saw was on... on TV. I mean, we—we saw the protests for the South. We saw the water hoses and the dogs and all of that, but that was, like... *down south*, you know? It—we—it didn't really... mean, and it may have dawned on other people, but it didn't dawn on me as a kid growing up... that, um... that I was necessarily in that same place. In an outside world, things started to come together for me. Said, wait a minute, you know, it's—it's... it's—it's not the way it should be. And I remember my freshman year, writing a letter to the editor. I was eh—on campus. And there was an article in the Newsleader or Times Disapctch about hose crazy black students at Duke who took over administration building, I remember writing a letter to the editor to say, you don't—no, we were not crazy, we had legitimate concerns. And, um, in fact, I—I kept a copy of that letter somewhere around here, too. Um, and that was my first letter to the editor [laughs] that I have ever written, was freshman year in college.

LB: Wow...

DW: Um, so... I—um... It wasn't until then that I really, really started thinking about it. Because I was in—I—you know, I think here in—in Richmond, I was pretty much in a cocoon. Um... with... um, the—the cocoon of my family and—and the neighborhood that I was comfortable in. And, in—and school environment that I was comfortable in. You know, it wasn't until I got outside that I...

LB: What did you spend most of your time doing when you were at home in Richmond, before you moved?

DW: Um... I remember... during vacation, kids used to spend a lot of time outside. You know, during summer vacation, we'd be outside. Um... especially in, uh, in Whitcomb Court, the big thing was skating... and the pavement, and so everybody had skates and you would see long lines of kids skating and just kinda hanging out... um... outside and just—just, um, being together. Um... I got my first job as a, I think I was a sophomore... in, uh, high school, and that job was a trade girl at the hospitals. And so when you hit about ninth grade, and there up, you started to look for a part-time job. And my first job was as a... as a—a trade girl. Um, but other than, you know, as a little kid, we were usually outside. We were playing... games that kids play. Uh, and as we got older, you know, you would want a part-time job, and the extracurricular activities at school... Um, we had—that was pretty much it. It wasn't, um, I wasn't going to the movies, wasn't doing a whole lot of shopping, you know, none of that stu—I wasn't—so it was just... in the neighborhood, being with friends, and... going to school.

LB: It sounds very focused [laughs].

DW: [Laughs] Yeah, that was... that was pretty much it.

LB: Um... So, about '68, when you were graduating from high school, were you experiencing any changes in your circle of friends, or...

DW: Mmmm... Mm-mm. [Laughs]... same friends. No. Um... pretty much the same friends that I had in high school. It—it ext—didn't extend beyond... the people that I pretty much knew in high school. Yeah. Um... I remember—now, I participated in the—there was a debutante ball... which brought together girls from different schools. From Walker—well, basically Walker who were [laughs, indecipherable]. So either Armstrong or Walker. But the—I think it was the AKA... um, one of the sororities—

LB: Yeah.

DW: ... sponsored it. And so that g—you got to meet some girls from... the other school. And then—and the—and the—the—the science program that I participated in at Virginia Union, there were people from other places.

LB: Was science your main interest at school?

DW: It was. I thought I was gonna be a biology major when I went to Duke, but it didn't happen [laughs].

LB: What did you end up majoring in?

DW: I ended up major—majoring in history. And I got a—also—I also got certified as a teacher while I was at Duke. So, history and—and el—and, uh... education.

LB: So what happened after Duke? Did you come back here, was that the beginning of the seventeen years?

