Robert Korstad: ...your family, where you were born, something about their background.

Herman Lodge: I was born in Midville, Georgia. It's on the western side of Burke County. I've been in Burke County all my life except a couple of years in the Army and four years in school. I guess maybe my family, my mother was uneducated. She's was probably third grade but she read quite a bit and was gifted enough. My father was a carpenter and a minister. I lived in Waynesboro most of my life. I stayed home with my mother until I went off to college.

One of the things is, I guess what would sort of drive my mother, I'm the only kid in the family who finished high school. She insisted that one of her children would finish high school. I was that one. Also, in order for her to send me to college she did a lot of washing, laundering clothes at home to help pay for my college education. I guess the reason for some of that too probably, reasons that motivate and drove me to I guess to try to become a leader is that one that in the early forties I was real young and there were hobos. We lived near a railroad and hobos would get off on that end of town and they would come to our house and ask my mother for food. They also wanted to work but we had a large family, quite a few boys, so she told them that she didn't need anybody to work. All of us had assignments that we had to do. Anyway, she would tell them if you are hungry, if you could wait until we all would have supper or dinner or whatever it was,
they could eat with us. And she did. She would sit them down to the table and feed them. We would all eat together. Then when they got ready to leave they would still insist that they wanted to work, because they didn't have any money to pay her with, and of course my mother insisted that still they didn't have to help us do any chores. But anyway, she would say, "Well you don't have any money to pay but if anytime you can help someone and you help them, that's my pay." That has sort of drawn me to do a lot of things probably. Another reason I guess, one of the main reasons I am on the county commission today is because of the fact that when I was in high school I had two semesters of general science and one semester of physics. I went to college down at Fort ( ), state school. I was going to major in physical education. All of a sudden I discovered that I had to take all these courses like zoology, bacteriology, chemistry, kinesiology, and all the ologies. I was not equipped. But anyway, I would go to chemistry, the chemistry lab and work all night with experiments to discover what element was in the tube that the professor gave me. I would stay up all night and the next morning I would go to class and that professor would tell me that there were none of the elements in that test tube that I had written down. They were not in there. It was frustrating. It was one of the most frustrating experiences I ever had. But anyway, I was able to get it out. I made a promise to myself that if I ever got back to Burke County I would insist and fight and do everything to
see that no child would have to suffer when they go to college or suffer in life like I had to suffer. I really did. So those I guess are the two incidents in my life that motivate or drive me to doing things. Then I came back and I started trying to do certain things and I found that it is real difficult to do things from the outside. You got to get somebody on the inside. If you get on the inside you can always make a change and make a difference. But the outside there are people who will just ignore you and tell you a bunch of lies and you never accomplish anything that way. So I guess those are the reasons that I was motivated and tried to become a leader in the community.

RK: You said you were born and lived for awhile in the western part of the county on a farm out in Burke County?

HL: No, we never did live on a farm. I don't even remember living there. My mother said we moved here after I was six months old. Believe it or not, this is the street we moved on when we first came here. I was born in 1928 so this must have been 1929 when we moved over here. She said we lived up the street but I don't hardly remember that either. I remember living on Quaker Road and that's really where I remember growing up at. I'm really about three doors down from where I was raised.

RK: Did you know any of your grandparents?

HL: No.

RK: Were you a younger child?

HL: I am the youngest.
RK: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

HL: I really had two half brothers and two I guess whole brothers. The key thing about it, my mother had two boys and my father had two girls before they got married. Then we had two brothers and one sister. We have one adopted sister in the family.

RK: So you grew up in a pretty big family. You said you had chores and things. What kinds of things did y'all do around there?

HL: Back in those days the boys were responsible for the wood. We had to cut wood and we had a well and we'd have to draw water. Monday was wash day for my mother so we had to build a fire around the wash pot and put water in it. The garden was our chore. We had a cow. This was all in town. We would have to take the cow out to graze. The girls would help with the washing and help with the cooking and that type thing. Of course all the boys learned to cook though. All of us were fairly good cooks.

RK: Was that something that she insisted on?

HL: I don't know, I really can't tell. I know when I got in high school just about all of my brothers and sisters were gone except one. I was protective of my room and I didn't want anybody to go in it so I would make my own bed and keep my own room clean. I guess that's where we learn a lot.

RK: What did your father do? Did he work as a carpenter in town?
HL: Yes. Of course, I would help him during the summer months and sometimes after school with the carpentry.

RK: Did you have other aunts or uncles or other members of your family that lived near you?

HL: No, not around here. Most of them were from down at Vidalia, Georgia.

RK: Is that where your family was from?

HL: No, my mother is from Jefferson County, north of here. My father is from down around the Midville section. We trying to track out roots after the movie, the TV series. What we found is that there is a church down near Midville called Bar Camp which when I went to the archives in Atlanta and looked at some of the records, we looked at the record of Bar Camp. They had a membership roll for Bar Camp. In this membership role it said that the churches mixed. This was even during, evidently was immediately after slavery, I don't know when it was because it didn't have a date on it. But there were several Lodges on it. Then we looked at some history and there was a large plantation owner down in that section named John Lodge, the same as my father's name. So we assume that our name came from this plantation owner. It is sort of interesting, when I go to Atlanta I usually go to look in the archives and try to ramble through some of that stuff.

RK: Yes, it's interesting. I wonder what growing up in Waynesboro was like. What was a small town in Georgia in the
thirties and forties like? What stories do you remember about your childhood and what feelings do you have about what that was like?

HL: I don't know much about race relations because when you are growing up in a segregated situation you very seldom come in contact. The only time I came in contact with whites is when we went out to work in the afternoon for some of them. Basically that's all the contact. We do know this, one of my classmates in high school had a mother who worked at the white high school. Their equipment was much, no, not much, it was tremendously better than ours. Our problem was, and I have problems with this thing today, every little town and there are several towns in Burke County, had a high school. There was only one high school in Burke County for blacks. The black kids in high school were not transported. Therefore in my class, even though the population was about sixty or seventy-five percent black, we had only seventeen kids finish high school with me. Black kids were not transported. Burke County had eight hundred and thirty-two square miles in it. Midville from here to the west is twenty-four miles. Girard to the southeast is about thirty or thirty-five miles. You had a tremendous problem. Sometimes we'd have, in my class I think there were about five kids who came from these other towns would board to go to school or live with someone to go to school.

It was sort of, I don't know, disgusting I guess, when you look at what someone else had. You see you're human being and then you
become frustrated.

RK: So you were aware. You and your classmates knew that you weren't getting equal, fair shake?

HL: Yes. Like I say, when you go to these high schools and you see this home economics or this chemistry lab and it's totally different from yours, it is just like walking out of a shack where you are and then walking into the Waldorf Astoria in New York. That's how vastly different it was. I guess that gave all of us a problem.

RK: So most of your life as a child was spent at home and in school, were there particular things that you did in school, sports or other kinds of activities?

