



Interview with B. O. Butler

June 29, 1995

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Summerton (S.C.)

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Behind the Veil: Documenting African-American Life in the Jim Crow South

An oral history project to record and preserve the living memory of African American life during the age of legal segregation in the American South, from the 1890s to the 1950s.

ORIGINAL PROJECT

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Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University
Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South

Interview with
B.O. Butler

June 29, 1995

Interviewed by
Kisha Turner and Blair Murphy

Unedited Transcript by

1. **Turner:** ...stating your full name and when you were born.
2. **Butler:** B.O. Butler. The "B" is for Broaddus, the "O" I don't tell, so B.O. Butler. I was born in Greenville County, 1925.
3. **Turner:** Can you tell me about Greenville when you were a child, your family, the home you lived in and the community?
4. **Butler:** Yes, the home that I lived in was formerly owned by my grandfather on my mother's side. And it was just a mediocre type home, family, very family oriented.
5. **Turner:** Who lived in the home with you?
6. **Butler:** My mother, father and six, two sisters, four brothers.
7. **Turner:** You said your family inherited this land?
8. **Butler:** No, not inherited. They bought it from my grandfather.
9. **Turner:** Oh, bought it from your grandfather?
10. **Butler:** Un-huh.
11. **Turner:** Okay. And did you farm this land?
12. **Butler:** Yes, we farmed.
13. **Turner:** Could you tell me about the crops and what your duties were?

14. **Butler:** We could call it general, not specialized but general type farming, cotton, corn, peas, potatoes and truck crops and things like that. Cows, chickens, those type things. Not a very large farm, large enough to take care of the family.
15. **Turner:** What did you have to do on the farm?
16. **Butler:** Oh, various types of things. My older brothers would do most of the work in the field and I did a lot of work around the yard with my mother milking cows and slopping the hogs and digging in the flower yard and things of that nature.
17. **Murphy:** What types of jobs did your sisters have to do?
18. **Butler:** Clean house, wash and iron, cooking, those types of things.
19. **Turner:** You were the youngest boy?
20. **Butler:** No, I was the third boy, two brothers older and two sisters older.
21. **Turner:** Did you get a chance to go to school?
22. **Butler:** Yes, I graduated from the Rosenwald School in Simpsonville, South Carolina.
23. **Turner:** Did you attend Rosenwald all the way through?
24. **Butler:** Yes.
25. **Turner:** Could you tell me about that school, your teachers, your subjects and stuff?

26. **Butler:** Yes, I was there from first grade through eleventh grade at that time. We didn't have twelfth grade. And about the teachers, yes I remember them, especially the principal and his family. We were very close. It wasn't that type of relationship that existed in schools later on so far as students and principal but I admire him because of his leadership.
27. **Turner:** What was his name?
28. **Butler:** Roy Phillip Cunningham. He later came to Florence, South Carolina and was principal over there.
29. **Turner:** Did you have to, well the Rosenwald schools were, they weren't state schools, right?
30. **Butler:** Yes.
31. **Turner:** They were state schools?
32. **Butler:** But they were segregated schools. The white school was on one side of town and this one was on the other side of town. That particular school was all black as I stated and we had to kind of do for ourselves mostly because the schools were not supported completely by states. We had to rally sometimes and raise money and build little tables and little chairs for children in the first grade. Mostly we would receive what was outdated or not needed at the white high school.
33. **Turner:** That includes books?

34. **Butler:** Un-huh. Not a real library but just a little room that was set up across from the principal's office that we called a library with some books in there. But the books that I'm talking about would be the ones that were used by the state, the state department of education. Those books were mostly ones that had gotten old and they were changing to new ones so therefore those books would be boxed and sent to the black school for our use.
35. **Turner:** How about transportation to school?
36. **Butler:** Walk. I walked four and a half miles one way everyday from the time I was six years old until I graduated.
37. **Turner:** Did the Rosenwald school attract children from how broad an area? Was this the only school in this area?
38. **Butler:** There were other little church schools. You know the schools first started out by being church schools. Black churches would organize themselves and build some type of a little building, a little two room building or one room building somewhere on the church yard and this is where children would go to school. But those schools even though they were formed and developed by black people but they were supervised by the white schools in the area and the trustees and superintendents and whatnot.
39. **Turner:** Since we are on the subject, you were speaking about church schools, what church did you attend?
40. **Butler:** I attended Rock Hill Baptist Number One in Greenville County.