DW: Um, that was the beginning of the seventeen years – after Duke. I didn't come back for, about seventeen years. I worked in other places. Um... my first job was a teacher. I, um... taught middle school social studies in Maryland, and that was—I—I could... completed my grad—my gr—my, um, classroom work in December and I was able to get a position in January... in... um... teaching in Maryland, in Frederick, Maryland. And what was interesting to me at the time... schools had been integrated in Frederick, Maryland for quite some time. But all of the black schools had been closed for quite some time, so schools were integrated, eh—but they didn't have any... um... any minority—they didn't have any black classroom teachers. We had a PE teacher... we had a shop teacher... uh... I think it was... yeah, it was PE, shop,... maybe an art teacher. But there were no—none of the subject areas were taught by black... um, teachers. And I remember the Superintendent of Frederick came to Duke, he recruited on campus, and he was—it—I mean, absolutely... um, thrilled to get me agree to come to Frederick, Maryland, um, to teach—to—to help to integrate the academic program. Um, so, that was a interesting experience for me, and I did that for a year and a half... until I decided to go to graduate school. And went to

graduate school in Atlanta University. I did say after my experience at Duke, when I selected a graduate school... or a place to be in terms of graduate school, I wanted to be either in Washington D.C. or I wanted to be in Atlanta. Cuz I felt they were two very strong [laughs]—very strong black populations, and so I chose, ended up going to Atlanta—Atlanta University and con—continuing my graduate work... which is, uh, minority school [laughs]. So I—I did reverse that... um, that experience.

LB: And then you moved back to Richmond eventually.

DW: Eventually. I worked—I lived in... um... I worked in Greensboro, North Carolina, I worked in Denver... um, worked in Charlotte... and then eventually came back to Richmond.

LB: What did you notice when you came back? What were some of the changes that you noticed from when you had grown up?

DW: I... um, it was funny, because I remember saying to someone, “Well, things haven’t changed a whole lot in seventeen years” and it wasn’t terribly different... when I came back. Um... downtown was deteriorating a bit. I think Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimers were still in business but they were on shaky grounds. Uh... the neighborhood—the pattern of living was pretty much the same. I remember looking for housing in Richmond... and wanting to be in Richmond, and at the time that I came back, it was difficult to find somewhere to live within the city limits... um, one that I could afford... uh... and that I wanted to—you know, wanted—wanted to live in. I think... we’ve been in this house now... um... twenty-five years. And we had to hunt and hunt and hunt. And a lot of the places—we had a black realtor—places he took me to I did not want to live in. They—they were—they needed a lot of work... Neighborhoods were... kinda falling apart when—when I came back. Um, I’m starting to see, you know—and I think I was here... five to ten years when I started to see it change for the better. Um, so I didn’t see immediate difference when I came back, but—I—I started to see a change after—after a while, which I think is much better now... um... than it was. But the housing patterns that are still com—pretty much segregated. Um... and when did I come back here, in eighty-... what was it...

LB: ’85? ’86?

DW: It’s about ’86. ’86, ’87.

LB: Now, when you were growing up... can you tell me an example of leadership that you saw that was really good, and an example of leadership that was not so good.

DW: Hmm... Uh... leadership that was good... [laughs]. You know, my world was so small, I would look at my—my high school principal, Mr. George Peterson [laughs]... as, you know, to me, he was the ultimate leader of Armstrong, and he was the principal at Armstrong for a long, long time.



LB: And he was a principal when things were really starting to change.

DW: Yeah, he was. I—when we—when I think when they started to integrate, uh, to bring in—to integrate the teachers at Armstrong, he was principal then, too.

LB: What did you admire about him?

DW: Um, he was no-nonsense. You know? When—and he was a—he wasn't a very tall guy, he's a short little man. Um, but when you walked the hallway, you know, people knew he meant business. We did not... and, you know, 'here comes Mr. Peterson.' And if he pulled a kid out, he—he just... gained a lot of respect. Um... and the kids respected him and we looked... kinda up to him—

LB: [Laughs.]

DW: ...but I mean, we looked... but, you know, not literally, but we did—we did look up to him and, um, he just... um, garnered a lot of respect. Um...

LB: How about leadership that wasn't so good - and, you know, on any level.

