

Oral History Collection

Donald Payton

Interviewer: W. Marvin Dulaney and Alfred L. Roberts

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Dr. Dulaney: This is September 30, 2011. We are at the Innercity Community Development Corporation interviewing Donald Payton who is a Dallas-ite about the civil rights movement in Dallas County, Texas. Donald, tell us where were you born?

Mr. Payton: I was born in a place called Cleveland, Ohio because my dad went to World War II and he met a girl whose parents lived in Tennessee. He moved up to Cleveland

and she moved to Cleveland and he sent for her and two years later it was me. So I'm a true baby boomer as a result of--I'm a result of World War II. And I was raised, basically, in segregated Dallas. Didn't know it was segregated then.

Dulaney: When did you come to Dallas? You said you were born in Cleveland.

Payton: Something like two months old. Dad came back home to show his war bride. And, as a matter of fact, he got stopped several times because my mother was very high yellow and had long Black hair. And so he got stopped by several policemen that asked, "Who is this and what is this?" because they had--as the war was winding down they treated the men who had been to Europe--soldiers who had been to Europe, differently from the soldiers who had been to the Asian front. The ones who had been to the Asia front, they got a little more respect than the ones who had been to Europe. My dad had told me about the training, how during World War II they would train to capture the Germans and kill the Japanese. They didn't really want them trained to shoot white men. So they trained them, told them, "You just capture

the Germans and you can shoot all the Japanese you want to shoot." And how the segregation of the--his treatment in World War II kind of built up the way that he felt about military and about the war and he passed it on to me. It was kind of where my training was based on stuff that he had learned because the war allowed him to get out of Texas some, but still didn't get away from segregation.

Dulaney: Tell me more about your mother and your father. Where were they from and what did they do?

Payton: My dad was born in Dallas in 1919 and he grew up on a farm out in a section of Dallas called Five Mile which was Oak Cliff. But he grew up in Dallas. And my mom was born in a little place called Brownsville, Tennessee. And again, my dad met her during the war and married her and they lived out some years in California. He just didn't like California. He wanted to come back to his comfort zone. He wanted to come back to Texas. So we lived in a section of Dallas called Oak Cliff and that was--kind of learned a lot of lessons about segregation because whenever we got out of our community we ran into things like the segregated water fountains and I

still know where they are now. I still see them around town. Little monuments to segregation. But my dad always told me, he says, "Look around son. Take a look around." He'd lift me up to drink from the white folk's water fountain [Laughter] because he always believed white folk's water was colder. You know that water probably come through some ice somewhere down off in there. Our water you'd better be careful. See I know what the white folks do in our water fountain which was really true. Little silly things.

Dulaney: What was your parent's occupations?

Payton: My dad was a--after World War II he went to horology school. He became--horology is the study of time and time pieces. He was a watch and clock repairman. So he studied that for a while. Then he went to landscape school to become a professional landscaper. Then he went to chef school. Kind of taking advantage of all of the advantages that World War II had promised. And he finally ended up retiring from the United States Post Office. My mom worked two jobs. She worked in a place called Reigns [?] Supermarket. She was the second or third Black cashier in Dallas

County. Reigns Supermarket hired the first Black women on cash registers. And they had a store in Short North Dallas. Had one over in south Dallas on [unclear] in later years. She was basically a grocery cashier most of her days.

Dulaney: What were their names?

Payton: My dad was Earnest Payton and my mom was Ida Payton. They were pretty progressive for the time. Like I say, my dad worked at the post office, so he got a chance to be in that first group or the second group, at least, of the Black postmen. These were the men who were hired as a result of World War II. And they would as a result of some of the work of a man named A. Maceo Smith who was responsible for coming in enforcing federal guidelines. He worked at the post office until he retired. We all kind of followed what Dallas was doing. We moved from Oak Cliff out to a section of Dallas called Hamilton Park which was quite an experience, you know, to be part of that integration movement.

Dulaney: When was that?

Payton: That was the summer of 1955. We moved to Hamilton Park which was pretty unique within itself. It was an experiment on Black suburbia. And it was quite an experience because I was surrounded by Black professionals. We had dentists. We had lawyers. We had doctors. We had musicians. And it really was an inspiration because it showed us what we could become. It was no impossible dream because we saw these people. Dr. Joseph Williams and dentist--Dr. Foster Kidd. Musicians like John Hardee who was an international saxophone player. Mr. Hardee's wife taught at Hamilton Park School. We had coach Theolus [?] [unclear] who was coach at Prairie View. So we had a lot of professionals. It was really a unique community, Hamilton Park was. We always had something to balance Hamilton Park off and the things that was so nice about Hamilton Park and even growing up is that we had people who were integrationists. We had people like Mrs. Wilhelmina [?] Reddick who later looked like a white lady. She was our Scout leader and she used to take us to all of these scouting events. And people would look at us and go like, "Who's this crazy white lady with all these little Black kids?" [Laughter] And she

would bring us in and she kept us--"Boys you go over here. Learn how to tie ropes. And you boys go over here and learn how to make Boy Scout things." Now that we look back on it we were integrating the Boy Scouts in the early 1950s. We were allowed to go up to Boy Scout camp called Camp Texoma up in Pottsboro, Oklahoma [Pottsboro, Texas]. The Black Boy Scouts from across Texas got the last week. We got the week just before school started. And of course everything was broken and damaged, but we were so used to broken and damaged things we just played right through it, you know. [Laughter] We shot broken arrows. Right on. [Laughter] That was, again, part of the integration movement is to have people who told us, "If it was good enough for their kids it was good enough for our kids." We were on the cusp of Brown vs. Topeka when the school teachers--as a matter of fact one of my old teachers was telling me about when they went down and they asked Dr. W.T. White when the schools in Dallas was going to be integrated. And Dr. White kind of rubbed his chin and looked around and said, "Oh, in about fifty years." [Laughs] So you had one group who was trying to teach us right from wrong and teach us the value

of education and on the other hand we got a school superintendent who was going to avoid the federal law for the next fifty years.

Dulaney: Talk about your education. Where did you go to school at in Dallas?

Payton: I started off at a little Catholic school over in Oak Cliff that was called Immaculate Heart of Mary School. It was a Catholic missionary school. They, after some years of reflecting back and talking with people, a lot of these people were probably so mean they'd been probably put out of every Catholic convent around the country so they sent them to us in Oak Cliff. [Laughs] It was very structured. And it was the Catholic school for Oak Cliff. You had St. Agnes [?] School for south Dallas. You had St. Peters School for north Dallas. We had Immaculate Heart of Mary School for over in Oak Cliff. From there we went to Hamilton Park School which was, again, a unique experience because we lived with our teachers. We saw them at their best and we saw them at their worst. They always wore neck ties. Never saw our teachers-our women teachers without stockings and that kind of thing. We didn't see them



in short shorts and mini-skirts or torn and tattered jeans. They always taught us how to maintain a level of professionalism.

Dulaney: This is at Hamilton Park School?

Payton: Yes this was at Hamilton Park School. It was actually a Richardson school district. I can remember the superintendent coming over named J.J. Pearce who was superintendent and so strange. He used to come over and visit our school and he would make our principal--principal Jones come from behind the big desk and sit at front. And he would sit behind the desk and make Mr. Jones sit in the little chair. He sat in the big chair. [Laughs] But it was a good school because it was the only Black school in Richardson. And so we got a chance to share in a lot of the resources that the Richardson school district had. We were the first school district in America to have television. We were so excited when we found out. They came in and told us that the Richardson school district was going to have television and we pictured Sky King and Lone Ranger. But they gave us The Science Man [Laughter] and educational things. Of course it wasn't the most exciting of television.

But because television was still pretty new. And you and imaging educational television was even newer than television. We were exposed to a lot of conveniences at Hamilton Park School. We never--the school never went without. Until when I went out and saw what other school districts had. You know we had a Coke machine there in the school. We had a snack machine. People would just be amazed. They would come from other schools and they'd say, "Man, these kids got a soda machine in their school! Man, and a snack machine! What kind of school is this?" Because kids coming out of school in the 1940s and 1950s they were still--a lot of them were still dealing with one-room schools. Those colored schools, you know. We had very resourceful parents. We had educated parents who understood the value of supporting the school and supporting the school district. Again, we lived and worked and worshiped with our teachers. And a lot of them were community leaders. Mr. Walter McMillan and that group. They were involved with voter registration [and] poll tax. And they talked about these things to us. By the fact that we saw then every day, they became like a border between parental and teachers. It

wasn't like teachers you saw them during the day and didn't see them again till the next school day. You lived next door and across the street from these people.