HL: Back in those days, you know basketball - that was another thing too - we played basketball on the outside. There were about six gyms in the county. The first one that blacks played in was out at Boggs Academy. It was owned by the Presbyterian Church. They built a gym out there. That was the first one. Then they finally built one at what is now Blake Elementary School and Waynesboro High School. They built one there.

RK: Were there particular teachers or like minister people in the churches or anything who had an influence on you?

HL: Yes, there were several teachers. I just came from a funeral for one of the teachers. She was ninety-two years old. Tuesday I went down to Dublin. Some of her influence I guess was
that she tried to teach me English. She was sort of, I want to say she was a "nut", but she forced us to learn about Shakespeare and Browning and all those guys. She tried to culturalize I guess rural kids, kids in poverty. She was trying to culturalize us. We had to read *Midsummer Night's Dream*, all that good stuff. She would force us to memorize poetry. I guess she had a tremendous influence on me. Another teacher who had a tremendous influence on me was my fourth grade teacher. She's probably the only teacher that let us call her by her first name. Most teachers in those days wanted you to use their last name. We would always call her Miss Sarah. But what happened was she would tan our rear end and force us to read. Back in those days, young folks don't know nothing about it a blue horse tablet, but a blue horse tablet had, that was the calculator of the day because it had the multiplication tables on the back of it. She would force us. One of the requirements before we got out of the fourth grade, we just about had to sing that multiplication table from one to a hundred.

She had a tremendous amount of influence. She would, like I said, force us to read and she would, like I said, tan our rear ends too. I think it helped. I kid her all the time now. She's fairly old. Every time she sees me, we meet anywhere in the middle of the street or at the bank or anywhere, she hugs all her students. She had a tremendous amount of influence on me.

RK: So is the school and the community you feel was kind of a supportive, I mean, the teachers were really required to look
out for you?

HL: Back in those days, Burke County being so large, in the black schools since they were not transported, they were about sixty one- and two-teacher schools. They were scattered all over the county. Most of the time they were connected with a church and a society hall. You probably don't know what a society hall is. Anyway, the society hall was actually the insurance for blacks because blacks couldn't buy Prudential or Mutual of Omaha or all that good stuff. Anyway, what they did, the folks would pay a small amount of money, fifty cents a month, something like that. If they got sick, there was a little money. What they would do, the community would, the people who belonged to that society, would, say if the mother was sick, the woman in the house was sick, they would go there and cook and clean and take care of the children. Then if the father got sick and if he was a farmer then the men would go and help gather his crops or help plant or help do everything else. So you cared for each other. You helped each other. That was the spirit that this was. Of course, the religious side of the churches was there too but I think, most folk would really go there sometimes to socialize. In our doctrine in my church, I'm an African Methodist Episcopal, in our doctrine it says that the church is more social than it is religious. Basically it is, to be honest with you because you go there to meet folks and you have a tendency to socialize. Of course we assume that back in those days people went to church and
stayed all day and it gave them an opportunity to find out what was going on in the community and going on with each other. We didn't have no telephones or no televisions. So it really was a social event. Most of the times they would bring food and they would always eat and they would talk all day. Then the school side of it, most of the time schools were, these one or two schools had the teacher living basically somewhere in that community. Then the parents would take care of the teacher and they would provide the wood for the heat and provide supplies or whatever that teacher needed to work with in that community. So it was really sort of a community based thing which gave families close contact with schools, church and society.

RK: When you were in high school and started getting ready to finish, you were saying that you were the first one in your family to finish high school, what were thinking about? This would have been during World War II I guess.

HL: It was after I finished in 1947.

RK: Did you know much about what was going on in the war? Did that have any kind of influence?

HL: Well, it really didn't have that much impact. I had a brother who went in service. I think probably the greatest impact was President Roosevelt. I think he sort of turned things around for really poor people. When you get all that CCC Camp. You can sort of relate to it and when Mrs. Roosevelt named Mrs. Bethune, everybody knew about this and this was a tremendous boost to
morale of blacks. Another thing about our schools too is that we could find out, not into today, we knew about each other. We knew where we came from. Our teachers insisted that you know about what is a ( ) or Jesse Owens. They'd drill you on these things so it would give you a motivating factor to advance. This is the thing we find today, our kids, our black kids don't understand their heritage. It is difficult for them to visualize like, up there at the courthouse you go by and see a marker with the fellows who died in World War II. They got a list and then another list over here and then they put "colored." When they renovated the courthouse somebody asked me if they were going to put it back. I said "Yes, we're going to put it back." "That doesn't offend you?" I said, "No, it doesn't offend me. It is not going to wipe that being called colored out of history." I said, "It's still there so why not let the kids see that they were not always called blacks or Afro Americans or whatever you want. They were colored." You don't just erase it. You let them know how difficult it was for their mothers and fathers or grandparents.

RK: So with your teachers, you studied current events and what was going on? You were studying black history then too?

HL: Yes. There was always a class in current events. You didn't get by without it. Certainly you knew what was going on. During the war, you know, you just about kept up with everything anyway.
RK: Did any part of the New Deal and Roosevelt and the changes that took place, you mentioned the CCC camps, did other things get down into Burke County?

HL: I think a lot of things. I think part of the courthouse was built with CCC. It was probably part of that New Deal job improvement program.

RK: That would be ( ) work progress and some of those groups that worked on the courthouse.

HL: I think those things did trickle down. I think a lot of blacks got fairly decent jobs out of it.

RK: So you did have some sense that the federal government could intervene and improve the quality of people's lives?

HL: Yes I think so and I think this is why probably most, of course sometimes I think the Democrats take advantage, this is why I think most blacks in the South are Democrats because of the fact of Roosevelt and the New Deal.

RK: When you were finishing high school, what did you think you were going to do with your life? What kind of hopes and aspirations did you have?

HL: Since I had worked with my daddy, I thought I wanted to become a contractor. I went to ( ) and I was going to major in industrial education. But when I got there they had, I guess, disbanded or took it out of the curriculum. I guess that's why I ended up in physical education. I wanted to be a contractor. I wanted to put things together. I think what amazes me sometimes
is I look at a building and see how this guy, the first thing in architect does is a drawing and put it on paper. Then some guy comes along that is a contractor and sometimes I say read the guys mind. Because a lot of times I find the architect didn't put it on paper. He put something that you can't build. It is just about impossible. The tape or the rule does not come out to what he says it is. I think it is sort of fascinating that the architect in his mind thinks something and then the builder or contractor tries to put it together. To me it's fascinating. That's what fascinated me about it. But like I said, by accident I got into physical education.

RK: So you didn't have any desire to leave here when you were young? Did you think about that or moving to Atlanta or moving to the city?