DW: Uh... let's see. Um... [pauses] Trying to think, I didn't, uh... [pauses]... I didn't pay—you know, while I was growing up, I don't think I paid a lot of attention to local politics. I think I kinda took things for granted. Um... I'd—I, you know—I remember accepting that the superintendent and the school board would, you know, prefer white people. And I think it was Mr. Willette (?)... was the superintendent. H. I. Willette I think it was. You know, I'd see his name sign and I'd just assume - that's the way things were. [Laughs.] And that's the way, you know, they were gonna be. That's—as I was growing up, that's what I assumed. Um... [pauses]... I remember... at one point, I remember the crusade for voters being extremely strong organization. And having a real impact... on people who voted decisions. I remember... when their, um... their endorsements would be distributed in the neighborhood, or come to the house. I remember my parents paid attention to that. And, um... it was—it was a really strong organization. People—people paid a lot of attention it. Um... [pauses] Um, let's see, I'm not sure. Nothing else is coming to mind right now.

LB: I am still so curious about... what caused you... to start protesting in your freshman year. Whe—cuz it sounds like... I mean, to me it would be... extremely intimidating, to come from the world you came from, which, you know, you're describing a really... insular world.

DW: Mm hmm.

LB: Right? Where everyone is kind of struggling economically...

DW: Mm hmm.

LB: Everyone's black. And then suddenly here you are on this super privileged, almost entirely white campus, that's got that real...

DW: Mm hmm.

LB: ... Old-South feeling to it [laughs].

DW: [Laughs] yeah...

LB: And... you step up, with about thirty other students and really change the way things are done. Which is a... I think I pretty amazing... step to take.

DW: Well, you know, and—I don't know if it was the—the power of being with those thirty other students, because these students were extraordinary students.

LB: Yeah.

DW: And they brought a lot of leadership skills with them. And I think just being among people who had enough courage... to say something helped my courage. Now, would I have ever done it alone? I don't know. But I think being a part of the—of the—of the group that came into Duke at that time, helped—helped to push me.

LB: It must have been an amazing group of students.

DW: It—one of—I mean, it is an amazing—it was an amazing group of students, and they've done, um... you know, I think if I were to... could locate them now, would see they've done a lot of great things. And, um, we had—ended up having some judges and... uh, some lawyers, and, um, you know, people who've just done great things. Um, I did, um... now, I did, now, run for... uh, president of my dorm my junior year. Now, [laughs] which was an extraordinary achievement for me. Because the dorm still was predominantly white. Um, but the girls, um, after—it was funny, you know, bec—I think we kinda became folk heroes or something on campus after... the freshman year. And people started to talk to us more. Um... girls in the dorm started to seek me out to, you know, ask about the experience. Um, and, you know, I—think I started to gain a little respect or something from that, and—and had enough, um, confidence and courage to become an officer in the dorm, um, at that time. Uh, but, you know, I'd—I'd have to say it was being with a... group of students who were there to—we were there to support each other. And we did, like... I started to say, we went in the building... administration only had, uh, few names of the ringleaders. They didn't know everybody's name. And so we were to go through this court process and they were only going to, um... take the ringleaders that they identified... through this court process. But we all stood up. And we all gave them our names, um, and our rationale at the time was that they were not gonna kick every black student off campus. And we even had a few who joined us who were not in administration building, because we felt that if we stuck together, that they were not

gonna kick us all off campus, and so that's what we did. Um, so there was some power and support [laughs] being with this strong group of people.

LB: That's a pretty amazing story.

DW: So... uh, and they didn't kick us all off campus. We—those who wanted to stay, stayed, and finished the time.

LB: How—when you were growing up, do you remember any big turning points for you personally? Or for your community?