Dulaney: Did you take classes from Mr. Griffin or play sports under James Griffin?

Payton: Oh, yes. I just saw him just two weeks ago at a funeral for Coach Jarnell [?] Jones. I was there when Mr. Griffin came. He was my seventh grade social studies teacher and he was also chairman of the board. He used to carry this little board and he used to paddle us. Paddle us with this board. [Laughter] Make us get in line. He was kind of guy who like lines. He always wanted us to have those good lines. "Get in line boys! Get in line!" Coach Griffin, we called him Duffy when his back was turned. Coach Duffy. It so odd because this year, in 1961, we one state championship in football. We won state champs. The Hamilton Park Bobcats. Yeah, I used to admire Mr. Griffin. And he was a true believer in education. He was the disciplinarian because Jarnell [?] Jones who just passed two weeks ago was the player coach.

He was the one who brought the swagger to Hamilton Park.

Dulaney: Was this the guy they called Jap [?] Jones?

Payton: No. This was Jarnell [?] Jones. He had just come up Florida A&M [University]. He was a quarterback. Would have gone to the pros if the pros would have been allowing Black quarterbacks. But he was throwing to a guy that ended up in the hall of fame name Willie Galimore who played for the Chicago Bears. Died very tragically in a car accident. But Jones was his quarterback. He brought in a series of pro-plays. And he man was truly a miracle worker because he took a group of pimple-faced, skinny-legged boys from Hamilton Park and, inside of two years, turned us into state champions.

Dulaney: Did you play football?

Payton: Well I played for a while. Till I found out they were bigger, stronger, and faster. [Laughter] So I got more into reading and writing. [Laughter] And then as the 1960s started to come in I really started to focus a lot more on the Civil Rights Movement. I was trying to stay tuned to what was happening in a place called

Cuba. I started off, as a matter of fact, learning to read by reading the Dallas Morning News. I started reading the Dallas Morning News probably at the age of four. And then I discovered a newspaper called The Christian Science Monitor. In the fifth grade a lady named Miss Carrie Wallace, who was our school secretary--somebody had ordered The Christian Science Monitor, but nobody read it, so every morning they'd get The Christian Science Monitor and it'd still have a rubber band around it. I'd come by the office and she'd say, "Donald Payton, here's your newspaper." And she would give me The Christian Science Monitor and I would read when the rest of the kids were reading the general stuff. Teachers would let me go in the back and read The Christian Science Monitor. So I kind of had a skewed vision of the world because The Christian Science Monitor was a very liberal newspaper. As a matter of fact, one--I forgot what the man's name was--famous writer. I asked him one time, if he was stranded on an island one of the things he'd have to have in his. And his quote was, "I'd have to have The Christian Science Monitor newspaper." It was a liberal newspaper and it made me--it allowed me to

balance the Dallas Morning News because the Dallas Morning News did very little coverage on the Civil Rights Movement. And I knew very well that the Civil Rights Movement was going on, but wasn't in the daily paper. Neither the [Dallas] Time Herald nor the [Dallas] Morning News. They just kind of played it off, but I knew it was happening because a lot of this was mentioned in the Christian Science Monitor. Then a couple things that really kind of started me to look at what was happening in the Civil Rights Movement was the murder of Emmett Till because they always warned the boys, "Be careful out there. Remember what happened to Emmett Till." And we had another guy that got executed in the state of Texas. His name was Tommy Lee Walker. Tommy Lee Walker was a neighborhood kid. Grew up here in Dallas and supposedly raped a white woman. He died in the electric chair. And I can remember people lining up to go over to--[unclear]--to see the body of Tommy Lee Walker. And as a young man electrocuted. So, you know, seeing this kind of stuff as a kid it really made me color conscious because growing up in a Black neighborhood Black people talked about white people. [Laughs] And also

growing up around people who were maids and cooks and that kind of thing. They always talked about what white people were doing. One good thing about it is that my grandmothers and my aunts would bring home magazines like Look magazine, Life, Saturday Evening Post. We used to play--well now we know they were poverty games. We used to play "That's my car". We would go through a magazine and we would say, "That's my car!" "No you got it last time." But we were teaching ourselves how to read. We were teaching ourselves how to read and how to research. And then I got introduced to the book mobile. A lady named Essie Reid and another man named Mr. Fennel would bring the book mobile out to Hamilton Park. So the book mobile would park across the street from my house because they knew they had a customer. [Laughter] They would always bring books, but they only came once a week. I can remember the book mobile and then going to the Black library which was over in north Dallas--the [Paul Lawrence] Dunbar Library. But it was always little and kind of, you know--

Dulaney: What street was the Dunbar library on? Do you recall?

Payton: I want to say it was on Worth Street. Worth off of Thomas [Avenue] [Corner of Worthington and Thomas]. Like I said, it had started to kind of dwindle then because we had the book mobile. And then I would--on Saturdays my parents would drop me off in downtown Dallas. Drop me off at the library and Miss Essie would hold that back door open and sneak me in. "Come on in son. Shh, shh, shh." And I'd be up--I'd be reading old newspapers on the microfilm reader. I can remember this big white security guard. He'd be standing over me [crosses arms imitating security guard] He was waiting for me to break the law. [Laughs] And I'd often wonder, 'I wonder what his job really is', you know. I guess he felt like, 'Well one day this boy here he's going to end up teaching somebody and they going to end up teaching somebody. Boy if he just sneezes or if he passes gas I got him.' [Laughter] So I don't know where he is, but I guess he's secure wherever he is since he's in charge of security. But that was my--I used to love the library. That was my favorite place. It was cool in the summer and warm in the winter and they always had programs going. Other little Black kids used to surprise me because they never went.



"Donald, what you do in the library? There's nothing in there but books. What you do in there?" I said, "Oh man, they got programs and films." I loved reading those old newspapers because I like doing historical comparisons. How things change and still remain the same. How, in example, in 1915 all of the Black teachers had a state convention to discuss this horrible music that the kids were listening to. And it was going to ruin the kids. They were putting down the classics and they were listening to this dirty low-down music called rag-time. And this rag-time was going to ruin these kids. That was just always--they say the same thing about jazz, same thing about rock and roll, same thing about rap. It's music, boy, it's music. What's going to happen? So I liked that. And then we moved from Hamilton Park in 1962 over to Cedar Crest [south Dallas neighborhood]. I can remember the--because it was so strange how we would move. When we were in Oak Cliff we were paying \$24 a month. Then we moved to Hamilton Park and we were paying \$66 a month. I can remember my parents saying, "Son, I'd really like to get those tennis shoes" or "Son, I'd really like for you to visit this thing, but we got to pay that

\$66." Then we moved to Cedar Crest and I can remember as a man was handing my dad the payment book. Says, "Yeah, you can stay here as long as you pay that \$118 a month." And my dad said, "I'm going to be damn sure to pay that \$118 a month." [Laughs] And the guy that we bought the house from—a guy named Don Fisher. We gave him a check and he blurred out of the house. He took off so fast. He left the refrigerator, furnishings, food in the refrigerator. He said, "You all can have it." So this was my first experience at white flight. [Laughter] Well, I had never lived any place where white people had lived. We moved from Oak Cliff from a [unclear] house to Hamilton Park which was brand new. Then we moved back to Oak Cliff.

Dulaney: Why did y'all move back to Oak Cliff?

Payton: Well, my dad was from Oak Cliff and there was a chance for us to get a brick house. And it was right across the street from the Cedar Crest golf course. My dad had been attached to the golf courses. He was--after landscape school, he was the greens keeper for the Negro golf course which later became [unclear] golf course [Elm Thicket, Dallas] which later became Love

Field. So he liked golf and he liked golf courses. And our house faced a golf course. And my dad used to say, "They might be lawyers and teachers and doctors, but they all live behind me. None of them live in front of me. They all live behind me." Says, "Nobody will ever live in front of us." It was so strange because Cedar Crest at one time was the plantation that was owned by the man who owned our family. So we moved actually back on the plantation. [Laughter] The same spot where William Brown Miller's plantation had been 140 years earlier. We moved back to the plantation. So--And that was always a very strong sense of pride. That all of these highly educated people with all of these resources lived behind a little man from Five Mile, Texas with a sixth-grade education. They all lived behind him. That was a real sense of pride with him because when we moved to Cedar Crest it was right after--I think the first lady to integrate Cedar Crest was a lady named Miss Megan [?]. W.T. White called on the phone and asked her was it true what he had heard. And she said, "Well, what did you hear?" And he says, "I hear you buying a house in Cedar Crest." And she says, "Well you certainly

heard the truth. I'm certainly buying a house in Cedar Crest." And he said, "Well I just want to let you know that if you buy this house in Cedar Crest you're never going to teach again in Dallas Independent School District." She ended up having to teach over in Irving because Dr. W.T. White cancelled that contract.