HL: I never did. I know once I worked at the V.A. for about thirty years. I was what they called corrective therapy. In the Army I was in physical reconditioning. What they did during World War II is they took physical educators and taught them some skills in rehabilitation. So this is basically what I was doing. Anyway, people would ask me, "Why don't you go to a large city?" I had an opportunity to go to, when I got hired, to Downing, Illinois, the V.A. hospital there and to New Orleans to the V.A. hospital and to Leavenworth, Kansas to the hospital. I turned them all down so the one came up in Augusta. I started working in Augusta. But I haven't had any desire to leave. Like I said, I
had made myself a promise if I ever got back here, I would try to help correct the situation.

RK: What was your college experience like? Were there people and things there, events there and people there that had a big influence on you?

HL: There were several but I don't think that they had that much influence. There was one particular professor. He was a professor of education. He called his roll by a memory. He had forty kids in the class and he knew your name and your hometown and all that. He never walked in there with a book or a roll book or any kind of book. I played football so he told all the football players, he said "Y'all stay gone too much. Y'all need to come. We need to have a tutoring session." He would take us to his home. There were about six of us. He would take us to his home in the evening, at night and study with us and tutor us. He probably had the greatest impact. Somebody who is this smart, but yet he had time to take with a bunch of five or six dumb kids. He didn't want to see us fail. I'm sure that's the person in college who probably had the greatest impact.

RK: Were most of the other students, young people from - was it an all men's school?

HL: No, it was co-ed.

RK: Were most of the students from small towns in rural Georgia too?

HL: Most of them were from rural Georgia. There were some
from Atlanta and Savannah and Macon. There were a lot from Macon because Macon is not but twenty-eight miles from it. They were pretty well scattered out.

RK: I am interested in after the war whether there was starting to be some thinking that changes needed to take place in race relations in the South. Did the impact of the war and soldiers fighting and kind of all of the discussion about freedom and democracy, did you talk about that in college? Do you remember?

HL: Not really. Immediately when I got there most of the males were older than I. They had been in service and they were on the G.I bill. Of course, I think the G.I. bill probably educated more blacks than anything else. It probably had the greatest impact on the leadership of the black community. Even around here they had courses. They had veteran teachers and actually veteran teachers who would help. They called them veteran teachers. They were Ag teachers who helped the farmers. They had veteran programs where people could learn brick masonry and all the building trades. So this had a tremendous impact. I doubt you found a veteran around here after then who really didn't have a fairly decent job or a skill they could work with.

RK: So that was really important to the kind of economic changes for people.

HL: I think it helped the race relations too I think. You find that you had educated somebody. That's real important to
educate someone and give them a skill so they become more helpful to the community. People recognize that when you've got something to contribute to other people. So I think it helped economically and it helped with race relations.

RK: When did you start college?
HL: 1947.
RK: So you went straight through?
HL: Yes for four years.
RK: You lived away from home?
HL: I lived at ( ).
RK: You majored in physical education and what did you do when you got through?
HL: I got drafted. I finished school June 6 and July 8 I was in the Army.
RK: You hadn't anticipated that, had you?
HL: No, I had already accepted a job. Maybe it was a good thing it happened. I probably wouldn't have ever ended up back here.
RK: Where did you go and what did you do in the Army?
HL: Like I said, I was in physical reconditioning. Really I didn't do nothing much but travel. I went in the Army in Atlanta. Then I went over to Fort Jackson for a couple of weeks. I went to Fort Knox and stayed up there eight weeks, left there and went down to San Antonio, Texas. I stayed down there twelve or fifteen weeks. I went up to Washington, D.C. to Walter Reed and that was
my horrible experience.

RK: Why was that?

HL: What happened was, it was segregated. The work down at Walter Reed, you worked together but the living quarters were, the white soldiers lived down on the reservation at Walter Reed. Black soldiers lived out at Silver Springs, Maryland. It was nice out there though. There was a college that was closed and we had dormitory type rooms and big space. The dining room was like a college type dining room overlooking the hills of Maryland, big glass window. But it was horrible. One morning we were there and it was snowing. It snowed. The first sergeant was black and he woke us up one morning about five o'clock and we got out in the snow. I guess most of the folk who were at Walter Reed had some college training because there were X-ray technicians and dental technicians or whatever you had. The first sergeant got us out of formation that morning at five o'clock in the snow. He said, "The next time I hear someone complaining about what white boys got and you don't have, I will call the MPs and say you are instigating a race riot." That really got me. That morning I went down to personnel in an assignment and I told them, I said, "I gotta go. Send me anywhere you want to send me. It doesn't make any difference." I said, "but I've gotta leave here." So they did. They cut orders to go to France. I went to Europe. Anyway the colonel over there was white. He called me in and he said, "If you have any problems, let me know and we'll try to keep you here.
You are a good soldier." I said, "Yessir, I know that. But I want to do my two years and I want to get out. If I stay here I'm going to do two years somewhere in the stockade or something because of the fact. . ." He immediately said, "Well I understand."

RK: So what were your feelings about all this?

HL: My feelings about it, it was sort of a peculiar thing that here you are in the nation's capital and I had gone into service in basic training, you were integrated.

RK: Those units were integrated?

HL: Yeah.

RK: Because the Army had been desegregated by then.

HL: Yes. But then you get to Walter Reed in the nation's capital and you are about five or six miles from the capital and here you are in a segregated situation. Then you get someone to tell you if you complain he's going to call the MPs and say you are instigating a race riot. It didn't set well.

RK: So you were complaining, you and the other soldiers were.

HL: Yeah, I guess we were. You've got all this fine, great stuff down there and you don't have it. You ought to complain. I think you should. I tell people now, "If you become satisfied, you're in trouble. They need to put you in the ground." But it did. It bothered me. Like I said, I went to France.

RK: What was that like?
HL: It was a fairly good experience. We were during the Korean conflict. We were living in an old garrison that the RAFA bombed during World War II. We had the capability of putting up ( ) huts but the Frenchmen wouldn't let us put them up, wouldn't let the Army put them up. But anyway, I was over there and we had millions of dollars of equipment at the hospital. We were a sixty station hospital. We literally put that thing in operation. They had anything from a needle to X-ray equipment. You just name it. It was stored in a warehouse. We could throw the thing up. It was tents. You could have an operating room. Of course, it would be a tent but all the capabilities were there to operate a hospital.

RK: Was being in France and away from the kind of segregated...

Tape 1 - Side B

HL: ...down at Bordeaux. Basically you had, I don't know why the red light district was segregated. I met one excellent family over there. I would get tired of going to the red light district because you couldn't set down at a bar and order a beer or drink or something or some lady would proposition you. You get tired of it. You get tired of somebody coming up. We could wear our civilian clothes over there. I would get on the bus and go into town and before I get to the red light district I'd get off.
One day I wandered into a bar and it was real quiet. A lady came over and I had a hard time explaining to her what I wanted. I finally got it. I would go back there because it was a nice, quiet, peaceful place. About my third visit she came by there and she could speak English better than I could. So anyway, she would start asking me about the United States, about Chicago, the gangsters. I guess she saw too many movies. She would ask me if everybody had a refrigerator. No, everybody's not rich as they show it to be over there. But we developed an excellent relationship. She had brought her husband out. She must have had a kid then about twelve years old. Her husband's mother was living with them too. This was a combination hotel, restaurant and bar. So what we would do, they invited me to Christmas dinner. We had Christmas dinner at midnight. I went there to dinner. What I would do is take this condensed milk and I'd take it down there and make these ice box pies. Most of the desserts in France don't have nothing but sugar in them. I would take it down there and fix it down there. We developed a real good relationship.

