

**Interview with
FLOYD ROSE
Lake Geneva Encampment
Williams Bay, WS
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FR: I was born in 1938 on a farm 6 miles E of Valdosta, GA, one of 12 children born to Alonzo and Georgia Rose. My daddy was a very strict disciplinarian but he wasn't home a awful lot. I was about 6 years old when we moved from Valdosta to Atlanta, GA.

VB: But if your father was a farmer, why was he away from the farm so much? You have to be there to farm.

FR: The first 4 or 5 years he did farm but then he moved into the city of Valdosta and began preaching for the West Adair Church of Christ. He was not farming then. We lived on Troup Street for a while then into the parsonage which was part of the church building. We were not there long, perhaps a year when he moved the family to Atlanta.

Interesting, in my formative years I went to what was called a 2-room school house. The high school was in one room and the elementary school was in the other. They had two teachers and one was the principal. The teacher would teach the first grade which was represented by the first row of seats, then she would move over to the next row and teach the second grade, and on and on it went. There was a beautiful relationship between the parents and those teachers. There were fish fries and all the wonderful things that went with that.

VB: Was that a fund-raiser?

FR: No. They had these about once a month for the purpose of getting all the people in the little community together so the teachers could tell all the good and bad things on the pupils. It was real interesting. There was an amazing closeness back then, even among farmers. If it was our day to pick cotton or crop tobacco, everybody from all over the country would come and help us. Then the next day it was someone else's time and we'd go help them. No money was ever exchanged. Some of the women who didn't work in the fields would help fix dinner. Beautiful relationship.

Then around 1942 or 43 we moved to Atlanta where Daddy became the minister for the Simpson Street Church of Christ. We moved into a parsonage. We thought we had really moved up because for the first time we had an indoor toilet. We didn't have a refrigerator but we had an ice box. We did have electricity but not an electric stove. We had a coal stove and I had the responsibility of getting coal out of the enclosed basement.

By that time my Daddy had become pretty popular and was holding a lot of meetings and I was not close to him at that time. This is a painful experience to remember. My daddy was a strict disciplinarian when he was around. I was never close to him until a few years before he died.

When he would come home, Mother would always have something to tell him that I had done. In those days, the man was the man. Mother would always say, "I'm going to tell your daddy on you" and he did not ask if you did it. He just did it to you because you did it. I got several whippings.

One time I decided to run away from home and got on a bicycle and got out on the outskirts of Atlanta and stopped at a service station and told the man I wanted a map to go to Valdosta, GA. I was going to visit my grandmother, 230 miles away - had no idea how far it

was, but I thought I could make it on that bicycle. He said, "Well, I have to have your phone number." I didn't know any better and gave it to him. I had no idea why. So I waited. Later I said "Scuse me mister, I didn't get the map yet." He said "I had to send somewhere to get one." I still didn't get it. Next thing I knew my Daddy was pulling up into that service station. He didn't say anything except "Let's go." He put the bicycle in the trunk, I got in the front seat shaking like a leaf on a tree. He didn't say anything. Got home, and he still didn't say anything. He never mentioned anything about that for the rest of his life.

But when I skipped school two days later with a friend. I had "complete" judgment then. I went to the store where he had a bill. In those days the Jews had stores in the black community and would charge high prices, but they would always "put it on the book, put it on the book, put it on the book." But they were the only ones who had the book. We never knew [how much was being charged]. A person would just go by and pay periodically. Well, I went in with my friend got some bologna, crackers, cheese and a couple of pops. We went down to a fishing hole and stayed until about time school would be out, and went back home.

In the meantime, it just so happened that Daddy went by that day to pay the bill. He walked in and the man said "Your son, Floyd, was just here earlier today" and put it on the bill." He said, "No, my son is in school." He said, "No. He was here and he showed him what was bought." Daddy went on to school and discovered that I was not there. I came home at the time I was supposed to.

At that time we always ate at a certain time - not like it is today where everybody grabs something and runs with it. We ate breakfast, lunch and dinner at certain times and everyone comes to the table. We were sitting at the table and he said "Floyd, how was school?" and I said "Fine." He said "Yeah? What did you study?" I said "The usual, math and English." I reached down to put some food in my mouth with my fork and he gave me a back hand across my face. Knocked me out of the chair, on to the floor. I said "What's the matter?" He said "Sit down." I got back up on the chair and he asked me about school again and I proceeded to tell the same lie and got hit again, knocked off the chair on to the floor. I got up the third time. He said "Now you want to tell me that you didn't go to school? I said "Sir?" "You want to tell me that you didn't go to school?" Then, of course, it was over. I told him I didn't go and he wanted to know who was with me. I felt sorry for the next kid but I had to tell on him, too. He took me over to that kid's house, told his mother what I told him. She tore into him right there in front of us. That was an experience I will never forget.

VB: What did he do to you?

FR: He didn't need to do anything more. He had knocked me out of the chair three times! I was still reeling and rocking from that. That was one of the memorable unpleasanties that stuck with me. The other, of course, when I was expelled from the Atlanta Public School system.

VB: Hold that. There is the statement that you always start 100 years before a person is born to know about them. Tell me more about your mother and father.

FR: I don't know too much about my mother's background except she was one of 22 children by the same mother and father. I hear now that he may have had even more children but I don't know that for sure. Her maiden name was Georgia May Butler. She was tough. She was baptized when she was 13 by D. M. English and was the only convert in that meeting. I learned later that the brethren at the time were pretty disappointed they baptized just one little girl. It so happened that that one little girl met Alonzo Rose who was later baptized into the Church of Christ, he came from the Christian Church but he was not that much involved in the church at

all, but he later became a preacher and the father of 12 children, 4 boys that preached - three of us still preaching, and a baby daughter who writes music, books and is extremely talented.

My mother was a homebody. She didn't travel much. I guess she couldn't because every time we looked around she was getting ready to deliver another Rose. By the time she turned 43 years old and the time when she could have traveled with my Daddy, death come. Mother perhaps had more influence on the children because she was always there with us.

Mother and Daddy came from the same community. We used to say "out in the country" what they used to call the "old Lakeland highway." The family owned about 400 acres which was divided and our family lived on 123 acres. My uncle took most of original farm. Now I'm learning that they were distant kin. Nobody knew who was who back then. I don't know anything about my Dad's father but I did know his mother. We called her "Daddy-Mama." I don't know how that name stuck, but that is what we children called her. Her name was Jenny but I do not know her maiden name. I really loved her and stayed with her sometimes during the summer when I would go back to Valdosta. She had moved out of the country and into town, living in the projects.

The projects then were not like the projects now. They were middle-class, clean where people worked and kept them up. They were real nice. At other times we would come down and work on my uncle's farm. My mother's mother died in 1953 and in the meantime we would come in the summers and pick cotton, crop tobacco. We tried to work but we could only make a few dollars, but then had to leave the field because we couldn't handle it any more. Other people could handle it, but once you leave that work it is hard to get back into it. Before we left when I was 5 or 6 years old, I was trained to drive a sled, bringing the tobacco from the fields to the barn.

VB: Why do you think your Dad was such a harsh disciplinarian?

FR: I don't know whether he got that from his mother. He may have because we saw her after we moved to Detroit and he was preaching for the Ford Avenue Church. Something he did to one of the kids and she said "Give me your belt." He said "Mama, you're not going to do this in from of these kids." She said "Give me your belt." And she whipped him in front of us. He would be embarrassed to know that was being told, but it gave us the greatest satisfaction. (Laughter) She was tough.

VB: Why was she tough?

FR: I don't know. Her mother was an Indian and I vaguely remember her. They lived way out in the country. She had long hair and high cheek bones. My daddy's mother had high cheek bones, too but she was extremely dark. Her mother was pretty light. I understand my daddy's daddy was extremely dark, too. That's about all I know about that part of the family. Daddy had several brothers, one of them, the younger boy, is a preacher and still alive. Uncle Sugar-Daddy called him Sugar Pie and we called him Uncle Sugar. His name is Willie Rose and lives in Adell, GA, about 25 to 30 miles from Valdosta, north on Interstate 75.