Dulaney: Yes. That story was in the Express, by the way.

Payton: Was it?

Dulaney: Yes it was.

Payton: So now we start to see integration come in. Cedar Crest is starting to integrate. We're getting the second wave of white flight. First wave was south Dallas. We were there living with relatives when south Dallas integrated. And, man, people got up out of there. I was just a kid. I didn't know what was happening. I just knew we had white neighbors one day and the next day the house was empty. [Laughter] I didn't know it was because of me. I didn't feel like I was threatening anybody. I was four years old. All I wanted to do was play and read newspapers and eat Cream of Wheat. I didn't want to threaten anybody.

Watching that white flight come that was pretty amazing to look at. What people did--what the City of Dallas did to prevent it. Because initially Oak Cliff was from what we call the bottom up to Marrell [?]. The year that we were supposed to integrate the Dallas Independent School District went in a dug out a hole and put us in a school called [Franklin D.] Roosevelt High School. It was all brand new, but we started in a hole. So that meant that we got to dig out of a hole. [Laughs] Because now I see most schools are built on hills where you go up.

Dulaney: Wasn't that a dump before? The site for Roosevelt?

Payton: Well, it wasn't really a dump. It was just kind of a community landfill. The dump was down--the official dump-- Anyway, it was a hole. So they gave us Roosevelt High School and we didn't know that it was a ploy to keep us out of South Oak Cliff High School because they saw that we were getting ready to integrate south Oak Cliff. Because now people had moved--in the summer of 1962 people had moved to south Oak Cliff. And so the white people who had just moved just a few years earlier from south Dallas to relocate to south Oak Cliff now they got to move

again because here we are. Guess who's coming to dinner? So here we are now, so they say, "What can we do?" So they say, "Let's give them a new school." So they dug a hole up and gave us a school off in there. We moved and then they transferred us to Roosevelt. It had been such a game because we had gone to [James] Madison [High School]. The bulk of us had called it Madison. Rather than give a bus that went from across the bridge--from Madison to across the bridge, we had to catch the bus at Madison, go downtown and transfer to another bus to catch another bus to bring us back to Oak Cliff. What was it--47 Moore was a bus that the kids from Oak Cliff caught. So instead of making it easy for us to be educated they made it harder because now you've got to have a token card--now you've got to have money to get a token card. Now you've got to keep up with your token card. They you've got to use your token card to catch a bus that takes you downtown and you've got to catch the bus downtown rain, shine, sleet, or snow that takes you back to Oak Cliff. [Laughs] It was virtually an hour and a half to get from a five-minute drive from across the bridge. [Laughs] So it's never been easy for us to

get an education in Dallas. Ain't never made it a pleasure. They've always made it a chore. And then after I left and I saw how segregated the Dallas schools really were I--

Dulaney: When you say you left--oh, you were going to tell us where you went.

Payton: You know, I went up to Cleveland to stay in Cleveland for a while with my grandparents and I saw Cleveland was integrated. And I noticed even in the schools the kids had all kinds of violins and violas and bass. And in the gym they had all kind of gymnastic stuff. Pommel horses and rings and that kind of stuff. And I come back to Dallas and all of our bands are some you've got to blow a beat, you know. [Laughter] We didn't have the strings and those kind of things. Whenever I would mention it people would say, "Oh well, let's just be thankful. Let's be thankful for what we got."

Dulaney: What did you do after you graduated? You graduated high school in 1965?

Payton: Yes I graduated class of 1965.

Dulaney: Where did you go? What did you do?

Payton: I went up to a school called North Texas State University.

A lot of my friends went down to Prairie View [now Prarie View A&M University], but I wanted to go see what white folks was teaching. I had Black folks teach me twelve years--fifteen years--all my life had Black folks. Daddy, mamma, grandmamma, aunts. It was an opportunity for us to--and it was again a move because now we reflect back how the State of Texas--they say, "Well, we ain't going to overly integrate the University of Texas. Texas A&M I had to question. That's a good old boys school so we certainly ain't going to send them to A&M. We got to send them somewhere. Says, "What should we do? Well, since the bulk of them are coming from the north Texas region, Dallas, Fort Worth, Denison, and Sherman." North Texas [State University] was already integrated. We'd already had [Willie] Atkins vs. [James Carl] Matthews case. So they say, "Well, let's round up the biggest and the brightest and send them to Denton. Send them to North Texas. Let's just lump them. We got to send them somewhere. Hell, let's send them to Denton." So they ended up lumping all of us up to North Texas. The bulk of us came in on--we didn't know it then, but it was really legal.



They brought us in on scholastic probation. "Schol-pro". They called to "schol-pro". [Laughs] We had never even been to college and we came in on probation. It was an experience because we were-- the dorms integrated in 1964. We came in the summer of 1965. So they integrated the campus. The women's dorm had already integrated. A lady name Betty Morgan who was one of my neighbors in Hamilton Park, she had integrated and she lived in Oak Street I think. She was one of the first to integrate the dorm. And when we integrated the dorms they put a little star behind all of the Black kid's names. So when it came time to send a guy to a room his parents wouldn't open the door and have a fatal heart attack [laughs] seeing that their son was going to have to share a room with a Black guy. So they put a little mark--a little star behind--we saw the book.

Dulaney: Behind your name?

Payton: Behind all the Black kid's names. All the Black kid's names, so the parents wouldn't come in there--Johnny Leibowitz [laughs] and they open the door and little Johnny has got a Black roommate. But North Texas it was still very segregated. I see a lot of it now.

We see Dr. Matthews and we pass him every morning. We speak and he'd look at us like he wished that he had a magic wand or he could make us disappear.

Dulaney: Dr. Matthews was the president?

Payton: President of North Texas State [University], yes. J.C. Matthews. And I had a roommate named Willie Davis. Willie was a basketball player. He was six [feet] eight [inches], about 280 [pounds]. The man had to see him. Biggest guy on campus. And he'd never speak. And we'd speak. We found out later after talking with each other. "Morning, Dr. Matthews" and he'd look like he had the weight of the world on his shoulders. And having professors that--can remember a history professor telling me, "You know, my biggest influence in my life was my grandfather. I loved my grandfather. I loved my grandfather. He told me, "When the slaves were freed that America went downhill and we haven't recovered from that yet," And I said to myself, 'Okay', you know. Just the way that they could look at you like-- one guy as a matter of fact, told us--he didn't like point at us and tell us, but [he said], "Some of you in here the best you are ever going to get in my class

is a C, so if you get a C you be very happy with that." A lot of us understand now how the teachers felt because we had gotten to his classroom coming from whence we had come with out of date books and adequate material, bad school, bad transportation and we had to overcome all of this and here we have made it to his room-to his arena then if he taught us what he knew and it made everything available for us then in another four years we had a chance to come back and take his job. And taking the job that he had reserved for his kids and grandkids. For every slot that we took that meant that his chance of getting tenure was going to be narrowed down. And so the sixties kicked in. The kids in the sixties, they had to integrate, but they didn't have to treat us fair. So housing changed at North Texas [State University]. Denton didn't change. We started running into those rednecks in Denton. And then also running into white kids that had never met Black kids eye to eye. So some of them, they were just as prejudice and racist as their parents and grandparents because that's what they had been taught to be. They [unclear] go back to Spur, Texas and treat Black folks fair. They were from--their

daddy was mayor of Spur, so he had no reason to treat us as equal. But they also found out--some of these young kids were brilliant because they had gotten this far with limited material. Some of them were math geniuses and chemists because they had had teachers who had come out of the Black universities. See, the Dallas school system didn't allow--well, the state of Texas didn't allow Black teachers to get advanced degrees. Some of these teachers had gone to UCLA [University of California Los Angeles] and USC [University of Southern California], Michigan and Michigan State and NYU [New York University], and Columbia [University]. So they came back with a lot of teaching experience that even the white teachers didn't have. So they were able to teach around whatever little obstacle they could put in the way because a lot of these teachers had never left Denton. They were good and Denton was it for them. They'd come from Krum, [Texas] and Ponder, [Texas] -- them little towns, so when they finally got to North Texas [State University], you can stay at North Texas and get your bachelors, your masters, and your doctorate and never leave Denton. We found that some of them were as limited--and some of the