RK: You got to see a little different aspect of France from being able to do that.

HL: Yeah, I really did. Another incident was sort of comical. We had been up to Verdunne to play football. We got put out. It was a tournament type thing. We got put out and we had a couple of extra days and one of the guys said, "Okay, let's
everybody pool their money and stop and stay in Paris a couple of days." We did. We pooled our money and divided it up equal so everybody would have some. We went in this hotel and I thought I had perfected my French. I said, "Donnez une chambre for me s'il vous plait." That lady looked at me and said, "Now what do you want?" That was another real great incident. What I found out over there though, English is required for most of the high school students. That's why you didn't have any problem when you walked into a hotel or restaurant.

RK: So you came back? Was that your last assignment in France in the Army?

HL: Yes.

RK: So what did you do after that?

HL: I got out and I taught school for one year and then I got this job at the V.A.

RK: Did you come back to Burke County?

HL: Oh yeah, I came back to Burke County. I got bored. I even drove fifty-two weeks I think. But I couldn't sit around. One of the things is, none of the people I knew were here after being away for four years and in the Army two years. That's six years. That's a long time to lose contact. You are around here and you don't know what to do. You don't know anybody your age. I was just miserable.

RK: You were teaching school here?

HL: No, up in Greensboro, Georgia. I was there for one
year.

RK: That's up in a different county, right?

HL: Yes, that's up in Greene County. It is about thirty-three miles from Athens.

RK: You didn't like that job?

HL: Not necessarily. I like kids. But the pay - see I was making twenty-four hundred dollars. I came to the V.A. and I made thirty-four hundred dollars. That was the difference. It was a matter of money with me.

RK: You started in 1954 or something at the V.A.?


RK: Did you live in Augusta?

HL: No, I lived here. I commuted here. The reason I commuted was I wanted to buy a house but there was really no place to buy a house. You could buy one but it wasn't worth the money they wanted.

RK: In Augusta?

HL: In Augusta, yeah.

RK: So did you still have family here?

HL: Yeah, my mother was here and most of my brothers and sisters were here. We had really only one brother to leave and he's in Atlanta now. But the rest of my brothers stayed here.

RK: What kind of job did you have at the V.A.?

HL: I was in physical reconditioning.

RK: Helping soldiers and everything?
HL: Yes.

RK: And you stayed at that job for how long?

HL: About twenty-nine years.

RK: You made that commute every day?

HL: Every day. I built a home. My home was one of the first homes that was built under the direct loans through the V.A. The reason that the V.A. created this was that blacks were having a difficult time securing loans. They did it especially in rural areas. What you had to do was go to the bank and ask the bank to give you a loan. They said no, we ain't going to lend you nothing. You knew that before. You'd ask them to give you a loan so you could send it to the V.A. They'd give you the loan.

RK: How did you find out or know about stuff like that? I am interested in how that information got out.

HL: Most of the information was given to you when you were discharged. Of course, you hunt for things. I think that is why most of the vets in World War II went to school because of the New Deal. They had been home, started businesses, bought farms with the G.I. bill.

RK: The military was good and in the end had some benefits?

HL: Had a lot of positive effects on the black community.

RK: You too?

HL: Yes, one thing it gave me a skill that I could use that I could make more money with. I was able to buy a house at three percent interest.
RK: Can't complain about that.
HL: I don't think I would.
RK: The V.A. then was integrated too?
HL: Yes. Well, I was the first black person who worked directly with patients. The V.A. was just starting to integrate those programs. They had brought some blacks from Tuskegee up to Augusta V.A. It was a fairly decent experience but you could sense the, I don't know whether you would call it the segregated attitude or what kind of attitude they had, whites would have against us. Like when I first went there my supervisor was an M.D. from somewhere up in Wisconsin. His name was Zintek. He introduced me to my supervisor and he said, "You reckon this is going to work?" He said, "Yessir, I think it will." He walked out the door and said, "It better work," and just kept going. But he was real good if you did your work. He'd fuss at you. But he would help you. In fact, some days he would tell the secretary, "Tell everybody let's stop work at three-thirty." So we would stop and his wife would bake a cake and we would sit around and talk. I thought it was real good because it gave you a chance to learn everybody in the department. There were about forty people. It gave you an opportunity to mingle and talk to folks that you were working with that you probably never would know because you never would probably come in contact with them. I thought it was a great idea. Of course, too you didn't have to work for an hour.

RK: When you came back did you have any different sense of
the economics or poverty in this county, in this area or about the need for change in race relations? When you came back from the Army did you have a different attitude?

HL: Well, I don't know whether I had any change but it was still basically segregated. When I came back we still had the one and two teacher schools. They still had them. They really consolidated these one and two teacher schools I think in 1955. Even my wife taught in a one or two teacher school. We came back and like I said in 1955 they consolidated all these one and two teacher schools. They built about five schools I think scattered out all over the county. Then the kids were transported to school. But anyway, I think from day one a lot of us started really working with them. I think the thing that really tripped this thing was 1961. It tripped our attitude. A kid went to, I think he was thirteen or fourteen, and he went into Piggly Wiggly which is a grocery chain. Like kids did, evidently somebody had sent him for two different packs of cigarettes and two people had given him different money. First he asked the lady for a pack of cigarettes, said Camels and she gave him the change back. Then he asked her for another pack of Luckies. He gave her the money. What she did was she threw the cigarettes after him and the change. He simply said, "You didn't have to throw it. You could have laid it on the counter or handed it to me." She got real disturbed and called the manager. The manager called the police and they locked the kid up. So I think that's one of the things
that triggered the organization of Burke County Improvement Association. It was born that year. What we did we organized a board and called Piggly Wiggly. We did and Piggly Wiggly finally got rid of the manager.

Another good story in this one too is that while we were boycotting they were sending telegrams and all the messages to the house. They had a maid there and I guess they thought that she couldn't read. She would intercept all the telegrams and she would copy them and we would know what was going on, the exchange between the mayor and the Piggly Wiggly. We thought it was a real interesting story that somebody would think that somebody was dumb enough not to know what was going on.

RK: So you had a spy right in your camp?
HL: Yeah, we had a spy. It was real interesting.

RK: So that was in the early sixties?

RK: Had things like the Montgomery bus boycott and emerging activism of people like Dr. King, were you aware of that? So that was starting?
HL: Yes.