VB: If you mom was baptized at 13, talk about the church influence in that area.

FR: Marshall Keeble established the church in 1931 I think under the sponsorship of the Central Church of Christ in Valdosta which was established in 1883. Keeble baptized 161 or 163 the first year, then came back the next year and baptized the exact same number. Phenomenal! So the church in two years had more than 300 members in Valdosta. We had mule and wagon with which to ride to town. No cars.

VB: Was this the event that provoked your family moving into Valdosta?

FR: The church at first had several preachers, Luke Miller, John Vaughner, John O. Williams and Elmo Roundtree. They had about 4 ministers before Daddy was given the church.

VB: Why was he given the church?

FR: I suppose he was the preacher and he lived there. He couldn't have had much preaching experience at the time. I know he had not had another church. That was his first church.

VB: What brought these other preachers there?

FR: Brother Keeble. In those days he decided who went where. And if you got into trouble, Keeble decided when you would leave. He would come there and tell you it was time to go. There was no committee. If there was any kind of problem, people would send for Brother Keeble. Keeble would also set up elders but they were his voice. I'll never forget Betty (?) Brown was probably the most famous black elder in the Church of Christ in the country and he was at West Adair. No body stayed there more than 2 years. He saw to that. He's send for Brother Keeble. Keeble would come, look around, and most of the time he would recommend a change.

VB: In the white church, this was a common pattern at that time. Preachers stayed 2 years.

FR: Maybe that is where that came from.

VB: Keeble knew the white church, that's for sure. Alice's father, for instance, would stay at a place 2 years and felt if he stayed longer he was wearing out your welcome. I had never heard that this pattern was in the black church.

FR: Back then, preachers didn't stay at places like they are doing now.

John O. Williams was not in the inner circle with Keeble with Vaughner, Miller. Those were the top people in that part of the country. F. F. Thompson came along a little later. But the secondary men were the John O. Williamses and the Alonzo Roses. I'm sure Keeble recommended Daddy for the church for nobody went anywhere unless he said so.

VB: You mentioned D. M. English. What was his influence in that area?

FR: All I recall about him was that he used to come in and do meetings. He was not from Valdosta but came out of the Memphis area. I'm sure Keeble baptized him, too. I don't think he ever held that church there.

VB: Any other early preachers?

FR: John Henry Clay. I think his original home may have been Nashville. Columbus Grimsley was in that area. Robert Simmons, St. Petersburg. Of course, Kelly Mitchell and that group was further up in AL. I don't know who was preaching in Atlanta before Daddy went there. I know at the time it was one of the larger churches in the brotherhood. Keeble started the Simpson Street church so he recommended Daddy there and I think he also recommended when it was time to leave.

I do not know the circumstances under which my parents met out in the country. Dad's background was from the Christian Church but he was not active in it. But after meeting my mother, he was baptized and so they were both members before they moved into town and before Keeble came for these meetings.

I know little about the Christian Church except what I have read regarding the Restoration Movement. Then in 1953 or '54, the lectureship was held in Indianapolis, IN and, because these events were never at that time held in hotels, the church building at Eugene and Boggs was not large enough for the crowd, we ended up using the Christian Church and were welcomed there with a good fellowship. We knew that doctrinally, we were the same except for the instruments and missionary societies. It was at that time as I recall and I don't remember

who the men were, but there was an interest in trying to convince Marshall Keeble to be rebaptized because he had been baptized in the Christian Church as well as G. P. Bowser. I remember hearing others talk about the carload of preachers going to Nashville for that reason. I don't recall who all went. Keeble said "No."

VB: Then your Dad's mother was part of the Christian Church?

FR: Yes, but she became a member of the Church of Christ. I don't remember if Dad baptized her or not.

VB: Do you know where the Christian Church was located in the Valdosta area?

FR: It was out there on our land. Somebody who had to be a part of our family donated the land for the church. I was guess it was the Berrians for that was the original name.

VB: The 1883 beginning of the white church was comparatively early as compared to most places, and this was before the divide over the instrument. Could this church go back to those days?

FR: I don't know, but you've provoked my interest regarding the Central Church. It may have begun as a Christian Church. I hope to look into this. In those day as I understand it there was an on-going fellowship between the two groups. Besides the date of 1906 for the division, I'm not sure when the practical division occurred. I know about Keeble, Bowser, Womack, and Alec Campbell were all a part of the Gay Street Christian Church or the Lea Avenue Christian Church in Nashville when these began the Church of Christ.

VB: What do you recall about race relations in Valdosta.

FR: I don't remember anything about Valdosta in this regard. We were in black circles all the time, except my mother used to walk to work at Snow Cleaners, and I remember seeing a white woman come to the house to pick her up when she went to do some cleaning. I vaguely remember that from when we were living in the country. But most of the time we were in the black world and I had no experience at all beyond that in Valdosta.

VB: The city has a heavy black population.

FR: Today the city population is around 80 or 85,000 with 35 to 40% of that is black in addition to Lowndes County.

VB: Did you ever hear your parents talk about white people?

FR: Not in Valdosta.

VB: Back to Atlanta and the school problems there.

FR: I got into some trouble, in fact, I was in trouble with little things pretty often there. The teachers in those days were closer to the parents. There was no such thing as parents' conference. Any day was a conference. She would pick up the phone and tell mother whatever she needed to tell her about me. I remember this time the phone rang one night and I answered it. It was my teacher and she wanted to talk to mother. I handed her the phone and when she hung up Mother didn't say anything so I didn't think anything about it.

The next morning Mother got up, got dressed and said I'm going to school with you. I said "For what? None of the other mothers are going." She said, "I just want to go with you." I was embarrassed walking with her to school. When we got to school she walked up to the desk and said to the teacher, "What did you say Floyd did?" Then I knew it was over. I don't even recall what I had done. I know I had cut up. The teacher was very diplomatic. She said "Mrs. Rose if you plan to whip him there is a walk-in closet around the corner. You can take him in there." She said "Did he cup up in the closet?" She said "No." "Where did he cut up?" "Right over there at his seat." She said "Get me the board." Right there in front of all those

kids she tore me up! Then she said "I'll see you when you get home, son." Of course the kids were laughing and I was embarrassed, but I didn't do that any more!

They thought I was smart and they thought my behavior was tied to my restlessness and their inability to challenge me in that grade, which was the 4th grade. So they moved me to the 5th grade.

In this grade my teacher's name was Mrs. Ford. Once you develop the reputation that you can fight and that you're bad, most kids would run from me. All you need is to whip somebody one time and your reputation is established. Until, of course, you run into somebody who does not know about your reputation and don't know you can't be whipped. That happened to me.

Still feeling frustrated about being whipped the day before by a little boy called "Papa," I took it out on a teacher. Something happened and she said something and I slapped her. Stupid. I can't explain to you even today why I did such a dumb, stupid thing. But that was the straw that broke the camel's back. For Floyd Rose they called the Police truant officer, then they called Daddy and Daddy came up to the school.

It just so happened that Clifford Payne who was preaching in Albany, GA was on his way to the Nashville Christian Institute to take his son, Ralph, and his daughters, Mary and Betty. Daddy asked him to ride with him over to the school because he had to go see about Floyd. While Daddy and the authorities were in the Principal's office Clifford Payne said to me in the outer office "How would you like to go to the Nashville Christian Institute with Ralph." I said "It don't make me no difference." He said "You might like that, Floyd."

In the meantime, there was an agreement being reached on the inside office with the Principal and the juvenile officer that if he took me out of the public school system, they would not take me to the reformatory. The choice between going to NCI and the reformatory was clear to me, so I opted to go with Clifford and his children.

My Daddy, who, as I have said was a strict disciplinarian, thought he could make me do good by making me feel bad. He would say such things like "You're not going to amount to anything," and "You're going to be in the penitentiary before you're 16 if you don't change your life," and on and on. I wasn't but 10 or 11 years old at the time. He did not realize that it was not having the positive effect that he desired, but the negative. I figured that since I was going to wind up in the penitentiary anyway because he said so, since I'm not going to amount to anything because he said so, well, forget it. So I stayed into all kinds of things.