Black teachers that we had had had the experiences of traveling the world. Especially coming from a place like Hamilton Park where you had musicians, teachers, and All-American athletes. So I had something to balance it with. And when we got to North Texas it was an integration movement. And then you know, Blackness kicked in. That Black power thing kicked in. You had Martin and you had Malcolm [X]. An autobiography of Malcolm had just come out. We started being real conscious--as conscious as you could be at a college campus in 1965, 1966. Watching the integration thing come and watching America kind of stamp on it. They tried to keep the lid on this. And they--in summer of 1964, Watts [Los Angeles, California] blew up. I had a cousin that was in the Watts Riot and they used to tell the story about when they started to riot his mom ran out in the street -- in the middle of the street and said, "White people! white people! Turn around! Don't come in here! Don't come in here! They going crazy! Turn around!" [Laughter] Man, he'd say that first blaze went off and everybody went, "Oooh!" And this blaze went off and this blaze went off and before you know it whole Watts was burning. And he said, "Yeah man,

my mama and them put me on a ship and sent me to the Navy." He said they went crazy. They used to talk about how Mercy had gone out and, "White people! Ohh Lord! Jesus Christ, don't come in here! They going crazy! They going crazy!" He said, "Mama" [She said], "Come on back in here." That boy had gone crazy and set this place on fire. [Laughter] So, that was how--like I said the sixties blew up. And then we started being conscious of the war--the Vietnam War and started seeing guys that we had just graduated with just a few months ago being shipped back home dead [or] injured. Coming back home with no legs. Missing limbs. And these were the guys who had gone in in like 1962, 1963, and 1964. Had gone in a little bit before us. Now they're coming home. I can remember one week they sent us all letters to come take a test to see if you qualified to be in college. Now we were in college, but they sent us a test to see if we could take this test to qualify to be in college. And they said, "Everybody's taking the test."

Dulaney: This is at North Texas?

Payton: Yeah. Well what it was is that a lot of these little towns now had got to fill their quotas. So let's get the boys who were in college. They're more threatening, you see, because these boys are educated. They are going to come back and they going to influence their little brothers and little sisters to go off away to college and they're not going to come back. And if they don't come back who going to work at the mill. Who's going to keep the grocery stores going? If these kids go off so these boys [unclear] start getting these letters. A lot of us were--I guess the bulk of us were the children of World War II soldiers. So a lot of these men--in World War II the military was the best thing that ever happened to them. It got them off the farm. It got them the G.I. [Bill] to go to school. A lot of them went down to Prairie View. Got degrees. And so the military was the best thing. Had grown up in a military environment. And so the best thing that could ever happen to them was go off and join the military. "Join the Army, son. [It will] make a man out of you." Come back to school. Go off and do--so a lot of them they actually [unclear]. A lot of them they didn't come back as a result of--

Dulaney: How did you avoid the draft?

Payton: Oh well, you know. It was just a draft. They had enough people. [Laughter] And then also--

Dulaney: You had a student deferment too?

Payton: No, no, no, no. I went down and discussed student deferment and this lady name Helen Bush down there [at the] wholesale merchants building. She said, "Oh no, a deferment's not for you." And I said, "Not for me?" She says, "Oh no, you got to go." So I said, "Well, it says on the back here if--on the back of this card if you have a problem come meet the draft, come and talk with the draft board." So I said, "When can I meet with the draft board?" She says, "Oh no, that's not for you. No, you can't meet with the draft board now. No." So every day I got up and went down and hung out down there until one day I saw this room full of old, old, old, old white men meeting and I said, "That's the draft board." So I went in and met with the draft board. I explained to them that I was a student, I was a son a disabled World War II vet. I was an only child. They said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. Good, good, good." They said, "Okay. Yeah, good. Alright, next." And I said,



"Well, what's the decision here?" Says, "Oh we have no decision, son. You didn't come to get no decision did you?" I said, "Well, yeah." And they says, "Oh, well, Miss Bush at the front desk. What that white lady say?" [I said], "She says I got to go." And they said, "Well, you got to go." [Laughter] And I did that, now. I went across the country--traveling, hitchhiked. Oh, no, I wasn't going to the war, man. I was as conscious--as conscious as I was--

Dulaney: You basically just went AWOL [Absent without Leave].

Payton: Well, no I didn't go AWOL. Got to go in to go AWOL. I didn't go in. I figured I could fight better from the outside. As Lyndon Johnson used to say, I'd rather have 'em in the tent pissing out then out of the tent pissing in. [Laughter] So, I felt like if I-- I had more resources to fight from the outside-to keep out, than I had on the inside-to get out. Then watching how--now Birmingham is blowing up, the Freedom Riders are all getting beat up and the Watts Riot had come off. So I saw this war thing as a ploy to round up all the young Black men and send them away and thin them out, you know. As a way of, actually, genocide. Get rid of us and especially the

ones in college. We wanted them first because those are the ones who can read, write, and count. [Laughs] We want them because those are the most threatening. I went down and again I knew that it was no way in the world that they weren't going to put me in the most hazardous--because, the way I'm thinking, I'm nineteen years old, I'm military, all of the civil rights stuff is happening around me. They killing off the kids. They blowing up buildings. And all of a sudden they send me a gun and an envelope and going to put me on a plane and drop me down in the middle of Southeast Asian desert. And my job is to go out and kill unarmed men, women, and children and burn up their straw houses and kill off their oxen. And I'd better do that because if I don't do that I'm going to be in trouble. I felt like being dropped off in the middle of the Vietnam jungle--and I had a dear friend who told me the story about being a tunnel rat. I says, "A tunnel rat. What the hell is a tunnel rat?" He says, "Well, the Vietnamese for the last 1,500 years have been fighting and they dug these cities underground." He said, "They got a little whole like this. [Shows size with hands] And they take you and

give you a forty-five -- a gun and a flashlight. And a little guy like you they going to put you up in that tunnel and your job is to go up in that tunnel and make all of them people in that tunnel line up and march out. And that's your job." And man, I could see that as clear as I could see that sunshine. Every guy that I had met in the military in that whole draft environment talked mean to you and they had bad teeth and bad cigar burns and they just-- everybody was mean acting, you know. It was time for peace, y'all. It's about peace. And I had grown up listening to old men tell stories about World War I. Had a great-great-uncle--great-granduncle and he was telling me about how they had sent him to World War I and one of them marching songs was "We're going to kill the Kaiser, we're going to kill the Kaiser". And he said that he was a peaceful man. He just wanted to rough the Kaiser up a little bit. He didn't want to kill the man. [Laughs] Says, "I didn't know the man. I didn't want to kill him. I just rough him up a little bit." So I had grown up around guys who wasn't very militarized. My uncle--my dad's brother told me about how he had--he was afraid. He didn't fish, he didn't hunt, he didn't

do nothing woods, he didn't go into weeds, none of that. He hated snakes. He was afraid of snakes. Wouldn't look at a picture of a snake. Wouldn't even talk about it. He said, "Man, they were going to put me where those snakes were." [Shakes head imitating uncle] It was like the Army was kind of like a big joke around the family. Here you got these guys who really wanted to go because that's their outlet. But hey man, I've been reading The Christian Science Monitor since the age of ten. My view was a little more skewed than those other people. I went there and folks were crying. My friends had been sent back in boxes. I just didn't see how that was going to benefit Donald Payton -- going off to learn how to kill Vietnamese, to kill unarmed peasants. You know how you get some guys--at a certain age they got that vim and vigor. They want to go off. They want to go to war. That makes a man out of you, boy. My thing was a little bit--staying home and taking care of the home front was a little more important to me. And now fifty years later they admitted it was a mistake. [Robert] McNamara and all of them now say, "Man, that was our big mistake." And I was nineteen years old in college. I didn't need a rock to fall

on me to know a mistake when I saw it. [Laughs] I was in college. I saw mistakes. I saw mistakes on my papers every day. My mistakes were written in red. [Laughs] So that whole Vietnam thing and the military--and then when the country changed they kind of came around and, you know. Then the anti-war movement started. And then we had Muhammad Ali who was saying, "Ain't no Viet Cong ever call me Nigger." So we had somebody who was running point for us. People started saying, "Well, if this man is willing to give up his championship and all of his money and everything, maybe we need to look at this a little different." And as people looked at it different then the war and the military and people's attitudes toward that started to change. Then I had been up in Cleveland and had seen Cleveland burn--the Hough neighborhood had burn. And was it Fred Ahmed and that group--

Dulaney: Ahmed Evans.