DW: Mmm... [pauses] um, big turning points... [pauses]... You know, I do remember... uh... I guess in high school, w—there was a little effort probably to reach out a little more... um, with integration. Um... I remember the first black students went to, I believe John Marshall, and I... I—believe I could have had the opportunity to do that because I was living on Northside, but I didn't want to. Wanted to, you know, continue with where I was. But I remember at my church, I attended West Memorial Methodist Church. And one of the things the church did was try to reach out to, um... um... the other Methodist church in the neighborhood. I remember going to youth conferences... or at least one youth conference at a church, and trying to... church I think now is on—it's off Cary Street, one of the big Methodist churches. But I remember going to this youth fellowship, and, um... we—we—would get in circle and join hands. And the little girl—there was a little white girl next to me, and she realize she was next to me, and she kinda did like this and ran around [laughs] to go somewhere else... you know, and that—that struck me, just—then, but I—like I said, there weren't many... opportunities, and I just kinda said, oh well. Um... then, you know, I—and that—those little things I'm starting to pick up now, well, you know, things are not really as... as they should be. Um... but it didn't deter me from... you know, feeling... um... it didn't stick with me a whole lot. I think, here's a sad thing, we—I felt more impacted by what I saw on TV... but, here again, it wasn't—it was somewhere else. It—it wasn't—wasn't here. And maybe because I didn't go a lot of places... um, I didn't feel it. I do remember... I remember the Woolworths and the Murphy's downtown. I do remember once... freshman or sophomore year when I'd come back to visit, I met my... went downtown with my mother, we were taking the GRTC downtown and we wanted to sit and I said, "well, come on mom, let's get something to eat." And we went to Woolworths or Murphys and she was reluctant... cuz it was a white man sitting on the seat and there was a seat that separated us. I said, "Well, we'll just ask him to move so we can sit together." And she was very reluctant [laughs]. I said to ask this man to move, and you know, by that time, you know, it's my second year or so, and at least I'm accustomed to being with people. I had no problem. But she was extremely reluctant—little things like that, I n—I noticed, you know, and realize that it did, uh, she was not as comfortable [laughs], um... doing some things that I'd started to get accustomed to.

LB: Do you remember any big turning points for your community when you were growing up here? Things that people talked about?

DW: Um... the discussion—now, I remember... [clears throat]... vaguely the, um... and I'm—I'm thinking I was away, when we had the... you know, when Richmond went through the Voting Rights Act... and we ended up with the nine council districts... and, uh... the election, I think, of Henry Marsh, but I—I believe I was away when that happened, but I do—I remember my father talking about it and there being a lot of discussion in the community about... um... the nine districts and being able to get a black majority and being able to get people elected to... elected to council. Um... I remember that. But I wasn't, um... And I think... was it—that was somewhere, what, around '67, '69, thereabouts or something like that. Um... when that—that whole discussion... came about. And the Voting Right Act. Um, I remember one thing, though, that—that really did, you know, when the schools were sent down in, um... what's that county?

LB: Prince Edward?

DW: Prince Edward County schools. Uh, cuz we never went through anything like that, but they, um... Prince Edward schools closing—which I thought was... absolutely... crazy. It was the worst thing that could have happened, and I could not, um... couldn't imagine anything... anything worse happening than that. Um... but I didn't... think that what happened in Richmond, um... I do remember, you know, I remember when we moved to Barton Heights, my brothers talking about walking a little deeper into Highland Park and having rocks thrown at them, but see, I never ventured that far [laughs]... into Highland Park as a girl. But as the boys started to venture out and they had little rocks and things thrown at them. Um... those kinds of things...

LB: I imagine with nine kids in the family, you'd have nine very, very different experiences.

DW: [Laughs] Oh... yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure we did. The three oldest ones are probably similar. The other ones, my—my younger brothers and sisters, things were very different as they went through school, than when we—when I went to school. For example, my youngest sisters and brothers, they had started, you know, busing all of—everywhere, so they even went to John Marshall. And the last three went to Thomas Jefferson. Which was completely foreign to me [laughs] at the time that I was, you know, in high school.

LB: How do you think your experiences during this time shaped who you are today?