RK: How did you feel and what did you think about all of that?
HL: Well, it is difficult to explain. You were glad it was happening. But you hate that folks had to suffer. You know, basically you get the same where anywhere. I still think that
there is a lot of resentment toward blacks today, even in my leadership role. I find that people don't like what I'm doing but they can't bother me too much because I'm independent. Like I tell them all, I don't care if you don't like me. It doesn't make me any difference. I said that's one of the reasons I got married so at least I'd have one person. [Laughter] But basically I think that Dr. King's effort and I guess this is why Arizona made Martin Luther King holiday. See why they suffered for awhile over it. But I think he's probably one, not one but the greatest leader that blacks could have had. His commitment to nonviolence. Sometimes I don't think I'm nonviolent. I don't think I could take the spitting and the fire hoses. I don't think I'm made of that material. But I think Dr. King's effort was great and we got a black out of the school board because he made the statement that they didn't need no Martin Luther King holiday for the kids. Basically sometimes I think people are right but what we did was when the school board passed the holiday the city of Waynesboro and the county passed Martin Luther King holiday. It is a paid holiday. What we decided to do with the kids, you know, the first year we didn't do anything. I said it is amazing you know, you say here you got Dr. King and these kids don't learn anything about him in school. So one of the social clubs in the morning had what they called a freedom school and tried to emphasize to the kids the importance of knowing about Dr. King and other black leaders so it could be a motivating factor for them. They needed
to learn something about their roots. So then usually about eleven o'clock we marched in town and ended up down at City Park.

Then in the afternoon you send the kids and they'd go to some of the disk jockeys around here and spin records for them. So it gives them some sense of pride and I guess gives them something to do too for that day.

RK: Could you explain a little bit about the Improvement Association? This event against locking this boy up kind of started things. Were you involved in that?

HL: Yes.

RK: Who else was involved? I am wondering how the networks got built there, how you got the organization started.

HL: I don't know. I met someone on the streets one day. I met a guy name Ezra Roberson on the streets one day and he said you know we need to do something about this. We decided we'd get a few folks together. At that time there were seven ministers and this is one of our weaknesses today. There were seven ministers who lived in the community who might not have been went to the ( ) theological seminary but who lived in the community and were good organizers. They could talk to folks. We even had a guy that was sixty-five and he was a farmer. He's still going to night school trying to improve his reading. If you listen to him talk you'd think he's probably finished ten colleges. But anyway, these were the type of people. And the superintendent of Boggs was there and a Presbyterian minister was there and a few other
folks in the community that were interested in it. That's where really Burke County Improvement Association got started. Basically I believe our first project was in 1965. It was during the Lyndon Johnson era, I believe in 1965. Head Start. We applied for a grant to have Head Start in the county. It was a summer program then and we got two hundred and ten thousand dollars I believe it was for an eight week program. So we operated it. We had five hundred and ten kids in it. They were scattered all over the county so we transported them. Then the federal government started putting pressure on us because we were using the black schools that were scattered all over the county. They said, "No, you got to integrate them." I said, "Well, we tried. You can't force anybody." Well anyway, one year we didn't have the program. Then we came back and we went out to Boggs. We transported every kid from all over this county out to Boggs Academy. But it was an excellent program. Then the next program we applied for was emergency food and medical service program. Then we formed an eastern Georgia farmers co-op. Then we formed Burke County Housing Improvement. We have some apartments that are owned by Burke County Housing that is for the elderly. It is ten units. Really just about everything that's been going on around here we - Then we provided the emphasis on suits. We just about sued everybody in Burke County. This is one of the reasons I'm on the county commission. We started out suing the county commission. We had ran two or three people and they lost. They
really lost miserable. But anyway, we sued the county commissioners first. Then we sued the city of Waynesboro. The city of Waynesboro caved in and created these districts, these single member districts. Then we sued the grand jury. Not the grand jury but the jury commission. The jury commission, there were only two black women on it. It was made up of about eight percent white women and about nine percent black males. So we sued on behalf of blacks and women. There is no doubt the jury reflects the population of Burke County so you see a courthouse full of women up there, black and white. You see very few white males. It is real interesting. Then we sued the Democratic Party. Now I'm on the Democratic Party Board. Who else did we sue? I don't know, we sued so many folks. But anyway, that's the way we have accomplished integration. We sued the school system too.

RK: Did the school after Board vs. Brown, was there any effort, did they create private academies?

HL: Yeah, they did but then they backed away. They thought that Brown was going to have some effect but they started private schools. But when they found out that it didn't seem to have any effect, they just backed away from it and put the kids back in the original schools. Then really when we sued them they built a school. They built one out on 56 South. But they did and of course most of them around here are caving in except this one. This one is probably not because all the counties around will send
their kids out there.

RK: So it is a private school?

HL: Yes.

RK: Were there other like war on poverty programs? Was there any kind of community action program here?

HL: Oh yeah. What happened was we were actually the unofficial community action agent. But then, see when blacks started handling two hundred and ten thousand dollars in 1965. It's an interesting story about it. See we were putting the money in one bank each year. The president of one of the banks called and said, "You all are not going to put that money in my bank?" I said, "No." He said, "Well that ain't right. You are supposed to rotate the money with the banks." We didn't know nothing about rotating no money with no banks. We were just happy to get it so we could try to help these kids. But anyway, after you start having money and they see you have control of that much money, everybody got interested in community action then. So we didn't have much problem. We brought in I think the EOA that's based in Augusta. But we do have workers here. We are also in with the Sylvania group. It's working out fairly good. Like I said, it's all because of money. If it wasn't for the money, they wouldn't...

RK: They wanted to have some say in that so they gave in to you?

HL: Yeah. Community Action just renovated the high school.
They got a grant and what's located in there. It's Head Start, EOA and the Transit, Burke Transit.

RK: Did you have VISTA volunteers or legal services people in here to help you?

HL: Yes we had VISTA volunteers. We had a legal service office here. I was president of the Georgia Legal Service Program for five years. We had an office here. With our fellow Reagan, he didn't take it all away but he did a lot of damage.

RK: Did this legal service, did these people help you when you started formulating these suits?

HL: Yeah, they could do it then. Now they've taken all that away from us. Every suit just about that we filed we had legal service backing.

RK: Do you remember who was involved in that?

HL: Bob Collins. Bob Collins was involved in it. There was a guy named David Ward. I was talking to Bob the other day and he said David Ward has changed sides. He works for the state now against all these programs, all these suits.

RK: So what kind of impact did all these government programs in the sixties and the legislation, what kind of impact do you think it had on the attitude of both blacks and whites in Burke County?

RK: One of the things that made the Community Action Program effective was that they had these community organizers and they could go out in the community and set down on these porches and
talk to these folks. That was the greatest impact. That is one of the reasons voter registration is as high as it is in this county. Voter registration in this county is over ten thousand with a population of twenty thousand. Blacks represent forty-five percent of the voter registration. It had a tremendous impact. These people could talk to them and there were no restrictions on what they could say. But then all of a sudden somebody discovered the impact it was having. Because actually you were out there telling poor folks the way to solve your problems is to register and vote, be involved in the community, be involved in your child at school. If you got somebody telling them this, then somebody all of a sudden finds out and says, "Hey, these folks here are really getting to these folks." They could talk the language. They could understand these folks and the condition they were in. It helped this county.