41. **Turner:** And what was your church like?

42. **Butler:** First of all it was just a little () type place with two aisles, had one aisle and two rows of seats on each side. It also had in the front of it in the middle a big belly type heater that they burned the coal in. I can even remember that in the beginning of it when I first realized, you know, what it really was that we used to use what is known as gas lamps that swung from the ceiling at certain places down the inside. This is how it was lighted especially for night activities such as revival meetings.

43. **Turner:** Can you tell me about the meetings, the evening services? Would you just come as a family?

44. **Butler:** Yes. In the beginning the family was too large to attend service because we went to church which was about eight miles from our home and we went by buggy. You know what a buggy is? (Laughter) This is a four wheel vehicle that's drawn by a horse or a mule with a curtain type overhead canopy. And the family couldn't go at all times. This is once a month service now, once a month, every fourth Sunday. And they would kind of alter going to church. One time they'd carry so many children and next time they'd carry so many. I can remember my baby sister and I used to sit in the floorboard of the buggy. My mother and father sat on the seat. They would put a blanket or something down in there and cover our laps with another blanket to keep us warm and comfortable.

45. **Turner:** And as far as this, that's the Sunday meetings you were just talking about?

46. **Butler:** Un-huh, yes. I told you that it was once a month. Our Sunday was fourth Sunday but there were other churches in the community that we always cooperated. Sometimes we would go to one church on the first Sunday and the next Sunday at another church. All these churches had service once a month.

47. **Murphy:** So did you share the same preacher?

48. **Butler:** No. We had different preacher, different congregation and different board of deacons and trustees. But it was kind of a cooperative. When we were having service they would come and visit with us and when they were having service we would go and visit with them. And I attended Sunday School at several different churches in the community, this one one Sunday, one the next and all around.

49. **Turner:** So you did go to church on most Sundays?

50. **Butler:** Yes.

51. **Murphy:** Okay, do you remember your grandparents well?

52. **Butler:** Not real well because my grandfather died when I was rather young and my grandmother lived a few years thereafter. But so far as remembering them, you know, that I could just describe them, no I don't. I'm not able to do that.

53. **Murphy:** Do you remember having any relations with older people in your community?

54. **Butler:** Yes, there were other families in the community that I remember having relationships with.
55. **Murphy:** Do you remember any of those older people or even your parents telling you about how it was when they were young?
56. **Butler:** Yes, mostly my parents telling about this.
57. **MOB:** What kinds of things did they tell you?
58. **Butler:** My father would tell me about he was brought up. A large family of individuals, father was deceased and his mother hired him out to a white family. That way he could go and stay during the week and come home on weekends. And this hiring was for the purpose of this individual giving them so much corn, meat or other farm food in exchange for his work. So this is how the mother was supporting the family. Later on after her death my father was the oldest one so he took care of the rest of the brothers and sisters.
59. **Murphy:** And your mother?
60. **Butler:** My mother was the daughter of this minister that we purchased the farm from. She was formerly Methodist but after marrying my father then she joined the church where he was and so therefore we were all Baptists at that time.
61. **Murphy:** Is the land that your parents bought from your grandfather still in the family?

62. **Butler:** Yes. After the death of my mother the farm was divided to the six children. I happen to have the home place, the home spot. But the small farm was divided into lots, not lots but acreage where each child got somewhere around four and a half acres. I have the home place which is included in this.
63. **Murphy:** Do you remember, I know you were young, but the Depression era or any stories that people told you about that time?
64. **Butler:** Yes, I was born right during the time, you might have heard the name of President Hoover. And at the beginning Roosevelt came in in the early 1930's I think it was. Yes, families had a pretty tough time during the Depression time.
65. **MOB:** Do you remember any WPA workers?
66. **Butler:** Yes, I do remember them. (Laughter) Yes I can remember, in other words, they were individuals who went out and worked for the government for a certain amount of money. We had a name for them that we used to call them, W-P-A, we called them "we piddle along" because they would kind of piddle. (Laughter)
67. **Murphy:** They just worked kind of?
68. **Butler:** Yes, they did road work. I can remember one thing they used to do, they used to use their two horse wagon that was drawn by a mule and they would haul dirt. A family would go out and work a day for a certain amount of money by using his particular wagon and had it set up to where they could load it with dirt in a certain place and then carry it in the roads, places that needed building up and turn that boards on the bottom and let it fall off in the road

and go back for another load all day long. And incidentally, those roads were kept up by convicts. Those persons that were in prison, they would be on the road working. I used to be afraid of them walking going to school because they'd be in the ditches with their chains on their shovels and a bossman standing over them with a shotgun, those type things.