Payton: Yes, Fred Ahmed Evans. You remember.

Dulaney: Yes. I grew up near Cleveland.

Payton: Did you? Yes, Fred Ahmed Evans. I was in Cleveland in the 1960s watching this happen and then it was like, 'Man, I'm not the only one that feel like it is one big mistake? So I took the test and it just--

Dulaney: The test you all were given to see--

Payton: Oh, no, no. I didn't take it. I was already in college. I didn't have to take a test to prove that I should be in college. My friend said, "Donald, man, this is the government. You'd better take that test or you going to be in trouble." Two weeks after that test everybody that took it was gone. [Laughs] And, man, you were in college. You didn't have to prove that. It was just a season of trickery, you know. The U.S., the federal government, and people were--the lines were being drawn then. You starting to see the angry Americans. And then I started to run into liberal white people who kind of befriended me. This is my first time really having white friends and seeing how they felt about things, how they got treated when they went into a place. How they got treated and how I got treated. How I got treated when I was with them and how I got treated when I was by myself. So I'm starting to see now what true

integration could be like. And again, I didn't want to off into that whole military thing [which] was--it was almost like a bullet going-picking on some little country. Because I wasn't threatened by the Vietnamese. I didn't have the slightest idea that one day the Vietnamese would be in America opening businesses and owning shopping centers and doing nails and fixing hair and sending their kids to Harvard and Dartmouth and Yale. [Laughs]

Dulaney: So to bring you more forward towards the present, what did you do after you graduated? You graduated from UNT?

Payton: No, no. I didn't graduate because I left and went out to--I left Denton and opened a little book store... Had a little book store there for a while. Called it North Star. Me and another friend. And we sold The Red Book and The Wretched of the Earth by Franz Fanon and autobiography of Malcolm. And we started to bring people in-coming around and talking like we brought a guy in name Alex Haley who was in town. Whenever they'd come to Denton they'd stop by the book store. One day had a couple come in -- a tall lady named Pat and a short guy named Ken Gjemre. They were watching us. They come in the store and

were looking around. And they says, "Well, how do you make this work?" And [I] says, "Well, we're in Denton. This is a book town. Everything based on books" [I] say, "We pay a nickel or a dime or a quarter for a book and we sell that book for half the cover price." So the guy says, "Hey Don, I have a station wagon full of books." [He] said, "Give me \$10. I graduated. I'm out of here." Says, "Give me \$10 for gas and I'll see you later. Headed down the road." Loaded all these books out and standing there [with] this short guy [with] thick glasses. And I said, "This is a \$25 book here. This one book is going to pay \$10 worth of gas." Guy looked up and looked down again. Kind of looked at me. And the next summer they went and started a little book store called Half-Price Book Store. Yeah, Pat Johnson [Pat Anderson] and Ken Gjemre. And I said, "Oh, another good idea--another idea gone well." [Laughter] And now they have a hundred plus stores. I left and went out to the Bay area [San Francisco, California]. Lived in the Bay area where I got a chance to meet Penny Jackson and Mama Jackson. And Penny Jackson's brother was George Jackson who was a Soledad Brother. He went into the court room in



Marin County-Marin County, California and killed the judge out there. I was hanging out with them. Hanging out with all kinds of writers and poets, you know, the California thing. Hanging out with--he wrote a book called The Many Lives and Loves of Mr. Jive-ass Nigger. Cecil Brown. Just hanging out with Cecil Brown and they were driving sports cars with scarves around their necks and dark sunglasses. [Laughs] They kind of look at me like a country boy out of Dallas, Texas. If you run with us you can live the California life -- San Francisco lifestyle. We got it good out here, you know. I said, "Man, this is alright, but it's not home." I lived there for a while and came back to Dallas and worked and got kids.

Dulaney: When did you get married?

Payton: My daughter is what--twenty-six now. And I had a son before, [but] I didn't marry his mom. She was a child of 1960s, you know. Those 1960s people that's when marriage and all that became negotiable. That marriage thing slowed me down. [Laughter] I didn't have time to be slowing down now. So again, watching, being a child of the 1960s and now

watching the children of the children of the 1960s and seeing how it's almost like the sacrifices-- nobody remembers the people who made the sacrifices. Nobody remembered the Carr [or] Hamptons [Johnnie Carr? Fred Hampton?] and the kids at Southern [University] because when you read the American story it's going to talk about the kids at Kent State, but not going to talk about the kids at South Carolina State and the kids down in the Southern who were killed by United States troopers. So they were killing our college students. Man, that college campus wasn't a nice place to be. [Laughs] The federal government was shooting college kids. So through that I saw segregation, integration, integration in education, segregation in education and was able to--I've had a unique experience because I've had the ability to compare it. I didn't grow up in a totally segregated environment or totally integrated environment. I lived basically in Black communities, but through my life experiences I've been able to meet with people who made changes. I met Judge [A. Leon] Higginbotham [Jr.] up in New Jersey. I mean, all kinds of people either up in [unclear] or people who I had read

about. Guy named Fritz Pollard. Do you remember  
Fritz Pollard?

Dulaney: A football player?

Payton: Yes. First Black coach back in the late 1920s. [unclear]  
Meeting these kind of people who had changed  
America. So it gave me a view that all Black people  
wasn't good and all white people wasn't bad. It  
enabled me to make better decisions because I have  
been in all those different environments. Then  
watching segregation fall. Watching how when the  
bathrooms used to be men, women and colored, and  
they changed them to one, two, and three. Gave the  
white men door one, the white women door two, and  
all the Black folks door number three. Watching the  
restaurants change.

Dulaney: When did that happen and was that here in Dallas?

Payton: Well, the first picket line I was in was down at a place  
called Piccadilly Restaurant. I came home and my  
folks says, "Where you been?" I says, "I was in a  
picket line" [Imitating mother], "Picket line! Boy,  
what you doing in a picket line?" I said, "Well, I  
got down there and I got caught up in it, ma." [She

said], "Boy, you ain't been caught up in nothing yet. You keep going to those picket lines and you are going to get caught up." But it has been a very unique experience watching--well, old north Dallas was a perfect example. The State-Thomas area. Watching how it went from a viable Black community down. And now it's back, but it's white now. [Laughs] So watching how places like Deep Ellum [Dallas, Texas]-the old central track--going down that old central track and going into the segregated theaters. Little Old Harlem that smelled so bad you could smell it [laughs] before you went in it. And then the nice theater we had over--it wasn't nice, but it was nice to us-the State Theater over in north Dallas. And then watching--allowing us to go down to the Majestic and sit up in what we called the "buzzard's nest" [or] up in the "crow's nest" and watching the movies. Figuring out why they pay \$2 and we pay fifty cents. We all seeing the same movie. [Shakes head] [Unclear] really costing y'all. But it has been a unique ride to see the city change, to watch the nation change. It came from segregation to almost integration. And now watching the angry young white men attitude come back again. Watching

how we have moved from our communities -- moved to the suburbs and now watching people move from the suburbs back into town. Watching how the now are changing, going back because Dallas has the largest number of one race schools of any school district on this side of the Mississippi River. The largest segregated school system. Watching it integrate and then watching it re-segregate again. Just kind of wondering where it's all going to end. Is it a pendulum that goes back and forth? Will we have more Obamas? Obama's good. I love Obama. But we've got to prove to the world that he's not the only young Black man who can read, write and communicate, that we've had Obamas for generations upon generations upon generations. Y'all the ones missing out, you know. Watching the dream defer. Watching young men bring young men, young women who run into that wall and don't know that it's opportunity for them to make some changes. And then also watching us get hung up on things. Forgetting about taking care of our elderly because we all had grannies and aunts that took people in. You know, cousins would come from places, relatives would show up. It was always somebody in my house. I'd come home and it was always

a cousin or a family who had been left out or put out [or] broke up could come to our house. And now watching how we treat the kids and same thing they say 1,000 years ago-young people don't have respect for the elderly anymore. They're brash and bold. And just waiting for--really believing in the dream. Really believing in the dream, but making sure that the dream doesn't turn to a nightmare in my lifetime.