DW: Hmm.... Um.... [pauses] Now, you know, I guess all—our—all of our experiences shape us in some way. I don't, um... I don't feel extremely... negative—I think I do have a, um, can-do attitude, I believe... we can accomplish what we need to if we work at it hard. I... believe that in seeing what my father did in raising the nine of us

and we were always—we always worked. We were never without a job. And, um, you know, it—it's a strong, strong work ethic which I've maintained throughout my—throughout my life. And that was, you know, one of the things that shaped me, I—it's difficult, even though I retired in October, it's difficult for me to not to... do something [laughs]. You know, not to contribute in some way to the community and that's just... something that's always been with me [laughs].

LB: And now you're running for the school board. Tell me about that.

DW: Well... here again, I guess it's—it's still, um, not being ready to not do something, and I don't know, you know, even when—when I went to Duke, I started to be active enough, I always... volunteered to do stuff ever since. Since that time, I just—do stuff. [Laughs] you know? Um... I—I was gonna say, I enjoyed my high school experience and I know we'll never go back to the days the way things were when I was in school, but I think school *can* be – and *should* be – a memorable experience for—for kids, at the same time that they're learning something. And I do—you know, I think the extracurricular activities that we had and the camaraderie that we had I think is important... to kids, and that they be in an environment where they are interacting with... with, um... other folks and enjoying people's company. Um, just doing things together, and doing projects together, I—I think is so important for kids. Um... I think there's a lot of stress... on kids... you know, even though we wanted to do well on our tests, the—the attention now that's paid—paid so much to standardized test... takes away from that... fun learning environment for kids. And we did—I remember doing tests in school, but I didn't feel the pressure... of doing a test as I think kids did today. When my—my daughter graduated from T.J. and her graduation class... was the first class where the SOLs—passing the SOLs was a requirement for graduation. And it seems like her first couple of years in high school, she enjoyed them. The *last* two, she felt pressure! You know, to pass this SOL, even she was a very good student, she still felt this pressure to pass this test. And so it was so different, her first couple of years where she went in to, you know, participate in the band, and to... um... be a part the—the dance group and that kind of stuff. She enjoyed it. She did her work. But then the last year... “Ahh, I gotta pass this test, gotta pass this test,” and it just took away so much... from the experience. I would love to see some more, um... opportunities for extracurricular activities built back into the schools.

LB: What were your favorites ones when you were a student?

DW: [Laughs] I enjoyed every club that I could [laughs]. Um... and—but my most productive one I spent most time, I was the editor of the school—of the yearbook. Um, that took a lot of my time. But, you know, I joined—I mean, the French club, the... the, um... um, the math club – every club they had, I tried to join [laughs]. Uh... and I—and, you know, the—the, um, the drama club, all of that stuff, I just loved it. Um, and I—even though I was taking the GRTC bus all the way across town, so quite often I'd go to school would be dark, and come home, be dark, because I stayed after school to do something. Um.... But, uh, I really enjoyed being editor of the yearb—

and the student council. I—I was an officer of student coun—student government, as well.

LB: Are there things that you'd like the generation of kids growing up in Richmond today to know?

DW: Hmm... Um, hmm. [Laughs. Pauses.] I think, uh, gosh, I'm s—I don't know, what would I like generation today to know... [pauses]... I'd like them, I guess... [pauses]... I mean, you know—I think if any kid could appreciate or—I know it's difficult for kids to appreciate... um... the education that's being offered to them today. But somehow—you—they gotta make the connection. I wish they could have an appreciation for what they're getting today in—in terms of how it's gonna help them in the future. We live... so much at the moment sometimes that we don't know what... was—before us. Um, can... really be helpful in the future when we—we stop and think about it. But, you know, that's just maybe a product of—of youth. Um... I'd like to see kids—and, you know, I'm still amazed today when I talk to people—who tell me that the kids—there're kids who have not ventured outside of their neighborhoods. That amazes me today. Um, and I think opportunities for a kid to interact with... different people and a diverse population of the city would be an extraordinary thing. Um, I think our schools—our school...we're pretty much back to s—segregated school system. And, um, I—I think that's unfortunate because I think diversity is good. Um... and so I—you know, kids need to know that there is a world beyond the four or five blocks that they live in. And it's there for them. Um... and they can take advantage of it.