RK: So these were local people who were hired through the Community Action Program?

HL: Yeah. Then like you said, they would send some VISTAs that lived in the community. It had a tremendous impact. We are still feeling the effects of it today. I wish we could pay some organizers. We could get the rest of these folks organized.

RK: What was the economic condition? Maybe you could just describe the, say in the sixties, either before or after these programs came in. What were the economic conditions like for people in the community, in the county?
HL: Most of the folks were involved in agriculture. Along came mechanization and the herbicides and the pesticides and it eliminated farm labor. The when the cotton picker came into being it really got (    ). So it was not good. The economic condition was not good. Of course, basically it's still not good. We have a sixteen percent unemployment rate. We recruit industry heavily but it doesn't seem to have an effect. I was talking with a local attorney, Betty Ann Hart. She won the one sixteen house seat. She is a local attorney here, black. We are trying to put together a study to try to discover what is the reason for this because you are getting these jobs but you still got a high, sixteen percent unemployment rate. Something is wrong somewhere. We are trying to put that study together to see what is happening.

One of our biggest problems too is the illiteracy rate in this county. It is tremendously high and that doesn't help us at all. A lot of these folks don't have skills. We had a company, McDonald's wanted to come here. We have grants for jobs. You've got over five hundred applications. The Ritz Corporation, a German based company, was going to make transformers. They got a hundred and thirty-five applications. But what Ritz was doing is saying okay, when you come to get an application you've got to show your high school diploma.

RK: That's all that had it. Plenty of people to work at McDonald's but not enough to work at one of these places. Why
after all the Head Start programs and schools have gotten better I assume, what are the problems with that education?

HL: The problem with education is the way you start kids off by grouping or tracking or whatever you want to call it. You put these kids in this group and say, "Okay, you're the dumb folks." These kids continue to get behind. By time they get to the tenth grade either they are too large or they are twice as old as the other kids and then they drop out. Then you got these kids in the street. Another thing you got, once they reach sixteen, naturally they are going. But the other thing is, what they've never done in this school is to take teachers and white and black learn about each other. These boys come in there and these white teachers, teacher ask them a question and he goes this way that they think he is being disrespectful. That is probably a black kid's natural gestures. They assume it is that so they send him to the principal and they send him home and all that kind of stuff. But like I said, people don't understand each other. They don't know about each other. I had a bunch of people up there in the county one day, all the heads of departments. I was trying to explain to them that they need to know about each other. Blacks need to know about whites and whites need to know about blacks. I said, "I guarantee most of you don't know why most black males have a moustache and most white males will not." I said, "Have y'all ever thought about it?" They sat up there dumbfounded because we don't know each other's attitudes and customs and what we need to
know about them. The more you know about a person, you can understand his differences and he can understand yours. Then you can get along much better once you understand somebody. I think those are some of the reasons that we have this high illiteracy rate.

RK: Have people moved out? When young people grow up, both black and white, in this community who have some ambition, do they leave here or do they stay? Is that a problem in terms of the community you think?

HL: Basically, once you learn, as you go off to college, it is real difficult for a person to stay here because everybody sees the dollar sign. They are going to go like Betty Ann. Betty Ann came back after. She was born here and she went to school here. She went to Spelman and then she got married. Her husband is a major in the Air Force, a chaplain. She decided she would say that she got tired of following her husband around. She came back and he is stationed over at Charleston. He comes home and she goes over there. Of course, he's in Africa now on a mission. Anyway, usually if they can find something to do they will come back but it is difficult.

RK: Do a lot of people work in Augusta and live here like you do?

HL: Yes. They have built a nuclear power plant here. One time there were fourteen thousand people working down there. That was a lot of folks working in Burke County. Anyway, now it is
down to about twelve hundred working out there. That was another thing that caused sort of a dropout because down there they were paying twelve dollars an hour because of the fact it was the David Bacon Act. I was talking to one guy down there and he was keeping concrete wet and he was making twelve dollars an hour.

RK: This was probably when they were constructing the plant and they had all these jobs down there.

HL: Yeah. When they left the only thing you've got down there now is the operators and the technicians and the engineers.

I guess another thing about the employment is the young folks, like I said they see the lights in the cities and the dollar signs. I think that's why they take off. We've got a few that want to come back. One of our kids from around here went to East Tennessee State and became a doctor and he's up at Greenville, South Carolina I believe now. He is on his second year residence and he plans to come back. He said he wants to practice in his hometown where he can help somebody. I said, "Well that's great."

RK: I'm interested in how you emerged as a person who begins to play a more active leadership role in the political arena around here, becoming a county commissioner. Both how you managed that with you job and how you saw your role developing in the early seventies.

HL: I really don't know how. The only thing I know is that we started suing because we couldn't talk to anyone and we couldn't win in the large (   ) so we just decided we would go. I
was sort of shielded by working in Augusta for the federal government. Things I could do they couldn't affect me economically.

RK: That's probably important too that you really had an independence.

HL: The only thing I would get was nasty phone calls. Somebody would call me at two o'clock in the morning and wake me up and call me a black son-of-a-bitch and hang up. Or somebody would call and say they were going to bomb my house...

Tape 2 - Side A

HL: ...things that turned out to be a scare tactic. It just don't stop with things like that.

RK: So you began to then play a more prominent role both in the improvement association but how did the running for county commissioner, how did that process begin?

HL: I guess it is because we wanted to sue and it went to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court announced the decision and I was in Valdosta. This is the first time people of the V.A. because of all the TV cameras and all the newspaper reporters were hunting me up there so I'm down at Valdosta with my wife. Anyway, we had drawn a plan and the decision went back for Judge (   ) down in Brunswick to make his decision. He accepted our plan. What the other side wanted was four single member districts and one at large seat. We told Judge (   ) what we wanted because
we'd never win that at large seat. So we divided where we were sure there were two predominantly black districts. What we did too was we tried to draw a district where all the whites in it had the money and was educated so they would put all the leadership in one district. Then we drew the other two districts. That way when Judge ( ) ordered and asked us when we wanted election we were ( ) three weeks and he told us it was three weeks from the day to the election. Someone suggested maybe we should wait until we can get better organized. I said no, I'm not going to wait. We are going at it now. Because we had drawn three or the white commissioners in one district. There they were in a heavily black district. I said no sir, we are going with this thing now. So went on and we won the two seats out of the five. But anyway, I was working at the V.A. at the time and of course when I went to qualify the person at the election board said you work for the federal government. I said I know it. You think I don't know I work for the federal government? He said you are not supposed to be running. I said that's not true. This is a special election. There are no partisan politics involved in this one. He looked at me like he wanted to jump on me but anyway, he took my little money. I think it was thirty-five or thirty-six dollars. Like I said, I ran and I stayed at the V.A. until I think it was the next year. We ran for two years the first time and then it became partisan politics and so I retired before the time came for me to qualify. I'm still slightly independent, not as ( ).
RK: What was the response when you joined the county commissioners? Do you remember the first meeting after the election and stuff?