Dulaney: Let me ask you some specific questions about the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas. Did you know some of the people who participated? A. Maceo Smith, did you get a chance to meet him?

Payton: I sat down with him for hours.

Dulaney: Robert Estelle [?] and Ray McMillan [?] Running through some names here. [unclear] Wright and all those people? George Allen?

Payton: See, I was here in the 1950s when the 1940s people really had leadership identities. I grew up in Hamilton Park and a lot of the people who were in Hamilton Park they were community leaders.

Dulaney: Like who?

Payton: Well, we had Mrs. Wilhelmina Reddy [?]. We had Ms. B.T. Starks [?]. We had Dr. Joseph Williams who was the first Black [unclear]. Worked for county medical. I mean a lot of people who were so busy going about that we didn't know what they were doing. They were somebody's parents or Mr. so and so. We didn't know that they might have been working for the EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission]-that kind of stuff. We were conscious of the vote because people in Hamilton Park voted something like ninety-eight point something percent. And watching TI [Texas Instruments] integrate because the first people in Hamilton Park were--Mrs. Naomi Bruton was the first Black woman to work on the assembly line at Texas Instruments. Hamilton Park was put out there to provide maids and yard men to keep Texas Instruments up. But yes, I knew--I got a chance to sit down for hours and talk with A. Maceo Smith. We talked about the movement in the 1930s, what his contribution had been. Robert Estelle and that group never really got with then because--they were good, but at this point--I was a kid of the 1960s. And a lot of them were kind of threatened by the kids of the 1960s because the kids of the 1960s had upset

the men that they were beholden to. They were upset when R.L. Thornton, John Stemmons, Robert Cullum were--all of these guys were beholden to them, so when the Black Power Movement came Stemmons could pick up the phone and call these leaders and say, "What the hell are you all doing over there?" And they'd come by and say, "You got to stop that now. I just got a call." [Laughs] I just got the call. The call said y'all need to just be quiet over there and stop all of that militant stuff because that's not helping anybody. Dallas's thing was, Dallas takes care of its own. But I had grown up around a lady that was Mrs. [unclear] named Mrs. Flannigan. My daddy and Paul Flannigan--Mrs. Flannigan's son grew up from childhood together, so I knew about Mrs. Flannigan and the things that she was doing. She was there before Miss Juanita Craft, Minnie [?] Flannigan. I'd been around these kind of people. It was quite an experience. To look at, in the 1960s, when the split came. The kids who were the militant kids bumped heads with the Black leaders. I can remember George Allen. They'd bring a big flat-bed truck full of watermelons down through Oakland and he'd throw watermelons off the truck to get votes



for the governor. They were older men, but a lot of them had worked at the post office with my dad, so my dad kind of knew them. A lot of them, being the fact that we had been in Dallas forever, saw a lot of them rise. Saw a lot of them rise through what they called hook or crook. Became a lot more noble as they got older, but some of them are quite characters. Quite characters coming up. [Laughs]

Dulaney: You left Dallas. When did you come back?

Payton: Came back in 1970s.

Dulaney: How did you get to the Historical Society because that's what I mentioned? Back in 1982, 1983 I think.

Payton: Oh, well, I had been going to the Historical Society from way, way--that used to be one of my favorite places because as a kid my parents would drop me off--I told you they would drop me off down there. Drop me off at the fair. That's why I was surprised for Fair Day because for Fair Day all of the Black folks were allowed to come.

Dulaney: Negro Achievement Day. Negro Day.

Payton: Negro Day. Negro Achievement Day. Nigger Day. All the above, yeah. [Laughs] You saw all of your cousins and

people from the country come there. But it was my playground, you know. They'd drop me off and I'd go to the aquarium, to the Hall of State and the Hall of State was Texas history. Had the nice murals with the pictures. So that state fairground -- that State Fair -- Fair Park was my playground because I lived right across the street from it in Oak Cliff. Just come out Forest and go there. When I was in Hamilton Park when my parents had thing to do they'd just drop me off. So I had grown up in those places because I was a rambling kid. Rambled in these places. [Laughter] I didn't know that I wasn't supposed to be in them. I never let the white folks know that I could read. [Laughs] If they knew that you could read then they could hold it against you. They could point at a sign and say, "You see that sign?" And I'd say, "Oh yeah, what does that say? Can't read." That was always so funny to me because once they find out that you couldn't read then they'd say, "Oh well, he ain't no threat." And they didn't know that I could read upside down and right-side up, left to right and right to left. [Laughs] And when I would go out to the fair I'd always meet people in these museums and stuff. I think the first

guy that I met at the Hall of State was Dr. Gambrell -- Dr. Herbert Gambrell who had been the director of the Hall of State from 1936--the day they put him in.

Dulaney: That's right. That's how I know that name.

Payton: He had--I didn't know it. I saw it in later years. He had a how to handle people who don't look like they belong in a museum list that the security guard had. I grew up in and out of them buildings. That was my playground. I didn't run with any group of guys.

Dulaney: How did you get there as an employee? To the Dallas Historical Society.

Payton: Oh, well, I served on the Dallas County Historical Commission. Some women and men had brought me in to-- Mr. [?] Linden [?] Adams -- a very nice lady and her husband was a big doctor over at Baylor. She brought me in to the Historical Commission. And from the Historical Commission I met John Crane. Now they starting to see that the Dallas story is about us all. It's not about one family. It's not about one man. It's about all of the people who make up Dallas. If you are going to work to preserve the story of

Dallas proper you can't leave these holes in the story. So to write out the--never mentioned the great fire of 1860, or not to mention the contributions of N.W. Harllee, Julius C. Frazier, the Pricilla Arts Group. Dallas had a true group of very educated professionals who made an impact around the world. Women like Fannie Chase Harris whose daughter was Frederica Chase Dodd. Founded the Deltas Dallas girls. So to leave these people out is to leave a gaping hole in not just the Dallas story but the American story. Dr. C.V. Roman that the [C.V. Roman] Medical Society was named for. He taught at Meharry [Medical College] and it's a book called 100 Greatest Black Orators. He was a nationalist. He was a doctor here. He believed in Black Nationalism. We had Dr. Ollie Brine [?]-First Black woman to practice dentistry. South Dallas girl. So when I came up and started telling people at the Historical Society about these people they say, "Well, why we haven't heard about them? If they did all of this why they didn't teach us about it?" I say, "Well, they were teaching you his story. They weren't teaching you our story." In his story he can write whatever he wants, it's his story. [Laughs]

He can put in anyone he wants and leave out who he want to leave out. Then after they saw that I had the ability to go out and find stuff that they didn't know where it was, didn't know where to look, they didn't know what people to talk to. They had missed a golden opportunity to sit down with guys like Maceo [Smith] and Mrs. Flannigan and that group that were impacting nationally, leading civil rights [unclear]. The Sweatt vs. Painter case was Darum and Bunkley and Thurgood Marshall who ended up being Supreme Court Justice was cutting his teeth here on Texas cases, on Dallas cases. All of this was happening in Dallas, but nobody was documenting it. And a lot of these people were still around twenty-five years ago, thirty years ago. We just all--the Black folks they didn't feel like they had made a contribution and then you got another group of Black folks who ain't going to give you credit for whatever the hell you do. They going to take all the credit even when they weren't here, had nothing to do with it, but when it comes to taking credit, boy, the buttons pop off their chest for taking credit for stuff they didn't have nothing to do with.

Dulaney: Give me an example of that.

Payton: Let's see. An example would be the integration of Fair Park.