LB: Do you think that there are things that we as a community are in danger of forgetting?

DW: Mmm... [pauses].... Well...[pauses]... uh, I don't know, f—I don't know. I—you know, I kinda think things go in cycles. I am starting to see—I don't know how long I, you know—what's... how it's... gonna change—but I'm starting to see... where I grew up, Northside, I'm starting to see a few white families move in. And I'm starting to see the neighborhoods become a little more diverse in areas where they weren't. Now, if that trend—I don't know whether or not that trend will continue... um... but I kinda hope it does. Uh, and this here—I think it's people at all income levels throughout the community, um... touching at some time, at some point or another... Uh [pauses]... I think... when I grew up, even though—even growing up in the projects, you might have had—even in the projects you had some people who were very poor [laughs] and some maybe a little better, so you saw differences. And then even in Barton Heights, you, uh... teachers were even—I lived in Barton Heights, a lot of our teachers lived... in, um... down near the Battery Park area. So we weren't, you know, that far apart... kinda in the neighborhood, but, you know, here again, you could see—y—you saw different incomes and... people living together in—in the same neighborhood, and—and—and learning, you know, to be a... learning to interact with each other. Um... so I, you know, I—I think diversity is good. And... and,

uh, I'm hoping that, uh... the community will continue to become diverse and people will have opportunities to get to know each other a little better.

LB: Cuz sometimes it seems like it's becoming more diverse, and then sometimes less so...

DW: Ee... well... in this block where I live today, um... the neighborhood—I could see—like I said, I think things go in cycles. Sometimes you see this neighborhood was... um, the maj—it was majority white when I moved in... um... but it—then it kinda—the block kinda went through cycles, majority black... and now I see it's turning over again. So, you know, things kinda do go in cycles, um... so, like I said, I don't know what the trend will be, but I—I kinda like the urban area and I think the economically, economically (?) a lot of people coming back to the urban areas. Um, but we need to, you know—if—if there're good jobs here and if there're good schools here, um, we—we'll see people come back into the... urban area, but we gotta have good schools.

LB: What do you hope to accomplish on the school board?

DW: Um, I think there's—having good schools is economic—economic devolvement (?)—[laughs]... project. Um... I think, I—as my background also as the city's budget director for—for a while back, and—and my background was in budgeting, and I did listen to the discussion in the last period of time, I thought the conversation had just reached a—a low where people were talking across each other and not listening to each other. And I know in the budget development process it takes a lot of talk and a lot of listening, and it takes early on in the cycle, and, you know, I thought that they, um... uh... my approach... to building coalitions and—and so forth would be helpful, that's one main reason I decided to enter the race. Uh.. and—it—um... and I—you know, and I just seen recently, too, that they decided to start talking to each other again, so that's a good thing [laughs]. That's a good thing, but I would like to, um... I would like—like to work toward um... and—I, you know, and my—my objections are probably are not very different from anybody else because we always want the greatest schools in the world, but I think we need to be a little... we need to be creative and—and—and a little more flexible in terms of, um... maybe even scheduling, I think the s... seven to three o'clock timeframe or whatever it is, kinda crazy. We need some flexible scheduling based on today's society and how parents work and what kids needs are. I think, um... kids—even when—kids are out of school two and three o'clock, then they—they gotta be somewhere until the parent come home and so we're using a lot of partnership... operations now on after-school activities. It could—though that time... um... could be used, I think, a little different in terms of academic progress, and you—but you still have to weave... extracurricular and some, um, fun things in. Um, but it—I think there's, you know, schedule—maybe some more flexible scheduling—

LB: Mm hmm.