69. **Murphy:** Yeah, chain gangs.

70. **Butler:** Yeah. The prisons then worked the individuals, made them work, quite different to what it is now. A lot of them in prison now living the life of ().

71. **Murphy:** How long did you live in Greenville on that land?

72. **Butler:** I lived there from my birth until the spring of 1946. Right during the close of World War II I left there and went to South Carolina State College at Orangeburg. There I spent three years because I lost some time by being deferred from the Army. They were drafting individuals. My father had me deferred because he was getting old and unable to do the work on the farm as he was supposed to so he went to the board and made this known and they reclassified me and deferred me as a 3-C I believe it was to work and help him on the farm. So, in spring of 1946 when I heard of the Germans surrendering I wrote to South Carolina State College and told them I was interested in coming there and they replied that they could not accept me because the school that I graduated from was not an accredited one. So I went from there to the principal, Mr. Cunningham, that I was telling you about a few minutes ago and he gave me, he ordered for me a state high school exam and I went to his house in a couple of days and took it in his living room and it was sent back to Columbia. Later it was the reply that said that I had successfully passed it and that they were issuing me

a state high school diploma. So then I wrote back to South Carolina State College and told them and they told me that I couldn't enter for the first semester, it was too late, that I had to come in on the second semester. So beginning in January, 1946 I matriculated with them and three years later I graduated with four years requirements.

73. **Turner:** Did your brothers have to go into the Army?

74. **Butler:** Two, the one just older than me and the one younger than I am, those two went.

75. **Turner:** Do you remember soldiers returning to the area?

76. **Butler:** Un-huh, yes.

77. **Turner:** What was it like?

78. **Butler:** It was a joyous time. I won't forget the morning that my brother came in, older brother, and we had this porch that went all the way around the house and had picked cotton. We would weigh it and put it on one side of that porch and later we would load it on a wagon and haul it to the gin. So he came in one morning while we were all sleeping. A taxicab drove to the yard and he came to the door and oh boy, it was a joyous time in that house that night. (Laughter) My mother was just jumping and shouting for joy. But it was a wonderful time.

79. **Turner:** Did they ever tell you about anything that happened to them? Were they overseas?

80. **Butler:** Yes, he's told me some things.

81. **Turner:** You graduated in three years so I'm sure you were very involved in academics.

What other kinds of things did you do while you were at South Carolina State, social kinds of things?

82. **Butler:** Well, let me say this first of all, I mostly worked my way through school. I applied at the dean's office and he sent me to the ladies dorm where the lady in charge of the lunchroom and she gave me a job waiting table in the dining hall. I did that for awhile. And I also attended three summer sessions in order to be able to get out in three years. So later on I worked some at the poultry farm, feeding and cleaning chicken houses. Later I helped with the farm work milking cows and carrying for them down on the farm. I was in the area of vocational agriculture so therefore we would sometimes have what was known as a vocational ball where we would all gather in the gymnasium and have a nice little dance, a ball, in the gymnasium. I won't forget all of the activities. It was kind of exciting to me to go to the football games and the basketball games and those type activities. I also participated with the college choir and this was very rewarding.

83. **Turner:** What did you say your major was?

84. **Butler:** Vocational agriculture.

85. **Turner:** Okay and did you plan to go back home?