When came time to integrate Fair Park J.L. Patton [Jr.] called all the--they find out it was his kids -- kids from Booker T. [Washington High School]. He called all those kids in and told them that we going to take all your awards and all your scholarships if you don't break up this march. Got a call from W.T. White [who] said my kids are over here. And it was how the kids from Highland Park had gotten tickets. Don't talk about the kids from Highland Park gotten tickets and gave them to the kids from Booker T. to go to Fair Park on Public School Day, not Negro Day, Public High School Day. These kids were allowed to come to Fair Park, but couldn't ride nothing. Could walk around. They wondered, 'Where the hell they get these tickets?' The kids from Highland Park had given them the tickets. And Patton, he ended up being, I guess, alright. There is a school named for him. He didn't want to make W.T. White upset, so he called, took all their ranks and scholarships and all of this because he didn't want them to be his point-the trouble makers. Ernie

McMillan and that group, people didn't like them. Then after everything got kind of alright then they started dancing at the Adolphus [Hotel]. [Laughter] Stopped going to the regular [unclear] and started going to the Adolphus. So again, usually the people who make the sacrifices aren't the people who get the credit. We got named for Emmett Conrad. I knew Dr. Conrad. Dr. Conrad was alright, but we had people who opened the door for Dr. Conrad. Frank Jordan, Joseph Williams, and [unclear] Jones. The first group that integrated Saint Paul [Hospital]. The thing that they had to go through. You can imagine that when they integrated St. Paul and some guy looked out of the door, he didn't look at his wife and say, "Baby, there goes five Negro physicians. [Laughs] There goes five Negro surgeons." And they had to swallow their pride. You know those doctors talked about them when they first came. They were starched and ironed, new shoes. Had to be clean. And you know the other doctors on the staff didn't look at them and welcome them with open arms. So nobody talks about those kind of people. They give credit to--hear them talk about Roman S. Dell, but I guess he's alright, but I just don't

know. He really did to where you could say, "Yeah, Roman S. Dell" because we had leaders who were leaders outside of the church. But white people they want to make it all about--an example is when we have a group event they don't come up and discuss thing with us as a group. They come up and say what?

Dulaney: Where's your leader?

Payton: Yes. Where is y'all's leader? I know that y'all haven't thought this up by y'all's self. Y'all got to have a trouble maker. Where's y'all's leader? And you never hear them address any other group.

Dulaney: Tell me about the Dallas Black Remembrance Project and how that got started.

Payton: We saw that we were losing people. We were losing stories. We were losing resources. And the Dallas Historical Society now saw that their collection was very incomplete because they didn't--all they had was the [G.B.] Dealey family and people like that -- people who were rich, and wealthy, and powerful, [and] drank good liquor, you know. And that all of the Black people had been marginalized. So, I talked with the board there and explained to them that they



were missing a big chunk of the Dallas story. And that if they went on like it was doing that the Historical Society was living a lie. And they said, "Well, who is an example?" I said, "Well, Dr. J.L. Patton whose collected everything on the whole history of the Dallas Independent School District. Has got every piece of paper that he has ever touched. Has got matchbook covers. Has got restaurant menus. He's got letters." And as a result of men like Patton [we have] produced people like Ernie Banks, [and] all kinds of doctors and stuff that from the neighborhood schools. Missed people like David "Fathead" Newman and all of these people. So it y'all are going to be content to just go along and say, "Oh well, nothing has happened". That's the same thing they told Maceo. Maceo went and talked to them about putting in a Negro building they said, "What have y'all ever done to deserve a building at the Centennial. This is the big Centennial. We've invited everybody from [unclear] to Mussolini to come to the big state fair. And you think we're going to bring these people in from around the world by having a Negro building in here?" So Maceo had to get federal money. I said, "It's the same thing

they told him. So here it is fifty years later and y'all saying the exact same thing." So they saw that they were missing out, so Dr. Magnay [?]-Dr. [unclear] Magnay [?], Philipa Sunday who was the great-granddaughter of Dr. Sunday, an early physician here in the 1920s, Peggy Riddle, John Crane of the Historical Society, me and then other people that I had helped to bring in. Guys like Mr. Tedford -- Mr. C.C. Tedford who taught English-taught English here from the 1930s. Y'all remember Mr. Tedford? Sharp. I used to go sit with him even after he retired he'd get up in the morning, put on his suit and tie, sit in his chair like he was waiting for--

Dulaney: I went to his house I think.

Payton: Down on Canard Street, yeah. We had him. It was like all kinds of people who were still around Dallas. A perfect example, right now we got Miss Princella Hartman who is what a 106 [years old] now. She's over in north Dallas. She's been in Dallas since late 1920s, early 1930s. So that's how Black Dallas Remembrance came about is that we've got to make it our effort to select everything that we can find

because as housing patterns change, people don't have basements and attics anymore. Nobody's got those big steamer trunks. Everything that everybody collects now they want to collect on an iPod or iPad or something that can be switched off with the touch of a button. But you know we've been fortunate that it has been an effort, that Dr. Harry Roberson had made an effort to collect material. Got a chance to collect Dr. Talbot's books. Used to go sit with him for hours at a time and talk with Dr. Talbot. He used to tell me about--I want to say it was 1927 or 1928, he got a chance to go to Sweden or Switzerland to an international YMCA conference. And you can imagine in the 1920s sending a little Texas boy on a plane or on a ship. Mrs. Anderson was still around -- Mrs. Pearl C. Anderson. Her collection--a lot of that vanished. We were able to save some things from her husband -- Dr. Anderson. He gave the first graduation speech at the first high school graduation class. Patton saved his speech. And by the fact that Patton was a historian--got to give him credit. He did. He saved Miss West's stuff. He saved YMCA stuff. He saved the United Way stuff. So he gave us a very versatile view of things that were

happening in Dallas. A lot of collections we lost,  
but--

Dulaney: Who had his stuff when y'all started the project? Because  
he had passed, I guess, in 1971.

Payton: His step-daughter, Dr. [unclear]. She didn't really get along  
that well with Patton she said. What did she say--  
"We used to kind of dance around each other." Daddy  
Patton is what she called him. But her daughter's  
still around. I mean, it's like so much stuff that  
we've lost. But we can't lose the work they put into  
it. We can't let people assume that nothing happened  
"until I got here", "When I got here, man, the party  
started, the ball started to roll" because we been  
fighting since the 1860s. Cato [unclear] Patrick [?]  
died July 8 [or] July 10 fighting slavery. We had  
people who -- J.W. Ray -- Professor J.W. Ray --  
first Black principal. These guys made impact on  
education. And it's so strange is because when you  
start researching them you find out people were  
doing all kinds of things. Dr. Hamilton-Dr. R.T.  
Hamilton who Hamilton Park was named for--that  
group. I just kind of wonder now if we are going to  
ever move out of the sports arena because they keep

giving us all these sports heroes. We don't get chemists and inventors and things anymore who make an impact on our neighborhood. Every little kid now wants to be a football player or basketball player or a rapper.

Dulaney: Or Jay-Z or Kanye West.

Payton: I explain to all of them, "Son, we're going to always need rappers. We're going to need people to wrap sandwiches and wrap hamburgers. And if you don't get an education you going to be a wrapper. They going to come in say, "When you're finished in this room here, guess what, wrap it up." [Laughter] So where we going to the next century with notable leaders. Will we have access, because the libraries are closing now? School districts don't give books anymore. Dallas Independent School District says the kids tear up the books and don't bring them back. We don't have books anymore. "No need to give them books. They're not using 'em."

Dulaney: We are going to start to wrap this up. [Laughter] I've got one last question and I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Roberts who I'm sure has some questions. How did

you get so involved in doing genealogy--about the Miller family in particular?

Payton: Well, because I grew up hearing stories about how my great-grandfather at one time inherited--was the largest landowner in the southern sector of Dallas County. Henry Miller -- my daddy's granddaddy. His daddy-- John Miller bought some hundreds of acres of land out in Five Mile and in 1893 white people came and took my great-grandfather's land. And I had an aunt that never let me forget the fact that we got to do something to get papa's place back. These white people just took papa's place and [she would say], "Son, you went off to college and what you going to do about getting papa's place back?" And I'd say, "Papa's place?" [She said], "Yeah, you know papa used to own all of this? [When] we'd ride [she would say], "Papa used to own all of this and the white people just took it. And you ain't going to do nothing to get it back?" And they'd say, "Well Sally, that was so long ago." [She said], "So long ago, hell! I want a house. I want me a house built on papa's place." So then I started going around to the records building and researching the deeds and

the probates and finding out that a lot of holes were in the story. Because the story was supposed to be that my grand-uncle supposedly killed a man and my great-grandfather borrowed money on his farm to get his brother out of jail. Now these people were agriculture--they were farmers. And there was no way in the world that this man was going to put his whole farm--I don't care how he loved his brother, he wasn't going to put his whole farm and everything that he owned at risk to get a brother out of jail. If he was in jail he must've been there for a reason. But I found a lawsuit and how this lawsuit took--this lawyer, this guy named J.A. Parks had filed a lawsuit and my family ended up getting thirty-six acres of land back. So then in 1971 I met Alex Haley and Alex Haley was telling me--he was doing a thing called genealogy. And he had a contract with Reader's Digest to write about his search to find these lost relatives -- this lost African name Kunta Kinte. This was 1970 and he had come to Denton. He had come to Denton and he came by the bookstore. We were talking about his writing for--I had been reading about Alex Haley because Alex Haley had done the Playboy interview. I used

to know a few people who would buy Playboy to read the interview. [Laughter] So he was telling me about the thing called genealogy. And after I saw what he was doing I said, "Man, this could work out." It just kind of fit in to my militancy.