I ended up leaving Atlanta, but I got baptized. Daddy was in a meeting under a tent in a suburb of Atlanta and that Thursday night a friend, Anthony Freeman, and I walked down the aisle. I thought Daddy would be happy. I felt good about walking down, didn't know all the implications of the decision at that time, but he said something that just devastated me. Instead of saying "We're glad to have Floyd and I'm happy about his decision." He looked at me and said "If anybody needed to come down here it is Floyd." People laughed. He had no idea how that made me feel. Anyway, I lived through that and went on to Nashville Christian Institute.

VB: Most people grow up with a love/hate relationship with their fathers. Did you admire him?
FR: I admired his strength, but there was something missing. He never said "Floyd, come on let me take you to the park." Never said "Here, catch." Never threw me a ball. All those little things that endear little boys to their fathers, I never got any of that. The only time he said anything to me was when he was correcting some behavior of mine. I think part of my problem

was that I was rebelling against something that I was not getting. I wanted something from him even though I cannot explain what that was.

VB: Did you get the warmth and love from your mother?

FR: My mother was a different story. She was always there. When Daddy was there, he was there in his body, never in his mind. We laugh about it now. Daddy would walk in the room and without saying a word, the room would empty! My sister, Helen, if he sat down on the couch, she couldn't sit there, she had to get up.

VB: Was he hard on the girls?

FR: I don't know. When he talked to you he wouldn't just say "Floyd, put some coal in the stove." (in a conversational manner) but "FLOYD, PUT SOME COAL IN THE STOVE!" like I should have already put it in there. We used to call him Caesar at the Ford Avenue church in Detroit. He was that demanding, that tough. He did not endear you to him. Only after mother had died and Daddy had moved to Valdosta and at an age where he was going over the hill that his children got close to him at all, at all.

VB: What was the size of Simpson Street when you Dad went there?

FR: I'm guessing they had 175 people. When he left they had around 450 to 500 in attendance. It was running over. They had more people then than they have now. You can lay down on any seat you choose, ~~except the~~ at least that was how it was the last time I was there for a regular service.

VB: The original church spawned others, of course.

FR: The Turner Road and the Greenbriar churches are larger than Simpson Street, and maybe another one or two. Where Wesley Brown is larger, too.

VB: What was the Simpson Street church like when your family went there?

FR: I was there from the time I was 6 until 11. My heart nor soul was in the church. I went because Daddy said "Go." I'd sit in the back seat and shoot marbles under the seat or whatever, creating all kinds of disturbances, knowing I was going to get a whipping when I got home. But I did it anyhow.

VB: Couldn't you Mama moderate any of this?

FR: Yes. Either she took care of business or she did. My other brothers and sisters were younger but they never got into as much trouble as me. That's why I said "There was something I wanted from him that I didn't get."

VB: Did your other brothers and sisters sense that?

FR: I don't know. When I was eleven, I never went back home. I went to NCI and traveled with Brother Keeble and finished NCI. I did go to school there ^(Det) one year and had a real devastating experience. Back then, if you moved from the south to the north, for some reason the educational system determined before you got there that you did not know as much. So they automatically put you back a grade. So they did that to me.

VB: Where?

FR: I went to Northern High School in Detroit in 1944. I was at NCI for the 7th and 8th grades, then I got sick. I had a serious asthma problem and they had to take me to the hospitals several times at night. It was determined that I could not handle the physical situation of the basement dormitory, so I left. I first went to Indianapolis, IN and stayed for a while with Irvin and Sadie Grimes because of the asthma, thinking it was a better climate. They asked for me. They had met me through Daddy holding meetings there. That was the first place that I held a meeting independent of any kind of adult supervision when I was 13.

Then I ended up at Northern High School. A little white woman came in one day and called me out of the room. We went into a small room and she said she would give me a psychological test. I didn't know what that meant. She had these squares and rocks and stuff and had me working with them. I finished and, of course, flunked her test. She suggested that I learn something that I could do with my hands because I didn't have the mental capacity to do anything that required thinking. I said "Well, Thank you," but I didn't listen to her and I'm glad I didn't. I always joke about that saying geniuses flunk psychological tests!

VB: Talk some more about NCI.

FR: I got there in September 1950. We drove by a large fabulous school and I thought "This is wonderful." They kept going and we turned into the back of this barn, I called it, and said "This is it." I said "This is what?" They said "This is it." I thought it was some sort of big barn or house. We got out of the car and we went in this dormitory. It was long a long row of bunk beds, top and bottom. I looked at it and thought "Well this is the famous Nashville Christian Institute."

When I faced that situation it wasn't but three or four days until I got into trouble by talking about one of the teachers and she said she was going to call Daddy. I thought I'd call him first and tell him Mrs. Gray was thinking about calling and let him know she didn't like me. He said, "What do you mean 'She doesn't like you?'" I said "I don't know but she said she was going to call you but I haven't done anything." "So you haven't done anything." "Yes sir." "Well who does she like?" "She likes (one of the other fellows in school, I don't recall his name.)" "Yes, he's her pet." "Does he get his lessons." "Yes sir." "Does he behave in class?" "Yes sir." "Well you do what he does and she will like you -- and don't you call here anymore." That was the end of that.

But about two weeks later when everybody went to Bible class at Jackson Street - if you felt like going you went and if you didn't feel like it, you went anyhow. On Wednesday night, a Mavis Spaulding who was 82 years old, and I could not explain to you today why she said what she said to me, but when the class was over and I started out the door, she was on her cane standing by the door. She said, "Boy, come here." I said "Me?" and she said "Yeah, you." She hugged me and looked at me "Boy, I think you might be somebody one of these days." It was at that moment that I decided not to let her down. She was the only person who ever expressed any kind of faith in me. (Floyd, choked up.) Everybody else was trying to make me be good by telling me how bad I was. She didn't say anything else. That's all she said, turned around and walked off.

VB: Did you speak that night?

FR: No, that was just shortly after I got there. The Dean then was Brother Cass Wade. Barnum Mathews had just left. The Dean insisted that if you stayed in that dormitory, you were going to preach or sing, or something, but you had to do one of the two. They insisted that everybody try to preach. So they gave me my day in chapel.

Before that, Alvin Simmons who was preaching in a little town called Dickson, TN, 40 miles west of Nashville, asked me to go down with him the Sunday before I spoke in chapel on Tuesday. Vernon, I practiced my sermon and I practiced. I thought I had 15 minutes worth of talk at least. I'm embarrassed to say that it lasted about 5 minutes and I wet on myself. Just that nervous. Just that nervous. When I got through I put the coat around me and went out the side door. It was still sort of warm so before long I dried off pretty quickly.

The next Tuesday I spoke in chapel. About a week later Brother Keeble was there and someone had told him about me, so he wanted me to do it again. So I did. He had been out of town. You always knew when he was in town because he would be at chapel. School started around the middle of September so it was around the first of October when he came in off his trip and he heard me speak.

He decided to take me with him the first year, 1950. We didn't go to Florida but went to Texas. I remember that because the first time my Daddy heard me speak was when I went home for Christmas. We went through Memphis and Little Rock, Abilene, Houston, Baton Rouge and back, preaching at all these stops. After that for the next two and a half to three years, I went with him everywhere until I went to Detroit. After that when I turned 14, I went with him for one or two places.

But he would take you as long as you didn't look like you were over 12. If you were 11 but looked older he wouldn't take you because he did not believe in paying full fare.

VB: Would you talk more about your teachers at NCI who influenced you?

FR: The public speaking teacher was a white woman of Indian descent named (Mrs.) Lambert Campbell. She used to tell us all the time "Get up to be seen, speak up to be heard, and please sit down to be appreciated." Then J. W. Brents was the Bible teacher. When Brother Keeble was in town he would always come in and teach, but he never taught the Bible per se, because he was a story-teller. A great story-teller with a biblical base.