86. **Butler:** Yes, I did. I figured that when I'd get out I would go back home but at that particular time the vocational department would be visited by the state department of education. They would interview graduates and the year that I graduated they came to the

state college and they would give you your first job. They would interview each student and after that they would assign you, write you and tell you what school they were assigning you to for vocational agriculture as a teacher. We were also taught in the vocational curriculum that in many instances the Ag teacher had to sit in as principal of a school. So when Mr. Anderson from the state department of education interviewed me he wanted to know from me where did I want to go, where would I prefer working. I told him in the Piedmont section. He says why. I said because I grew up in that area and I feel like I know more about the farming conditions there than I would anywhere else. But later on in the month of July I received a letter from him stating that I'd been assigned to St. Paul Training School which is down the road here about three miles. And I was very upset over that. I did not want to go. First of all I said I wasn't even going. My mother insisted that maybe I should be go and be interviewed, see what it was like and even take it for one year and if I didn't like it then I could move some place else. So I took her at her word and I came to St. Paul in July, 1949 and I was expecting them to say, you know, vocational Ag teacher but I got there, the chairman of the trustee board told me that I would be Ag teacher but I had to serve as principal of the school also. I was very young and I did not want to do it so I said I can't do that. So he said well you were recommended very highly by the state department of education and the South Carolina State College vocational department and we feel like you can do it, why don't you just give it a try. I said well I'll think about it and let you know. So I went back to Greenville and again my mother said well, why don't you just try it a year. So I decided to try it a year. And I fell in love with it and here I am today. That school existed for three years after I came there. After that year the integration of school systems in this county was supposed to have taken place but they were transferring most of the high school

individuals from St. Paul to Scott's Branch which is just across the street here. While I was in summer school at South Carolina State College working on a master's degree I was informed that I would be transferred from St. Paul Elementary School to Scott's Branch High School and that took place during the fall of 1955.

87. **Turner:** So they closed down St. Paul?

88. **Butler:** No, St. Paul continued to operate as an elementary school and they moved the high school students out.

89. **Turner:** Could you tell me a little about, you went back to South Carolina State to get a master's degree?

90. **Butler:** Yes.

91. **Turner:** How was Orangeburg during that period?

92. **Butler:** Well, I thought it was booming. I went back to get a master's degree in education through the vocational education department so this is what my degree was. When I received a master's degree from South Carolina State College in the spring of 1956.

93. **Turner:** And I know you, of course you were out of school by this point, but how did you feel about the activities taking place in this area with desegregation and school equalization and those kinds of things?

94. **Butler:** This is something that I came into, I came into the system in 1949 and I think it was about 1954 when this suit took place, right? So it was sometimes very, very disturbing because my experiences then, there was so much meanness involved. You've heard about the case about the Delane's house being burned. That's the spot right over there, that red barn there, that's the spot right there where that home was. The school's across the street, his house was here and that was when I was at St. Paul. His house was here and the house burned and I didn't see it but I was told that the fire department, the fire truck from uptown came and parked across the street over there and sat on the sides of the truck and watched it burn down. There were any number of different things that took place along that time very disturbing and that was, the whites had vowed that they would not allow their children to go to school with these little black girls and boys. So therefore after it just got to the place that they just did not see where they were going to be able to continue as they were, they abandoned the old white high school over here and went across town over just where you cross over 95 and built a private school. There is where they moved and they took with them quite a bit of the equipment and materials from the old school and carried with them over there.

95. **Turner:** Do you remember hearing about the White Citizen's Council?

96. **Butler:** Oh yes. I remember when the superintendent at that time, you might have heard this name when you read the story concerning H. B. Beachman. One morning uptown a lot of letters had been mimeographed and distributed all around the streets so people would come across them. And they were supposed to have been from the Ku Klux Klan and I understand that the FBI came in and investigated and tried to find out, you know, they can take it and

find out where they were printed and what machine is used to do it. So they kept checking around until they finally found the typewriter that did the typing. Where do you think it was?

In the loft of the superintendent's house. There were many mean things. One other situation that is not funny but it will make you kind of chuckle sometimes when you think about it, there were statements made that before they would allow their little girls and boys to go to school with those blacks, they would die and go to hell. And would you believe that somewhere along the line some of them, it wasn't very long after that they died. I don't know where they went. But that statement was made. (Laughter)

97. (Interruption - Door bell rings)

98. **Turner:** We were talking about white people's reaction to black people's struggles.