HL: Yeah, I think what we tried to do, we tried to talk to each other and we tried to explain to each other that if we are going to fight we are not going to get anything done. But we worked together real good I think. It ain't been all too smooth but when people understand that when you start bickering among yourselves you are really in for a problem. It hasn't been bad at all since we got the third person, black one on there. And we have not tried to just ramrod things. In fact, neither one of us has ever been chairman. One of the reasons is this county, it has been easy for us because of the fact that East, he was chairman. The other thing is that the chairman doesn't have a vote unless they have a tie. We keep that controlled. Another reason it has been fairly easy is because the county has had money because ( ) is on the tax digest. It is on there and it is an opportunity to do things. Like we have eleven fire stations scattered all over the county with about eighty-five people in it. Most of these folks are cross-trained in fire fighting and emergency medical technician. You got a hospital down there about six years ago and it is paid for. You got a health department which I am proud of. It is about a seven hundred thousand dollar building but it gives poor folks sort of a luxury to health care. They have two nurse practitioners and a real good staff down there. We built a new
jail. It is a Holiday Inn type thing. If you didn't see the razor wire on the fences on the outside back of it you'd say gosh, this must be a nice motel. But it's not. I think it is interesting they just build a comprehensive high school out there. It is about a seventeen million dollar building. I wondered when the superintendent was building it I said boy, down in this cotton field and you are going to build that type of school? And it is. It is a state of the art. It has five thousand seats, the football stadium; two thousand and fifty auditorium capacity; gymnasium with two thousand seats. So it is a huge thing. I think the money has made it easy.

RK: Have you gotten federal money too, state and federal money, for some of these projects?

HL: We got some for the health department. We got four hundred thousand dollars to build the health department. Believe it or not some anonymous donor gave us two hundred thousand dollars.

RK: I noticed we were talking and discussing yesterday and that you played an important role in trying to help the smaller communities get rechartered, get their charter back. What ways have you been able to help people in the rural parts of the county, away from Waynesboro?

HL: Well, what we tried to do, what I tried to do, go to each city council scattered about all over the county, and try to tell them that the county has certain pieces of equipment like
bull dozers and you need a bull dozer. Bull dozers cost about a hundred - I don't know, a tremendous amount. And if you need it, let us know so we can schedule because you can't afford to buy one. I said now you are citizen of Burke County. You might be a citizen of Sardis instead of Keysville but you are a citizen of Burke County too. So the equipment belongs to you, it doesn't belong to just the people who live outside the city. So we have been able to help. Our game plan is sort of spread recreation out like the recreation they have up there. We have done Midville, Keysville and we are going to just go around the community and try to build those recreation playgrounds for the kids. The health department has clinics at Keysville, at Sardis and at Midville, each extreme end of the county plus the health department here. The nurse practitioner is assigned to go out there once a week to both of those places. Anyway we can help, what we try to do is like even the person who sells tags, the tax commissioner, she goes to outlying areas so folks won't have to come in. We you try to do in your long range goals is try to make it convenient and services available to everybody in the county. That's what you are there for. You are there to serve people. That is the only way to do it, to try to get the service or the product to that person. That's what we try to do.

RK: You mentioned a little earlier that you wish you had some more community organizers here. Do you feel like there has been a decline in the level of political activism?
HL: I think so. One of the things is, there are a hundred and seventeen black churches in Burke County. For some reason, some people have stopped. This used to be the gathering place. When we had ministers who lived in the community and were community oriented. These people who were at that church they could go to them and they could talk to them and they could get up there and tell them to register to vote, tell them who to vote for and all this. Now folks don't go to church much. That's why I think we need to try to take the service to the people instead of trying to get them to come to us. That's why I said organizers are necessary. Of course, like the last election, Cynthia McKinney, Burke County is part of Cynthia McKinney's district, and the Republican she was running against is a white farmer in this county. She beat him unmercifully. I don't whether the effect of her and Clinton on the issues or not.

RK: But she won? I saw a bunch of posters. So she won the election?

HL: Yeah. Somebody said that she got about seventy percent of the votes over the district. That's a lot of votes.

RK: Was this for U.S. Congress or the state?

HL: No, U.S. Congress.

RK: U.S. Congress, that's great. What do you think are the biggest problems remaining today that you want to work on or think that needs to be done in Burke County?

HL: Well, the school situation. The school situation is
probably it. I was discussing with my niece last night that for some reason the counselors in these schools, well I don't want to say what I want to say, but they ain't no good. These kids when they get to the eighth grade and they let these kids take any subjects they want to take, by the time they finish they don't know anything because they haven't taken the hard subjects, the subjects they need to take. Now they are out there on us with no skills and nothing to do. So we were talking about, I was talking about what we are going to do in our church is that soon as the kid hits ninth grade we are going to counsel our kids and track them and see what courses they are taking, see if we can help how they are doing so we can be sure that when they finish high school they'll be knowledgeable. Another thing we decided we would do too is to be sure that any of our kids in our church who finish high school and want to go to college or go to trade school that we will try to find the means to do it. In our church at least we do have a lawyer. Betty Ann is in my church. We have a lawyer. We have an assistant school principal. We have several teachers. We have some retired teachers who've got time and who are knowledgeable about that stuff. We are going to track our kids and try to find ways for them to get into college. That is one of the biggest problems is that the counselors are not helping them. Don't ask me why.

RK: It is interesting that with the end of segregation the fact that there has been some deterioration. You don't have that
same group of dedicated black, mostly women, teachers who push the same way they pushed you to memorize Shakespeare and kind of do those things. Now they are saying take whatever you can take to not have to do much.

HL: They seem to be not interested in the kid's problems. They seem to be interested in just I guess showing up to work.

RK: I guess from your point of view of head of industrial development commission, this is a big problem. You are having a hard time attracting industries to the county if you don't have an educated work force.

HL: You do but what we are trying, you just have to go at them. The only reason we are getting some industry is because our ability to offer incentive because of our financial base. You are probably right. We were in here this week Monday or Tuesday and we brought in the extension service worker. He wants to go to Japan. They have invited him to Japan to see a factory. Anyway in this factory over there is a special soybean that is grown to make soy sauce and some kind of other Japanese food. What they want to do is grow the soybeans in an area and build this plant that produces these products. Some of the Japanese representatives came over here several months ago and we toured the county. We showed them some of the bean fields. They seemed to be thrilled about it and so they invited him to come to Japan.

I guess we are going to have to jack up some money to send him. He wanted me to go but I told him I don't believe I can stand an
eight or twelve hour plane ride.