J. W. Brents had us memorize Matthew 5-6-7, 1 Cor. 13, Acts 2 and got extra points if we memorized Matthew 1 and even now I can almost do that because it was so drilled into me. You didn't pass a test until you learned these chapters. Then they taught you all about the church and how to prove that the church was right and other churches were wrong, proof-texts on baptism, instrumental music and all those things.

VB: Who do you remember as your contemporaries?

FR: Jack Evans, Franklin Florence, Sr. was there but he left a couple of years before I graduated, but he was very influential. There was James Tinsley, Frank McIlvain, David Benford, Daniel Harrison, James Wilson --these are the men that I remember most. They were the ones I ran with.

One of the things about NCI that I can never forget, there developed a camaraderie, a beautiful fellowship among us if you went there for any length of time. That's way people were shocked when Jack and I had the discussions and when it was over we'd sit down laughing and talking and playing. During those discussions in Terrell, I was staying at Jack's house - people didn't know that - after it was over, I went back to the house and Pat would fix dinner and some of the guys from NCI were there. One fellow I shall never forget, J. M. Butler, the big fellow who used to be in San Francisco but passed away since, he was sitting there with Jack, myself and the others, he would look at me, then look at Jack, and he said "Scuse me, look, how do you all do that?" I said "How do we do what?" "Y'all just through debating!" I said, "Yes, that was over there, this is over here. We're not enemies. We just don't agree on that. We agree on this."

Unfortunately, those preachers who went to NCI for just a little while who never caught the spirit like Wells, and Billy Washington and others, there was a different story. Among those who did, there still remains a closeness that transcends differences.

VB: Beautiful. To what do you attribute it?

FR: Brother Keeble and the whole atmosphere there. It's just like here at Lake Geneva. To listen to these people talk, this is a part of their life. And some of them you couldn't tear them away from here. They will be back next year and the year after that because there is something here. That's what it was--there was something there. It can't be explained. You just know when you've got it.

VB: Talk about Keeble some more. How did you relate to him and him to you?

FR: Well, we had one real problem. We were in Abilene. Brother Keeble had a way of cutting the neck off and you not even realizing it until you shake your head and your head was gone. He was tough!

We were at the 10th and Treadway church where Brother Bowdrie was preaching at that time. The way things went, the preacher would introduce Brother Keeble, then Brother Keeble would introduce a boy, and that boy would introduce another boy, then that boy would re-introduce Brother Keeble. The boys would rotate as to who would speak first after Brother Keeble. Brother Keeble never spoke for more than 25 minutes at the most. I had almost 10 minutes and the other kid had about the same amount of time I had never been there before. Brother Keeble spoke about attitudes. He looked at me and said, "You take Floyd Rose, that good little preacher, good little preacher but he's got one of the worst attitudes any boy ever been to NCI.

My heart fell. In the next breath he introduced me to preach. Preach what? I couldn't believe that he just did that to me. I sat there with tears running down. He said "Come on, your time." I got up and I'm not sure what I said. The women were so nice. They knew that I was devastated and they all crushed over saying "Floyd, he didn't mean that." But I wrestled through with it.

When we got home I wrote Brother Keeble a note and put it on the bed in the room where we were staying. We all slept together, me him and the other boy - three of us and they didn't have a king sized bed back in those days, by the way. Put it on the bed, packed my little suitcase while he was in the other room, and I came out on the porch and sat down waiting for him. He came out the door and looked at me and said, "So you're leaving!" I said (with a pitiful, crying voice) "Yes sir. You hurt my feelings." "So you're leaving!" I said, "Yes sir. You hurt my feelings." He said it again the third time and I replied the same way. I thought he was going to say "I'm sorry." He looked at me one more time and said "You're leaving!" I said "Yes sir." "Well, bye." He turned around and went back into the house.

Now where was I going. No money, no where to go, nothing. He knew that. I stayed there as long as I could, got my little bag and went back into the house and unpacked it. We went on to where ever we went.

He was a phenomenal person. During the latter years I became uncomfortable, as most of the young men did, with this whole thing about race. But Vernon, he helped me one time with that. When Martin Luther King came on the scene and there was so much turbulence among the younger black preacher among the Churches of Christ. No more were going to David Lipscomb and have that rope in the balcony [segregating us off from the whites].

One day Franklin Florence and I were talking with him about that. He looked at me and he looked at Florence. He said "And you think that I like that? You think I'm doing this for ME? I'm doing this for YOU. Where are you going to school if I don't do this? Where are you going to school? The colored brethren don't support the school." I just dropped my head.

Never again did I said anything to Brother Keeble about that. Never. I don't care what other people said.

The unfortunate thing for me is that he always wrote letter by hand. He never had any body to type anything for him. He would get up early in the morning and dress, always immaculate and clean. He always insisted on his shoes being shined. His, at least. He told me more than once that if you look like you've got everything, the white brethren won't give you anything. When he would get up to introduce me, especially if there were whites in the audience, he would talk about my mother and father having 12 children and what a difficult time they were having. He was making a pitch for money for NCI. There I was looking pitiful, the collar too tight or too loose, suit not pressed properly, shoes didn't look the best. The white people would look at me and sympathetically smile. But he would get the money, and that was his point.

VB: What about your preaching? How did he and others evaluate it?

FR: I don't know, but the only thing I can remember was not so much about him but he always took me more than he took anybody else. In fact, when we got to Pecos, TX in 1951, he was invited there by the white 4th Street church and they held an open air meeting - no tent - just benches and some lights strung up and they had this podium/pulpit.

Billie Sol Estes, who was not a real active member of the church but he came every night. He leaned against his car, he never came in to sit down, and he listened to me talk, and he listened to Franklin Brown. But for some reason I never knew, he was not impressed with Frank and never offered him anything. But he sort of liked me. He told me the last night of the meeting, "Here's \$10." Well that much money for an 11 year old black boy in 1951 was a nice little piece of money. It would buy a lot of hamburgers with that. Then he said "I want to send you to school. I'll send you to college and pay your salary to travel all over the world to preach. I want you to write or call your mama and daddy to see if it is all right with them. I said "Oh, yes." Of course, I didn't think I'd see him any more so I forgot about it.

We left Pecos and went to Albuquerque, NM. That night Billie Sol drove up in a red convertible Fleetwood Cadillac. He came up to me and said, "Did you call your daddy and mama?" I said "Yeah. They said that would be fine." I hadn't called them, but I told him that. When I got back to NCI he had paid for my schooling for the whole year and was sending me \$40 a month to take care of incidentals. He did that up until I finished NCI, two years at Southwestern, started at ACU where they said "No." and I ended up going to McMurray and he paid for that. His troubles hit then and that was the end of that.

I'd have to leave evaluating my sermons to someone else.

VB: Keeble took you so much he must have been impressed. Did Keeble give you pointers in speaking?

FR: Strangely enough he didn't but he would tell us about memorizing certain scriptures. He wanted us to preach sermons like Jesus turning water into wine, the man in the 5th chapter of John, that sort of things. We never got into telling people how to live, telling men how to treat their wives, that sort of thing. We had better sense than that. But sitting down and sharing outlines, he never did anything like that.

VB: After your sermons, did you receive an evaluation?

FR: If there was something we did not say right, oh yes. He would make whatever corrections he felt was necessary. That was only periodically. If you did well he would let you know. But he never did say "Son, you really did great tonight. I'm proud of you." It wasn't anything much

like that, but he always taught us to comment on the message of the person who spoke before you.

VB: You were young and rambunctious. Did you ever get spankings at NCI?

FR: Brother Keeble never spanked me but I've seen him take care of some other boys that were with me like David Bogard and little old Jim Webb. But he never had to whip me per se. One thing he did that I didn't like. Someone at some place suggested that we take up an offering for the boys as a token of appreciation and they took up a good little money which they gave to Brother Keeble which we expected to get it when we got to the school. We never did get that money. I don't know whether he for forgot but we certainly did not bother to ask him about it. I wanted my money, but I didn't get it.

VB: What were some of the impressions as you got more exposed to the white church that would come to Keeble?

FR: There's something that happened that's hard for me to shake in retrospect. At the time, strangely enough, you just accepted it. Until Martin Luther King came along and started talking about this stuff in the open you just thought that was the way it is. You had a place and you accepted it.