DW: ... that kinda thing, some creativity... in—in—in, uh... how things are offered to kids. Um.... So, I've—I—you know, that's one of the things, creativity. And I think the good things that are happening in school, you know, where we are getting good results, I'm not sure that we... that we value a way to properly understand how to use th—those results and... and—and—and put them across the city. Um, not just in one place, I think it's ridiculous that people have to... um... almost scramble to get in the school if they want to get in. It should—it's gotta be [laughs]—it's gotta be across... the city.... I, you know, personally—and—and this is just a personal thing, I—would never push for this--like neighborhood schools. I enjoyed being able to go to school close to my home and if every school close to your home offered what you want, you'd go there. You wouldn't have to scramble and feel so pressured to...

LB: It is a crazy scramble.

DW: Get to a particu—do you have school-age kids?

LB: Yeah, I mean, we live in Church Hill and we send our kids to John B. Cary.

DW: Mm hmm.

LB: And... we pulled my daughter out from middle school, and, you know, we—we loved Cary... when she was there and when my son was there. But we noticed when she was in a different setting, she was so used to taking those SOLs, that she resented having to think beyond fill-in-the-blank.

DW: [Laughs]

LB: And that really bothered me.

DW: Yeah... I was, uh, like I said, when I noticed a different when my daughter—last couple years when she had to focus on those SOLs. And I was very disappointed that she did not get... um... I would like to have seen her get more writing...

LB: Yes.

DW: ... skills. That's one thing I—I would love to see—kids write more. The, um, communication skills are just not there, in my opinion.

LB: I know.

DW: And... some of it has to do, I know, with technology and the way we communicate, but I... would love to see more writing.

LB: I agree.

DW: Um... um...



LB: And, you know, we're—we're really hoping to get my daughter into Open High, or Community in a year, but it's—it's a scramble!

DW: It's a scramble. Yeah. Yeah, you—and, you know, I just—I—we shouldn't have to scramble like that. I had to sc—and just—my daughter graduated... um... 2004... And at that time they had magnate schools and so I was able to get her into John Marshall. She was accepted at Community... um, but... here again, even getting her into community, I had to... go... practically beg somebody. You know, the girl was qualified, but you have to... go through this.... At that time... I completely didn't understand the process [laughs], you know? What?! [Laughs]... This is crazy.

LB: I know, and you were *inside* it, almost, you know? As—as someone who was so deeply involved with the city.

DW: Yeah. But, still I had to—it's almost... it feels as though... you have to make the right contact... to get where—and I don't think it should be that way.

LB: No.

DW: I think you—I think we should understand what the process is... and everyone should have the opportunity... um, to get the child where they, you know, feel is best for them. It—ideally, it would be [laughing] what's in their community. But, um, if it's not, we should at least understand [laughing] what the process is.

LB: I know... Well, Daisy, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you would like to add?

DW: Gosh, Laura. Um... I can't, uh... can't think of anything. Uh... I hope I've been helpful.

LB: You've been super helpful, but I'm gonna ask you one more question. When Zwelethu comes to take your portrait, is there a location... that... meant something to you when you were growing up here—

DW: Hmm...

LB: ...where you would like to be photographed?

DW: Hmm. [Laughs] You knew it would be the old Armstrong building, but no, that's all burned—it's burnt up, now.

LB: You could still be at the—[laughs]... at the location.

DW: [Laughs] yeah... Gosh, um... [pauses]... Uh, I—I don't know. I—you know, I keep—I keep going back and say, y—I guess my childhood was very insular. Cuz I wanna go back to... where I lived [laughs], where I went to school [laughs]...

LB: That would be perfect.

DW: Uh...

LB: Any of those places.

DW: Any of—yeah.

LB: Well, thank you so much... This has been... super helpful.

DW: Ok... Well, I hope so. I don't know...

LB: Oh, absolutely.

DW: When you think of all the experiences...[indecipherable].

LB: But you know, I mean, it sounds like you were—you were here at a time when things were changing... a lot.

DW: Yeah... Yeah, I—I suppose they were and, you know, and as a kid, you know, well, it's—I don't know... Maybe not one of those... perceptive persons [laughs].

LB: I wouldn't say that.