Dulaney: You were a history major at UNT?

Payton: Yes. I was a history major up there, but I had teachers who said, "Son, the best that you going to do in my class is a C." And that was a part. Didn't know then it was less than a hundred Black kids at North Texas then and that we were part of the big integration experiment. Didn't know I was a part. Felt I was a part of it, but never quite sure.

Dulaney: Back to the Miller family. That's how you got started?

Payton: I always liked to listen to those stories. Those old people sit down and tell stories-tell them cotton patch stories. Had a great-grand-uncle. Called him "Thousand pound". Could pick a thousand pounds of cotton a day. Had his own wagon. And they named him "Thousand pound". Found out that it was actually a group of people. There was like a "thousand pound" club. When you went to pick cotton you took cotton



pickers with you. [Laughs] You didn't take no readers. You took cotton pickers. I can remember one story that was really kind of symbolic of the family, is that they had gone on this cotton pick and my aunt Lucy decided this day that she wasn't going to go pick and she wasn't going to work. And so the white man come down and he sees that she's not there so he says, "Dempsey, where is your wife?" He [the great-grand-uncle] said, "Oh, she's up in the house there. She's not coming." He [white man] says, "What do you mean?" [Great-grand-uncle says, "She not coming." And he [white man] says, "Oh no, no, no. Not at my place. When one go we all go." Dempsey says, "Look man, I can pick a thousand pounds of cotton a day. I can get a little more. I can get her part." [White man says], "Oh, no, no, no." So he was going to go up to the house and make her come to work. So she says, "White man, I'm standing behind this door and I'm holding an axe. Whatever you put in this door first I'm chopping off with this axe, so come on." [She] said, "So be prepared. Whatever breaks the plane first I'm hitting with this axe." And he went back down to the field and told Mr. Dempsey, "You got a crazy woman

up there." He said he was so glad to see that white man he wanted to grab him and kiss him because he knew if that man was going to force his way into that house on Lucy, she was going to hit him and she was going to chop him up with that axe. And he was going to get blamed for the man being killed because he brought the woman out here. If he hadn't have brought this woman out here she wouldn't have cut up this man. So by the fact that you brought this woman out here you guilty. You guilty of killing this man. [Laughs] He say he was so happy to see that man. And I used to just love to hear those kind of stories -- those cotton patch stories about how they had overcome and little games that they would play. Even the light stories, how--be careful when you pick up change when working for white people because it could be a test. She might leave a little quarter or fifty cents laying around and see if you steal. So if you see it there just leave it there. Ain't nothing but a test... She do that all the time. And watch it when she come in. She going to come in--I cleaned this whole kitchen and she going to come in and take her finger and wipe under the table to see if you dusted under the table. She know

you dusted on top. Watch it now. And then my dad started his second job from the post office and this other stuff he was doing was cutting yards. So he go cut rich white people's yards and he tell me, "Son, go in and play with them kids. Find out what the white kids are doing. See what they doing." I didn't have--I can cut a yard. You go integrate. You go in there. And I would be amazed at these toys that these kids would have. And they would be amazed at me because I could read and could discuss issues. And parents would be amazed. They'd say, "Man, where'd you read about that?", "Where'd you hear about that?", "I sure wish my kids would--and I'd be saying, "Kid got a whole toy room here." But the kids, they would--we got toys, but they don't discuss. So that's kind of how I got into the family there. And then after I started to collect the stories and collect the photographs--and then "Roots" took off and everybody in the world was trying to find Kunta Kinte then. Everybody wanted that microwaveable genealogy. They wanted to touch a button. And then there used be--a card used to come in the mail that would say, "Dear Mr. Payton, we have research the whole history of the Payton

family and for \$19.95 you can order the whole history." [Laughter]

Dulaney: And your family crest.

Payton: Yes. And I'm saying, "My family picked cotton. Didn't have no crest on no cotton sack." [Laughter] And then you'd get the meaning of you family's name, the family crest and you get this whole print out of names of people who shared your name--from the phone book. Came from a place called Bath, Ohio. I knew people that ordered those things and they used to have their big family crest in their houses. Had a good friend that kind of spared me too. A guy name Mr. Ridge-Burrow Ridge. Lives over in Cedar Crest [Dallas] there. He had one of those Ridge family [crests]--Mr. Ridge. You know Mr. Ridge--Burrow?

Roberts: Yes.

Payton: He had one and I was so proud of that knowing Mr. Ridge had ordered his Ridge family [crest]. That was kind of interesting. That was--kind of fit--because you kind of have to know where you come from to know where you're going. I could get a degree in Chinese history and never sit down and talk with my

ancestors. And so that's how I got into the whole--  
-how all of this came about. The aunt from the Watts  
Riots that stood out in the street to stop--. The  
women who were going to chop up the man. And the men  
who set Dallas on fire. That whole thing made me.

Dulaney: Okay. Dr. Roberts?

Roberts: The only thing I would like to ask is would you give us a  
brief outline of the slave cemetery that's here in  
Dallas?

Payton: Which one?

Roberts: Which ever one you'd like to discuss.

Payton: In the process of rediscovering who you are and where your  
family--what your family's role is got to study the  
land acquisitions, what farms did they have, what  
churches did they start. And when you get into the  
churches then you start finding the cemeteries.  
Cemeteries tell a lot about families that were able  
to afford tombstones because tombstones were a  
luxury. You find how the church [and] the community  
cemeteries were all combined. I've got relatives  
that were buried in old Freedman's cemetery which  
is over in old north Dallas. My great-great-great-

granddaddy John Miller was a slave. They started a little cemetery over off of Highway 75 on Bulova Street. It's called the Honey Springs Cemetery.

Roberts: And does that still exist?

Payton: Yes, the Honey Springs Cemetery is still there. They don't bury in it anymore. It's a park now. Then we had the Miller Cemetery where our former owner is buried. And he buried the loyal slaves and the ones who came in later years. Buried them in the cemetery with him. When they buried him they buried him on the edge of the cemetery so if anything is eating into the cemetery it gets to the colored people before it gets to the white people on the inside. So the colored people still dead and still have work. So in the process you've got to all do your research on your family cemeteries because you look at how people are buried it tells who they liked, who they didn't like. Can look at, birth dates and birth years, and see how people today are born on those same dates because as you go through life you'll find as one person dies another child is born to carry on. You'll see the cemetery is a sacred ground and our family has about four cemeteries that we

actively visit. We've got one that we're in the process now of trying to restore. It's the burial ground of a man Ambrose Tarve [?]. Mr. Ambrose Tarve started the Church of Christ movement in Dallas. He started the Church of Christ within what they call a brush [unclear]. Started out in Five Mile, out in the country. He'd clear out a clearing, clear out a space in the hedges and have a church. And he's buried in an unmarked grave off of Persimmon Road in the Five Mile section. He was the first teacher in the southern sector. Ambrose Tarve. So we're in the process of trying to get people in the church--the Christ Church of recognize Ambrose Tarve.

Roberts: His grave is still there?

Payton: Yes. But has no marker. Has no marker and no identification. Maybe just a little piece of stone, but the graveyard is still there. So it's a lot of things that we could still do as far as our cemeteries are concerned because as the saying goes, "as you are I once was and as I am you soon shall be". That's why we've got to work--to work in the present to preserve the past for the future.

Roberts: Thank you.

Payton: You heard of Tarve?

Dulaney: Yes, I have.

Payton: Where you see something about Ambrose Tarve?

Dulaney: I think I saw something when I was downtown in the clipping files at the Dallas Public Library.

Payton: I've been trying to get them Church of Christ people to--he started the Church of Christ. My great-great-great-grandfather he started the Freewheel Baptist movement. That was John Miller. 1870s.

Dulaney: Donald, I want to thank you very much for coming out.

Payton: Well, sure.

[End of Interview]