99. **Butler:** You know another situation that happened was that a lot of individuals that lived in this area, everybody who lived in this area, lived on farms and some of them plantations where one big white farmer would have a lot of houses built around the farming area and people would contract with him and live on his farm. It got to the place that it was so bad that if they found that these individuals had anything to do with the petition that was signed to bring this about that they would fire them from their jobs and have to move from the plantations. They couldn't live there any longer. There were any number of just mean situations that happened like that. I can remember some that related to school work and that was a teacher, a prospective teacher that would come to the area, sometimes I would need to hire - recommend for hiring, they didn't allow me to hire - recommend individuals for interview at the superintendent's office for hiring for the high school or wherever it might

have been. So there was a list of those families who signed that petition. Anybody related to those families, regardless of how qualified they may have been for the position, they would not hire them. I can remember, I didn't know what it was but once I went to the superintendent's office and he would carry in somebody for an interview, they would sit there and question them. What's your name. Do you know such-and-such. We either know them or didn't know them. But if they would mention certain names as Reagan, Briggs - do you know that person. Are you related to them. Richburg, Delane, all those different names, Hilton. This person interviewed didn't get above the board. In other words, we'll let you know something later and letting them know later was, no deal.

100. **Turner:** How do you remember people responding to this kind of white reaction or kind of backlash to what was going on?

101. **Butler:** There were groups that continued to meet and to, say for instance, a lot of farmers were not allowed to gin their cotton if they were kind of independent and didn't have to live on somebody's place but continued to farm, they would pick their cotton and they couldn't carry it to the gin. The ginner wouldn't gin it for them. And in the spring of the year at the time to plant crops they would usually go and get a loan at the bank, get their fertilizer on time or whatever it might have been in order to plant and make their plants, they were refused. So the people had to ban together and form little co-opts that would help them go out and purchase fertilizer. They had to carry their cotton to other gins away in order to get it done.

102.**Turner:** Is that the same with selling their crops? Would they forced to go outside of the area?

103.**Butler:** Yes, that's right. See usually when a person would carry cotton to the gin it was left on the gin yard, it was weighed and left on the gin yard and they would pay them, write them a check from there. But they could not do that here. That was their method of trying to just freeze them out. I remember also that a lot of the graduates from the school, Scott's Branch, when graduation night came, we used to have it at night, those students would come to the graduation and in many instances their bags were already packed and after graduation they would catch the bus or go into Kingstree and get the train and they were headed for other places like, mostly New York City. I had a conversation with somebody not too long ago that we were talking about them and the class the year they graduated and the things that I told them at that time. I told them I said now see here, when you go up to heaven, I called New York heaven, I said when you get to heaven don't you go there to live with your sister and brother or other relatives and get involved in the family matters because if you don't mind you will be put out. When you go in to help your sister fight your husband and because they love each other after a certain length of time she's going to turn and help and say don't hit my husband and you're going to be out the door. So they were laughing about that some time back.

104.**Turner:** Do you remember, I think you were probably I guess still at South Carolina State but maybe when you moved to the area you heard about I think it was the class of 1948 that rebelled about having to pay a fee to graduate or something?

105.**Butler:** I wasn't familiar with that situation. But it's possible because I do know that after I came to this, see I spent six years down here. I only came to this one in 1955 so I wouldn't have known about that. But I do know that even though we were not given things that we were supposed to have because monies coming in from the state level would come through the superintendent's office and it was always that the white schools got the better part of anything, even the financing of the schools, you know. This would make it difficult for us. I'm not saying it because I was there but because of the calibre of teachers that I had and the dedication that they had to education, we had a pretty good system of educating the population of students in the school. I sometimes feel proud of it. I went to Philadelphia for a general class reunion. They call it class reunion but it was any person who attended St. Paul, Spring Hill, Scott's Branch that graduated from Scott's Branch living in and around the area, Philadelphia, New York and other places around like that and some of us from here went. But it was a big class reunion and to tell you the truth, it was so amusing that when I walked in they were there by the thousands and all of these were in there, some of them were teachers that once worked in the school and ex-graduates and the like. It was just so amazing. When I walked in I said to the young man that was on the door collecting who invited me, I went as a speaker for the occasion, I said I cannot do it. He said yes, you can. I said I've talked to all of these individuals. I've stood in the gymnasium over there in class assemblies and the like and standing, talk to them for a long time trying motivate and lift them up you know. But to get them all together at one time in that big room I said un-uh, that scares me. But sure enough it was a very rewarding experience.