I'm more sure than I'm not sure that the place was Conway, AR. It was some place in AR. Once again, no tent, just open air meeting, the whites sat on one side and the blacks on the other. The rope down the center. When Brother Keeble got through preaching, he would stand in front of the blacks and invite them to Christ, and the white preacher would stand in front of the whites to invite them to Christ. But that's not the real story. When a white person responded to the invitation, he or she was taken to the white church and was baptized. But the black person had to be taken to a black Baptist church, the same church Brother Keeble had just got through condemning to Hell. I never will forget that, although it did not hit me at the time. In retrospect, that was the greatest commentary on the hypocrisy of the white Church of Christ experience. That was more blatant than my being rejected at Abilene Christian College.

VB: What did you Dad think of your preaching in the early days?

FR: My grandmother until the day she died did not remember. She was there in Atlanta that Christmas when I came home and preached. The place just erupted with people screaming and crying.

VB: Why?

FR: Part of it was surprise, part of it was pride. I wasn't that good obviously but when I left there in trouble, on the way to reformatory (voice breaking up) and when I came back I was totally different person. Probably all of that had something to do with it.

VB: Early on you had some gift in speaking.

FR: Probably from my Daddy. I'm almost sure some of that is genes, because we ended up with so many of his sons preaching. If Sylvia was a man she would be better than all of us, no question about it. Hands down. (laugh)

VB: I'm surprised that your Dad would invite you to preach.

FR: He did. He knew that I had been preaching. He preached behind me because I couldn't go but 10 or 12 minutes at the time. I remember the sermon I preached "When God is looking for a man." I went through the Old Testament noting the problems and God was looking for a man to straighten things out. Finally, Jesus. God was still looking for a man.

VB: What inspired that thought?

FR: I might have gotten that sermon from someone else. I don't remember. It's been a long time. I'm sure it was someone else's idea. In those days we did not have any independent ideas. Things have changed over the years.

VB: Besides the teachers, did other whites come to the campus?

FR: Oh yeah. Athens Clay Pullias used to come and speak in chapel, Ira North, E. H. Ijams. He was tough. We liked him. The others came were kind of condescending, but he spoke with you respecting your intelligence.

One man who had a bum leg I never shall forget, he told a joke and I know he didn't mean a bit of harm in the world but it was the most inappropriate joke that I have ever heard anybody tell a black audience. He said there were two boys playing, a white boy and a black boy. The little white boy said to the little black boy "I bet there weren't no Niggers back there when Jesus was upon the earth." The little white boy scratched his head and said "You forgets about Nicodemus." He started laughing himself until he realized he was the only one. He just turned around and walked right off the stage. That was late in the 50s. He really thought that was going to be funny. It might be funny but not from a white man. I don't remember his name. Probably didn't want to remember it.

VB: Tell me about going over to Lipscomb in their lectureship.

FR: Two things I remember about going over there. We used to go every time Brother Keeble would speak. the Lipscomb lectures coincided with the NCI lectures. Brother Keeble was the only one they invited they invited to speak there. He spoke at the time when every one from NCI was asked to go over.

At first, there wasn't a problem. We went up to the balcony. That was before King awakened the conscience of black folk in this country. But this last time, I don't know if it was '65 or '66, Brother Greer from Washington, D. C., Obie Eli and some of the other brethren would not go upstairs, period. They went downstairs and sat down. Daddy, Brother Trone and the rest of us went upstairs, but when they saw the rope, it just did something. Brother Trone and Daddy were just talking about it loud enough that the whites on the other side of the rope to hear.

Somebody went and told Brother Keeble. Brother Keeble came out of the side back door, walked all the way around, came inside that auditorium, went up the steps and went over there. He said "Y'all having problems with this rope?" Daddy and Brother Trone started talking. Brother Keeble just took his hand and knocked it down. He said "You're going to Hell over a rope."

When he got over to the school that night he almost took his text on Brother Trone and Daddy, and especially Brother Trone because that is who he heard when he came up the steps. He said "Trone is going to let a rope send him to Hell. A rope. They didn't have that rope up there to keep you from sitting with white people. They had the rope from keeping the white folks from taking all the seats from you." Every one laughed but they knew better than that. He said "All this discussion going on about white and black, well the Bible says the Jews had it first and the Gentiles got it. Somebody's got to have it first. The Jews had it first and today the white people had it first, but you got it." People listened out of respect for him, but nobody really bought his logic.

The next thing I remember was Franklin Florence and I and Daddy and Brother Trone and A. J. Colston were in Nashville and there were doing a series at another time, the whole thing about segregation at Green Street Church of Christ. They couldn't do anything like that at

Jackson Street. The place was jammed packed. I don't know who organized it. The preacher was an ex-Methodist minister that Daddy baptized in one of the meetings when he was there. I don't recall his name, but I'm almost sure it was him. Anyway, Brother Colston spoke that night on "Who Maketh Thee to Differ?" Everybody was shouting "Amen!"

But the next morning Daddy said "We're talking all that talk, we need to go out and meet with Brother Pullias." Billie Sol was there. He came. I wanted a fall course and he dropped by and told them he was going to be out there. I went to the phone and called the news media and told them Billie Sol was going to be there. I wanted the publicity about the race thing. I had no idea they were going to order us off the campus with the police. Nobody thought that. But Colston wouldn't go. Daddy said, "Brother Colston, you're a hypocrite. You did all that preaching." Brother Colston said, "Listen, you don't run my business. You run Ford Avenue. And white people don't play. If they tell you they're going to put you in jail, they're going to put you in jail. I'm not going and I'm not going to jail for Mama."

So we went on out there not thinking about the police. Franklin Florence and I went in while Daddy and Brother Trone stayed in the car. And Billie Sol was just outside. We drove up as close as we could to the administration building. Brother Pullias refused to see us, period. But Willard Collins, the vice-president, said he would meet with us. While we were in there talking about why we couldn't go to school there, I don't remember what he said. I just know we couldn't go.

But when we came out, I saw all these kids just coming toward the car. I looked up and there were the police. The police came and looked in the back seat and saw Billie Sol. and said, almost in anger "Get off this campus. They don't want you on this campus. And you," pointing to me and Franklin, "don't you ever come back on this campus." I don't think Brother Collins would take a chance on saying that.

The kids were supportive, I could tell, so I felt good about things were going to change. The police slammed the door on Billie Sol's finger and hurt it, ordered the car off campus. I think Daddy was driving so we pulled off to a store nearby. The kids came around and just wanted to talk. Some had tears in their eyes. You could tell that wasn't what they wanted to see happen. They were the two incidents I remember mostly about David Lipscomb College.

VB: Who was the spokesperson when you went up to Brother Collin's office.

FR: Franklin Florence, primarily. I had my two cents worth, but he was older and the principal speaker. I think Brother Collins said he would speak to two of us so the rest had to stay out in the car.

VB: Potential students went in.

FR: Right. Florence could have gone because he did not go to college. I was at the point where I could have gone. This was '62 and I had just gone two and a half years. Two years at Southwestern and a half year at McMurray and I was interested in going there to finish. Didn't happen.

VB: When did your folks move to Detroit?

FR: They moved in 1951. A year after I went to NCI they moved to Detroit where Daddy took the Ford Avenue church in Highland Park. I stayed six months in Indianapolis.

Daddy was supposed to do a 2-weeks meeting in Detroit, it was going to take him a week to get there so he sent me to preach the first week and he did the second. I wasn't but 12 at the time. It was a tent meeting in Highland Park. People really came. I was shocked.

Brother O. A. Johnson organized that. He was the principal of a school and also the main person at the Ford Avenue church.

VB: Any success?

FR: I suppose so. I had a special appeal to young folks just about everywhere I went. We baptized a lot of young people. I remember one place 67 people came down the aisle in Atlanta. About 23 of them were baptized. That was when I was 16 or 17.

VB: In Detroit, was the meeting held beside the building?