RK: That's a long ways to go but that is good. You've got the good farmland and you've got the skills for farming and then you, that's the key thing, having that processing plant here. If you don't have that you don't have the good high paying jobs, the skilled jobs.

HL: We just got another plant. We are buying eleven hundred acres of land. It is a battery recycling plant. Their salary is going to be ten dollars an hour. Of course the benefits amount to about forty or fifty percent so you are talking about fourteen or fifteen dollars an hour. But we know why because of the fact the insurance for working around that acid and lead is probably going to be pretty high. My assumption is that the salaries and the benefits there are because of that lead.

RK: They have to make sure they are safe at least. Kind of a final question here, we've gotten the history pretty well. How do you think things have changed over here? You were born here in Burke County, raised here, spent most of your life here. As you look back over those days and times, where do you think the county and everything is today?

HL: I think it has grown. Some attitudes have been changed. I say that because of the fact that the county supervisor of the Farmer's Home Administration is black. The ranger, forest ranger is black. You have a lot of folks in this county, just like Cynthia McKinney is going to represent Burke County in Congress.
Then we have a black guy who was born in Burke County and lives in Augusta who is going to be state senator for Burke County. Betty Ann was born here and went to school here and is an attorney on the main street is going to be state representative from Burke County. She has a lot of white clients, especially women who want to get a divorce. That's pretty good. But anyway, I think there is some change in attitude. I think that some of the attitudes are not going to change. Of course, what we always say is that you can't legislate and litigate attitudes. You've got to try to work to change them. That is the only way. Like I said, get to know each other. I know a lot of folks' attitude have changed about me. I know a banker who always makes the statement, Herman, most of these people don't like you but at least they respect you. I reckon the attitudes get changed somewhat. I think it has changed for the best.

RK: Even the conditions I assume, say people out in these rural communities, people who are living on the land or aren't the forest rangers or the lawyers or the state representatives, do you think their lives have changed too?

HL: Yeah, but I think these folks who, it's just like a housing stop. If you ride around Waynesboro you probably won't see any ( ). You might see some old houses but you won't see the slums like you would see in New York or rundown housing in Mississippi. If you go all over this county you probably wouldn't find one. What you see is nice homes. Some of this stuff, like I
say, is a result of Mr. Andrews who is Farmer's Home supervisor who found ways to help people get homes. He got the information and he can help folks. Just like you asked me how did I know about the G.I. bill and all this stuff. See if people become knowledgeable about what is going on then you can help people find a way to get some of, as the boy said, the good stuff. I think we have all tried to do that, tried to get information to people. That's the key to it. I think a lot of times, information has been hidden from poor people. If you don't know anything, you can't accomplish anything. The key to it is to try to get information to people. So that's what we try to do.

RK: So in a way it's opening the system up so everybody does have an equal opportunity.

HL: I am working on a county commissioner's handbook. I am trying to have it ready when the new commissioners come on. I was telling my wife, the commissioner probably don't know what year this county was chartered. It is history. The first page on that thing, we are going to put the history of Burke County so they'll know. A mission statement - what are our goals going to be? We are going to identify each department. What are their goals? And put a picture of the person who is head of that department. A lot of times you don't know who is working for you. It is a shame for a county and a community not to know who is working for them. Like I say, I think you have got to get the information to folks and then they can better understand. Then they can help
themselves and help you too.

RK: One of the things we talked about in Greenville at the end was the need for developing a new generation of leaders, passing on the skills that you developed and learned over the years to young people who are going to eventually have to take your place. How are you trying to do that or are you trying to do that here?

HL: Yeah, we are doing it. Like in our church, we take the opportunity to take our kids all the time somewhere. We have found that the tests in these schools are based on experience and not mostly classroom work. Our kids, black kids, don't gain much experience. I think one of the things we have to do is give the kids in this age experience they need. Like in Burke County, there are four elevators. I bet you half of the kids in Burke County haven't been on an elevator, let alone an escalator. There was a test my wife was giving call the California Readiness Test to first graders. The test would say, put an X on the pail. The pail is setting on the beach with sand shells in it and showing the shoreline. Most of the kids have never been to a beach in Burke County. They don't know what a pail is. But they could essentially turn the language around and put a bucket there and stick the mop in it and say put an X on the mop bucket. Now if you look at Webster, pail and bucket, the definition is just about identical. So the kid who's family take him to the beach is going to pass those tests. Yet you have this kid who lives out here in
the boondocks, he's not going to pass it. Or if he lives in the projects, he's not going to pass it. I think we are going to have to provide experiences for young folks so they can see the leadership roles. I went to homecoming at Fort Valley last week. We took two kids out of our church to the football game and let them go in the dorm. We slept in a motel and ate in the motel restaurant. It provided the kids with experience. This is how the other side of the world lives. It is not just the way you live here in Burke County. I think one of the necessary things is to try to provide the experiences for them. We are trying now to put together Boggs Academy. I don't know whether anybody came through Boggs.

RK: It was dark last night after we got through so we didn't get to see it. We are going to try on the way back.

HL: What we are trying to do is not necessarily reactivate but create some programs out at Boggs in leadership and especially for young folks. We hope that when they get some of the dorms and stuff repaired those kids can go out there for a week and gain that experience with leadership. We hope we'll be able to do that. Those are some of the things I guess we are going to try to do.

RK: Is there any effort to create, we were out in Arkansas last week talking to Calvin King and Arkansas Land and Development Corporation. Are there efforts of trying to figure out ways of providing jobs on the land for black families or young black men
who can stay in the county or businesses that people can run? Is that something that you've been thinking about?

HL: What we are thinking about is trying to find a way to convince these kids, if you do not have a high school diploma, get you a GED. That is a difficult thing to do. Don't ask me why. Even in the county, what we did in the county we passed I guess a resolution that we would give the county employee a raise if they studied for their GED. But you know, we can't get nowhere with it. Our biggest problem is in the rural department and most rural counties are black. That is our biggest problem. How can we convince these young folks to go and get their GED? Because I arrested a kid, not a kid because he's twenty-two. He and another guy were helping and this guy brought him along. I said where do you work? He said I don't have a job. I said why don't you go out and apply for (  )? He said I applied but I don't have a high school diploma. I said well, why don't you go back to school? I said you can go to night classes out at the high school and at my church we have a literacy program now. Yessir. And that was the answer I got - yessir. I ain't seen him. Nice looking kid, twenty-two years old. But that's the problem. How do you convince them that they are going to (  ). Now it is just about impossible to do anything without a high school education. Nobody wants to look at you because every time you look somebody is sticking a computer in your face. If you don't know anything about it and they can't teach you. There is nowhere you can
hardly go without somebody sticking a computer at you. So that's the key.

RK: In addition to not getting the proper counseling and training in schools, I guess some of them have just given up hope by that point. Do they have a sense there's a real future for them or something they should work for?

HL: I don't know. That's a tough one. I think that a lot of times people get the attitude well, the world owes me. I don't have to do that. This world is not like that. You've got to earn everything you get.