106.**Turner:** When was this reunion?

107.**Butler:** This was three years ago.

108.**Turner:** Okay. Again, I don't know, maybe you've just heard about when the Supreme Court passed down the decision to desegregate public schools, before that I understand that they started to construct a new school for the black students here. The state allocated more funding to almost comply with the separate but equal.

109.**Butler:** This took place in 1954 I believe it was. This school right here was built. It was once just an old () type of, looked like a warehouse, white board building with a tin roof and a hallway down the center and classrooms on either side. The hallway down through the center had boards driven up at a certain height that students could hang their coats and their hats to go into the classrooms. The classroom was overcrowded. One teacher had as many as fifty-rome odd students in first grade. Fifty-one, two or three, somewhere along there, anyway. Another old building that was constructed on the outside was Army barracks. They begin to sell those barracks from World War II and there were three of them I believe put together that ran out the other direction off from the other building and this is where one class, the vocational Ag class and a little shop in one of them was set up. Restrooms were out across the ditch in the edge of the pines, one for girls and one for boys.

110.**Turner:** And then they just kind of started to brick in that building or something like that?

111.**Butler:** No, that building was, they did paint it. It needed paint real bad. But just beyond there is where the brick structure joining to the back end of this old run-down type situation, there is where the new part was built on and that was the new high school. At that same time the brick part of the old white school, original white school, was constructed down there in a

very modern, nice way. But this building was thrown together real fast and hurriedly that I don't know how it passed state regulations. But at the same time it was done in order to say well, you have a new school now and you don't have to come over here.

112.**Turner:** Do you remember the NAACP coming down here?

113.**Butler:** Yes.

114.**Turner:** What do you remember about that?

115.**Butler:** First of all, I learned about NAACP when I was at South Carolina State College and I joined the NAACP while I was out in the area doing student teaching down in Yamessee, South Carolina. When I came to this area they had a very strong organization. It was the one who actually went about with the petitions and things of that nature in order to bring about the integration. They met in a church down here by the name of Liberty Hill and another one up here on the corner named St. Mark, AME. Both churches were AME. But I remember them meeting. I attended some of their meetings. The pastor of the Liberty Hill church at that particular time when I was at St. Paul, I joined even as a Baptist. I associated myself with them in that area at the AME church that I might be able to attend services with students from that particular area. So I stayed at that church for twenty-one years. But in attending the meetings, I've gone to some of their meetings. I remember when the NAACP was split. We have now what is called the Clarendon NAACP and you also have the Manning branch. I remember when it split. I can also recall a Mrs. Majestic Simpkins from Columbia coming down trying to prevent it from going into that stage.

116.**Turner:** What happened, what caused the split?

117.**Butler:** I think some of the officers, there was a controversy over some money. One was supposed to have spent some money that they didn't have and this brought it about. But incidentally, in dealing with that branch I used to go to the meetings but the pastor of that church was very much involved in the situation and knew a teacher in this area that affiliated themselves or worked with him talk with me. They told me instead of you coming to the meeting we know who you are, we know what you stand for, said but if you come to the meetings you will be fired and we don't want to lose you. So you just give us your financial and moral support and don't attend the meetings. That was the reason why I didn't go to the meetings when they would hold them monthly, you know. But I was aware of what was going on and was very active in it.

118.**Turner:** From what I understand from what I've heard from other people this was kind of underground. Was that the case? You couldn't like freely talk about your involvement.

119.**Butler:** Un-uh. Let me tell you this little story about that. In 1955 when I came from the St. Paul School over here they transferred me during the summer. Alright, I received a letter from the superintendent at that time requesting me to come from South Carolina State College (End of Side A)