FR: No. It was out on 8 Mile Road out where they were trying to start a church around 7 Mile and Livernois. The tent was located on the other side of 8 Mile Road. That was the beginning of the Wyoming church.

VB: In whose house did you stay?

FR: When I first got there, I stayed with my aunt, I called her Eliza, my mother's brother's wife. Uncle Butler. My sister, Dorothy, was already in Detroit, too. She was a member of C. L. Franklin's church, Oretha's daddy. All of the Butlers were not in the Church of Christ. Most of them were, but not all. My sister was staying there so she went with them. In fact, she did not come out to hear me preach until the last night. We had a fair reputation of talking about other people at that time and I was as bad as the rest of them. She wouldn't bother to come. I don't even like to talk about those days.

I remember this meeting in Indianapolis, IN where I stayed for 2 weeks. I was just going to make people get into the Church of Christ and I would say things at the end of the sermon "The Baptist Church ain't in the Bible nowhere. If you can prove it, come up here. Here's a Bible. The Methodist Church ain't in the Bible nowhere," etc. That kind of talk. Had a debate even and I wasn't even 13 or 14 years old. Didn't know what I was doing but I just bluffed my way through it.

Tape 2

VB: What do you remember about the church in Detroit when you first came?

FR: Not too much, except I thought I was in a place second to heaven because after all, I was in Detroit, MI. I had crossed the Mason-Dixon line, no more segregation, everything was just beautiful. But I noticed that people used to come to the South to visit us had all the big cars and we thought they had the big homes, but when we got to Detroit we discovered their homes didn't match their cars or their clothes.

We lived in a brick house, but it was a two-bedroom house on Princeton Street. There were 12 of us who lived in a 2-bedroom house in Atlanta. My mother and father had one of those bedrooms and the living room was reserved for company, so the girls had the one bedroom and the rest of us slept in the dining room, some on pallets, some in the kitchen, all over that house. The bedrooms were small, probably 10' x 11'. Same thing in Atlanta. We had stacked bunk beds. Eventually, Daddy bought a house over on Woodland Avenue that was more than large enough, Three stories and a basement. We had plenty of room there.

VB: He likely did not have much money, coming from the South.

FR: In Atlanta he was making about \$65 a week, then got up to \$75 a week. In Detroit he started out at \$100 a week, maybe a little over. When he left he was up to \$137.50, something like that. Daddy almost had to travel all the time getting meeting money just to make ends meet. In fact, I was holding as many meetings as he was when I got around 14 years old. By the time I

got married I would take out just enough to get to the next place and send the rest home to help him out with expenses. I did that for two or three years.

VB: Were your siblings doing some of that, too?

FR: They were not working. They were still in school. The next person under me was Helen and I sent her to school. Helen sent Marshall. In fact, Sylvia stayed with me during her last year in high school in Toledo. I don't know about Jimmy as I didn't have anything to do with his education, or Richard's or Marshall's. We all sent Sylvia, she was the baby.

VB: Your meeting in Detroit until your Daddy got there, did you help him move in?

FR: I don't remember. I'm sure I did along with the brethren. Somebody with a truck may have come down and moved them. That often happened in those days. I know he had his own car. Come to think of it, we didn't have that much to move. When you live in a parsonage, the furniture belongs to the church. We may not have had anything. I know, the church furnished the house and I think the Marion Coats used to live above us. Over on Princeton. 1528 Princeton or something like that.

I was getting close to 13 years old at the time and went back to NCI. The next year was when I came back up. I was about 14 or 15 and in the 9th grade when I went to Northern High School for a short while. I think it was one year. When I went back to NCI I could not stay in the dormitory because of my asthma. I never stayed with Brother Keeble. Mamie Lee who is Hambrick now, told Daddy she would keep me and she did. She lived about a mile and a half from the school and I walked that.

VB: Any benefits to being a senior at NCI?

FR: I was not over my age in the classroom. I graduated when I was 18, which was the same age as the others except for Patricia Officer who is Evans now. She was about 16 and had been to summer school.

Things were about the same there except we had a new Dean. His name was Jimmy Lyman. I don't remember anything special. By that time, I was gone all the time. I'd get permission to hold a meeting during school time and they'd let me go.

VB: During school?

FR: Yeah. Same thing at Southwestern. Of course that's the way I lost Pat Evans. We were supposed to get married. She went with me to Detroit to visit my mother after graduating from NCI. Everybody that knew us knew that we going to get married. Except Jack. He didn't know it. (laugh) I suppose his position was just because you go on the porch doesn't mean you're going to get into the house.

I never will forget that. I went to Los Angeles to hold a meeting for Brother Hogan. The first time I went out there I was a senior at NCI. That was when learned after I got back that Jack and Pat were talking. But when Floyd Rose was back in town, I was in charge. The very next year we all went to Southwestern. Shortly after school started I ended up again in Los Angeles and this time I didn't stay two week, I stayed three weeks. Back in those days there was no such thing as a week's meeting, the average was two weeks. If you got good you went on into three weeks. We baptized a lot of young folks. But when I got back to Southwestern Jack had enough time to talk her out of this relationship and into one with him. So they eventually got married.

VB: You brought up adolescence. How did that stage impact you?

FR: I went through the same changes most kids go through.

VB: Did your Daddy talk with you about it?

FR: No, No. In my culture, that was taboo. Unfortunately, you learned among kids and the things you read. Like everybody else, if I could find me a good juicy book, I read it.

VB: Being such a popular boy preacher, did the girls come on to you?

FR: Oh yeah. I was so popular that when I finished Southwestern Sister Carpenter made an announcement "Tell the girls that I was coming through on a train and I wanted all of them to line up by the railroad track and wave at me." And they did. Man, I'd pull up on campus and I had this [lowen nort do-phine? - an unusual sounding horn] and the dormitory would empty! Everybody would run out there to see me but Ann. She wasn't impressed. And that is who you want. She was dating another guy. I kept going until I got her.

The rules were so strict down there. But I wanted her so bad, when I finished school, she wasn't in school with me. I met her down there at lectureship. When I decided I wanted her I gave up the church in Toledo - I had it while I was still single - I said I wanted to go back to school, but that was one of the real reasons I went to Abilene. I tried to get into Abilene Christian but wound up at McMurray.

I used to drive every weekend all the way to Terrell to see that girl. When I got there, Sister Carpenter, the Dean, would not let me see her by myself. I had to sit in this big room with everybody else, all the other couples. That's how we dated. We couldn't go anywhere! We were never by ourselves, never! Couldn't go to the movies because every time I'd want to go, you'd have to get two other couples who wanted to go. And if you couldn't do that, then you couldn't go. But I still wanted that woman and I ended up getting her.

VB: What were some of the more successful gospel meetings you did as a boy preacher.

FR: Are you talking about baptisms and general responses?

VB: That or the meetings that made the biggest impact on you.

FR: The longest revival or gospel meeting that I held was in Galveston, TX. I preached every night including three times on Sunday and every night except Saturday night for a month. They wanted to do it Saturday night and I said "No, I just can't do it." There were several three week's meetings. One was with the Figueroa church in Los Angeles. At that time I was keeping up with the figures because they meant something as far as your own pride and arrogance was concerned. But somehow after that meant nothing to me, I blocked all of that out of my mind. I do remember that in Los Angeles we baptized close to 30 people and in Chattanooga, TN probably 23 or so. That largest may have been in Atlanta or Valdosta.

But just about everywhere I went I was going to get a good 10 to 15, and a lot of restorations, which in the black church meant "Brothers and Sisters I have sinned. I've repented and I ask for forgiveness." That sort of thing. You count all that because it adds to the numbers. If someone asks you "How many baptisms did you have?" you'd say "I had 120 responses," but most were asking for prayers but it sounded good. Then I'd get on a plane and just close my eyes and visualize the next issue of the Christian Echo, "The achievements of Floyd Rose." Back in those days if you preached for R. N. Hogan, that meant you were going to preach for Levi Kennedy, J. H. Winston, G. E. Stewart because they represented the Big Four. And Floyd Rose had it all locked up! It was pride.

VB: Talk about your experiences with the Big Four.

FR: I endeared myself to them. I don't know how many meetings I held at Figueroa. Probably I held more in Cleveland for Brother Winston. G. P. Holt, I forgot about him. Probably did as many for him in Oklahoma City and later in Indianapolis as I did for the rest of them.

*Penalty
Sapphire*

They used to sit around and talk and I was amazed at some of the things they used to talk about. I didn't know that Brother Hogan smoked and that shocked me. Brother G. E. Stewart smoked cigars and that shocked me. I didn't know Levi Kennedy talked the way he talked and that shocked me. He just about said anything that he felt. As they talked, it was obvious that this brotherhood was divided between Marshall Keeble and them. From TN to FL by way of MS, AL, AR and GA it was Keeble territory. Detroit, Chicago and Cleveland then going west from Little Rock into TX it was G. P. Bowser territory which was influenced by R. N. Hogan, Levi Kennedy, J. S. Winston and G. E. Stewart.

VB: But they let you into it.

FR: Yes. I don't know how else to say it but to say it, You see, there was no one else at what they considered my level at that time. Jack Evans and that group - Lawton and Wells - they were not on the national scene. Only Floyd Rose for probably two or three years. I was the most sought-after. I was "the person" for a long time.

VB: The kind of sermons that you preached were what?

FR: Whatever my Daddy preached. Most of it, not all, came from my Daddy. I tried to talk like him. Isn't that interesting how I went from being resentful to trying to be like him! My gestures, the blackboard or chalk board I tried to diagram it just like Daddy. I was Alonzo Rose although my name was Floyd. When I started out people would say they heard him. A lot of people heard me who had not heard him because I was in the areas where he was not.

It was only later that he finally got to Los Angeles, Chicago and Cleveland and by that time he had a tremendous following among the young preachers and that caused some resentment among the older preachers. That's why he was not forgiven and others were, whatever might have been his transgressions. Everybody knew that. Nothing is changed, not even now.

VB: I'm not picking up on what you are talking about. Start with the popularity of yourself Vs your Dad.

FR: OK. I was obviously going more places and doing more meetings than he was. Probably some of the reasons were I was young and John O. Williams had introduced this whole concept of youth revivals. That just took off and I was the person to do it at that time. That accounted for half of it. Then Daddy couldn't travel that much anyway because he had a church that he was trying to build in Detroit.

VB: Was he resentful?

FR: No, I never got that impression. He was very supportive. When I'd come to places like Dayton, he would drive all the way down there one night just to be there. If I was in a meeting at Toledo, he would come over to be with me. He may have driven over to Cleveland. I wasn't so comfortable with him being there primarily because I was doing his sermons.

I remember one night I had on the board "A Great Gulf Fixed." That was one of his sermons. I had drawn a line with one side things like Naaman and the other side his cure. That kind of thing. I had the word 'cure' spelled 'scure.' Daddy came right in the building, came up on the pulpit and said "Come here. That's spelled wrong." People sitting out there watching. I took the eraser and took off the 's' which left the word 'cure' out of line with the rest of the points. Of course, that looked better than it being misspelled. I was uncomfortable and it was difficult for me to preach after such a bold and obvious correction. That was in Toledo.

VB: Did your Dad begin to warm up to you personally.

FR: He would be supportive, but we never had the kind of a relationship that I and he would like to have had. When you start getting grown, if you miss it down there, its almost too late. The first time I hugged my Daddy was in Valdosta and it was probably three years before he died. And I would extend a hand politely but he was just not the kind of an affectionate person that I am. And maybe I am what I am now because I missed that. When I embrace people now maybe its not so much for them as it is for me, even if I don't realize it. I don't know.

VB: Part of that is generational. They didn't hug much back then. Back to your preaching, after you finished NCI, then what?

FR: I was at NCI in the 7th and 8th grade. In the middle of the 8th grade I ended up going to Indianapolis for 6 months, then I went to Detroit and to Northern High School. I would have been in the 10h grade but I was put back a year to the 9th grade and I was there for a year. Then I went back to NCI to finish the 10th, 11th, and 12 grades. That's when I graduated and also it was in that time that I was doing a lot of traveling, holding a lot of meetings. They let me out anytime I did a meeting even during the school year.

VB: Why?

FR: Daddy was opposed to me traveling so much with Brother Keeble during the school year because I was not getting my work. Brother Keeble didn't pay him any attention and took me anyway. I did not do well in school except in Bible where I made As. The rest was just enough to pass - C and C+. I didn't have any interest in anything but that book. But I read a lot. I loved history but I wanted to read what I wanted to read. Even now, I know how it ought to be said, but I'm not sure why. In writing letters, I know where a comma or period belongs but if it gets into semi-colons and things like that, I have to let Estelle work on it.

VB: Give me your first experiences with Southwestern.

FR: I left from NCI to Southwestern and in that group was Jack Evans, a fellow named Twitty, James Wilson, Daniel Harrison, Herbert Griffin, James Stewart - we were the ones from NCI. That year there were 53 students total; of that number there were 11 or 12 girls and the rest were boys. I had been in meeting all that summer. A. D. Isbell was the President at the time. When I first got there Brother Barber was there but he left shortly. There was a vice-president who was white but I don't recall who he was. Roosevelt Sams was the Dean under Isbell and Mary Carpenter was Dean of the girls.

That was an interesting experience. Mary Carpenter was something else. You would be put on probation for holding a girl's hand, and if you got caught kissing two or three times, you were on your way home.

VB: Did she never marry?

FR: Not again. One time I was talking to her after I had graduated - I made sure of that - and I said, "Do you ever want a man? Do you ever think about being married or being with somebody?" She looked at me and said, "Nobody ever asked." I said, "Don't you know why? Who's going to say something to you?" (laugh)

I lived in her house along with William Miller, the preacher from Nassau, Bahamas who is being supported by a church in Detroit. He was my roommate first in the dormitory and then when I moved over to live with her, I asked if he could stay with her and I paid her. Billie Sol took care of the school and all that stuff, and I just gave her money. I made a D in her psychology class. You can graduate with a D but you can't take it anywhere. That's when I was going to try to go to ACU or ACC at the time. I said, "Is there anything we can do about this." She said "No, unless you come back here it up."

I said, "Sister Carpenter, you would demand that I come back here this summer and go to school? Why can't you let me do some correspondence?" "I can't make an exception for you," she said. I said "I stayed with you, washed your clothes, I washed your sheets." She said, "Yeah and that has nothing to do with this." I had to go back to Southwestern and spend a month in the summer to make up that grade. Tough, but do you know what I respected about that? She didn't make any exceptions, not even for Floyd Rose. Didn't like it at the time, but I respected her.

VB: Your teachers there, who made an impression on you?

FR: Mary Carpenter, number one! (laugh) I can't recall the Bible teacher and I don't recall learning that much from him either. He was white. The only black teachers they had when I was there was Mary Carpenter, Dean Sams but I'm not sure he taught a class. He didn't teach me. There was a history teacher there, whose name I don't recall for the moment. Sister Isbell taught literature and I was in her class. I used to sit in there with the Bible on the inside and the literature book on the outside. She thought I was reading literature. I don't recall any special impression when it came to preaching, either. I had what I had when I got there and just kept it up.

There was a slight problem which developed between the NCI boys and the Southwestern boys. The first year they had a tent meeting and they had different ones of us to speak every night. There were a couple of fellows who when to Southwestern and who had not gone to NCI, which meant we had the up on them. We were all teasers. Even now we'll say to one another "You can't preach, You don't know what you're talking about" etc. So during this week of meetings we teased each other " You just wait until tomorrow night. You haven't had preaching yet."

We started teasing the other guys and didn't realize the negative effect it would be. One fellow, John Cooper, went over in a corner, sat down and cried. We all apologized but it really hurt him. We didn't mean to hurt him. We teased him like we teased each other. He was also the assistant minister under Dean Sams who was the preacher for the church. The church met in the auditorium at Southwestern. Dean Sams spoke that morning and we spoke at night. John was a nice fellow but he didn't have the kind of natural talent and training that the NCI boys brought with them, having been trained under Keeble.