120.Side B

121.**Butler:** ...moving me from the St. Paul Elementary School to the Scott's Branch High School and everyone was having to come in to fill out applications. So they required me to

come in and fill out an application and on that application they boldly asked the question are you a member of the NAACP. So when I got to that question I wrote in there yes because I did not want to be moved from St. Paul out here. I knew that this was going to result in being fired or not being hired. So I filled it out and I put the application on the desk of the secretary and I walked out. I went back to my boarding place at St. Paul and went back in my room and started packing my bags and getting all my belongings together. Finally the lady () called me and said (). Says there's somebody to see you Mr. Butler. I said okay, just a minute. Finally when I went out there sitting in the yard was the superintendent and the chairman of the trustee board. I walked out there and I was so mad, I walked to the door and I said, () you know, kind of angry. I was putting them in agony. I said yes! He said come here a minute we want to talk to you. So I walked out to the door, I said okay, what is it. He said get in. So I just reached and caught the back door and opened it, I didn't get in but I just kind of turned around and sat kind of on the edge of the car seat. He said Butler, we noticed that you filled out your application and you said that you're a member of the NAACP. I said that is correct. He said well, we can't hire you if you put that on your application. I said I know that. They said well, why don't you do this, take, they brought along a new application, take this application and fill it out and don't put that on here. I said well that still wouldn't change the situation, would it. Said yes, but it won't be on our record. I said I'll think about it. And I took it and went back in the house and started packing again. Then finally I decided I'd go up to the church which was up the road about a mile and a half or maybe a mile, somewhere around a mile, and talk to this Reverend Richburg who was the pastor of the church. I said look here, I filled out an application a few minutes ago at the district office and I told them on that application that I was a member of the NAACP. Said I

was just visited by the superintendent and told him what all was said. He said well Mr. Butler, let me tell you what, said if they are willing to do that knowing that you have told them the truth and they want you to tell a lie on it, do it. So I says I'll think about it. I went back to South Carolina State College and I had several friends who were principals of schools in various counties and I told them about it. They told me the same thing. So I filled out that application and mailed it back to them and to this day I haven't heard one word from them concerning this. I was hired back as principal of the high school.

122.**Turner:** () to ask you anything about education, being an educator can you talk about how you see the education of black children changing from the time when you were a child to now? The quality of their education, the content I guess, attitudes toward education.

123.**Butler:** Well, that's a situation which I've seen some changes in. As I told you before I had a very mediocre type bringing up. If it had not been for teachers who were energetic and enthusiastic and very interested in helping to develop the little black girls and boys, there's a lot I would have missed. But I think they did a pretty good job of doing that. When I came out of college and started working I came into a very, very deplorable situation of students and what they had to work with and () and dedicated to the cause, spent all these years trying to build it up. Through my work here at the high school, I had to be very innovative in trying to bring in these types of things, bring in even sometimes speakers that could motivate individuals to look up and try to be somebody you know. Because they'd been pushed so long and not having anything to work with, so I've had the opportunity of having to fight for a lot of things that I needed for them in order to improve their education. Up until 1971 I was elected to serve as the superintendent of the district in which I had been serving under

for so long. And I went into this with that same determination, to do all I could to improve the area and the school system and the educational process. And I feel like we did a pretty good job but this change in administration when I went to the superintendent's office, had to bring in other individuals from other areas to serve as principals of the schools, there's where a lag or slack was that it caused friction among students, teachers, parents and all these type things. And so I served in that office for seven years and when I felt like I couldn't take it any longer I asked them to transfer me then back to the high school and then I came back there and worked for six more years. And in the spring of 1984 I retired because I had put in enough years to move out of the system. But I see certain periods in there where education was doing real well and then I've seen periods in which it seems to be going backwards. Right now I'm serving as a member of the school board of this area and we're very much concerned with the state level of student progress, their measuring up with other systems in the state as well as national. We find that it has been kind of low and we're working very hard to try to build this up.

124.**Murphy:** Just quickly, this is a complete change of subject, but black businesses in Orangeburg as well as in this area, can you tell me what they were like? Were they restaurants primarily and did you patronize these?

125.**Butler:** Oh, yes. Orangeburg has quite a few black businesses that are doing pretty well now, some of them. But at one particular time they were almost frozen out also.

126.**Turner:** When was this? What time?

127. **Butler:** Back during the time when schools were ordered to integrate and individuals were losing their jobs and things of that nature. It was a lag there then because individuals were having to leave this area and go elsewhere to find work. And so they were not here as they were when I first came here. In Orangeburg, it was booming. We had one corner down there called the Webber corner. Webber had a dime store. Webber had a soda shop and various things of that nature. Yes, he was doing real well. I don't remember whether they still have that there now or not but at one time it was moving pretty good.