VB: Let's explore this relationship with you and Jack because that is one of the biggies. Talk about Pat and your first relationship.

FR: I met Pat when I was 13 and she was 11. I'm not sure she liked me or the fact that I was "the man" around. Anyway, we liked each other. Her mother liked me, thought I was nice. We started going together when I was 13. When I was in school in Detroit I was writing back to Pat. When we graduated, she went home with me and my mother came down on the bus and stayed two weeks in the home. We were talking about marrying later. We ended up going to Southwestern in the same class. I did not pay her the attention I should have, I didn't have to, she wasn't going anywhere. Where was she going? She was my future wife. I knew it, she knew it, everybody knew it. Everybody except Jack, of course. I found out later they were talking a little bit at NCI. I didn't know anything about that until it was all over. When I went to Los Angeles and stayed three weeks, didn't bother to write or call. Why? I'm Floyd Rose.

To hear her tell it, there was this Youth Conference in Chicago, I me this white girl in Los Angeles and she had a little crush on me but I had no relationship with her. But I didn't tell her about Pat. Pat is right about that. I didn't figure they would run into each other, so why mention that. Her name was Nee Miller. I think she was of German descent and I didn't know

how her family felt until I ended up coming to Chicago and she couldn't come to hear me preach. I baptized her in Los Angeles. She met me in a restaurant in downtown Chicago because she couldn't take me to see parents. There wasn't anything serious between us anyway. I never kissed her or anything. But they were roommates at the Youth Conference and she was telling Pat about this young preacher that she met and how much she liked him. His name was Floyd Rose. So that killed that. That's what she said but I think it was more than that. By the time I got back to Southwestern from Los Angeles, we were still on and off, but really, Jack was more in and I was more off.

In the meantime, I also met a girl in Toledo that I also baptized whose name was Carol Copeland and I was going to marry her. She was Miss Southwestern. But I didn't have the same feelings toward her that I had toward Pat, but I know she'd make me a good wife. Then, I tried to respect all the rules. You don't kiss them, you don't hold their hand, and I thought that would make them respect me. So I never kissed her, never held her hand. Just sat out and talked. Talked not about Jesus - I didn't know so much about him as much as the church, the Bible. She looked at me and I thought she was impressed by my knowledge.

I ended up going off on one of my extended meetings. When I came back, my sister, Helen, who was there at the time, came over to Sister Carpenter's where I was staying and said, "Floyd, I need to tell you something." I said "What?" and she started to cry. I said, "What's the matter with you?" She said "Carol's got another boyfriend." I said "What?" "Yeah." So I went to see her, we talked and she said "Yeah. You didn't pay me any kind of affection I needed." I said, "You want me to kiss you? You know I can't kiss you, it's against the rules." She didn't say nothing. The other guy kissed her and got her.

You bet your life when Ann came around I forgot the rules just like everybody else! And I told Sister Carpenter "You may not catch me, but I'm telling you now I'm not paying any attention to this stuff. You got me thinking these girls would appreciate me respecting these rules? No they don't. They want to be held, they want to be touched and they want to be kissed, and I'm going to do it!" And I did.

VB: And she said?

FR: I don't remember. Oh, she said, "Well I'd better not catch you." (laugh) I would have done it even if I had been caught because it would have been worth it. (laugh)

VB: Let's talk more about Jack and your history.

FR: After they married, I wasn't mad. They moved to Portalis, New Mexico where Jack went to school and I held a meeting not far away. They came over to the meeting and I went back home with them and Dugan Benford was also out there. That was my first time to be with them after their marriage. That was good for me. I needed to make sure. I'd see them off and on at lectureships. When it was in Toledo, Jack didn't come but Pat came. Then Jack came up to Sandusky, OH to hold a meeting and they stayed with us. Ann and I were married by that time. We all became friends and that worked out fine. I saw Jack like I saw any of our old friends. If we could attend each others meetings, we would do so. That never changed.

VB: What changed?

FR: Our relationship never changed. I still feel close to Jack even today. The next time we had differences, it had nothing to do with Pat. It had to do with some issues involving a book that I wrote. Beyond the Thicket.

In 1968, the lectureship was held in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Columbus Grimsley was the minister there at the time. In the meantime, I had a little popular in certain white circles with the

(it)

likes of Dwain Evans, Bill Banowsky, Walter Burch, Rod Spaulding, and Chuck Lucas. I'm being invited to Crossroads, to the university lectures at Gainesville, FL, then to Mendham, NJ, to West Islip on Long Island, etc. I began to feeling a little different about the church because they were talking about Jesus. I began to listen but it didn't hit me. In 1968 at the lectureship where Billy Washington now is but where Brother Grimsley was at the time - different building, of course.

While we were in the lectures one night, someone handed me a note that said "Martin Luther King just got shot in Memphis." I grabbed Franklin Florence by the shoulder and whispered "King's just been shot!" We went out to my 68 VW, turned on the radio and they announced that he was dead. I slumped over on the steering wheel and screamed. Florence grabbed my shoulder. I knew I'd admired him and respected him, I didn't know that it was that deep. I was shattered. I finally got composed and we walked back into the auditorium and sat down. About that time somebody had handed Brother Grimsley a note. I don't know who had just finished speaking but he got up and these were his exact words "I have a note here that says Martin Luther King just got shot and killed in Memphis, TN tonight. That just goes to show you, you can push people too far. Next on the program will be Humphrey Foutz from Baltimore, MD."

I sat there and looked at the audience and looked at him. I saw people beginning to weep and young people began walking out. I said "Something is wrong with this. My God! Something is wrong with this. That's all, that's it?" Humphrey Foutz, to his credit, stood up, shook his head and said "I can't preach." For all practical purposes, nothing else happened for the rest of those two or three days and they finally just dismissed the lectureship. But for two days, Vernon, I begged Brother Grimsley to at least send a (choking a bit) - it's hard for me to talk about it now - send Dr. King's wife a telegram or something. "This is the only church in the world that will ignore his death. The only one! My God, what is this?" After almost two days he agreed to let Roosevelt Wells.....(end of tape).....

When he finished reading to the audience what was sent to the King family, he said "Of course, we know he wasn't a Christian." For me that took away everything else that he had said. I just got up and walked out. I remember a young man standing up, looking at Wells and saying "He had his beliefs. Y'all ain't doing nothing for nobody. But at least he had his beliefs."

All these people with all this courage about the one church, trying to figure out how to get back home without any problems because they were burning down cities. I came on back home and was never quite the same. The very next Sunday, Brother Loveless from Cleveland was coming through and I asked him to preach. He got up and before he could say too much about being there, he said "I want you to know that I don't worship Martin Luther King. I worship Jesus and somehow you ought not to be thinking about him."

I sat through that and when we got home we were talking, I said "I need to say something to you, Brother Loveless. I really didn't appreciate your comments today." He didn't even know what I was talking about. When I told him, he said "Well, I don't worship him." I said "I know, and I don't either. But he has done more than any other single man in this country to make life better for you and for me, and I don't forget that."

I got that out of my system, but I started feeling a little different about our attitude toward other people. One of the members of my own church remarked to me when the cities

told me that "something's wrong with you. There's nothing wrong with white people, there's something wrong with you. If you just weren't black you'd have the opportunity. But you're black! Accept that! You're black!" This black body had a white mind and the white mind made me want the same things white folks wanted. The black body was rejected so I ended up being the victim of self-hatred. I cried.

I called Billie Sol and he came down. He didn't come to ACC but to McMurray and made arrangements for me to go there. I told him I didn't want to stay over there. I ended up staying with a black sister, Mamie Cofield and Billie Sol paid her.

When I went to McMurray, I had a rude awakening. I went over there and enrolled in their Bible courses because I wanted to teach them. Not to learn, because they were Methodists. I never shall forget the confrontation I had with one of the professors. We were talking about the church and I said "You know you cannot find the Methodist Church in the Bible." I went on. He's say something and I'd say "You just don't want to hear the truth." He looked at me and said "Floyd, the only truth I know is the truth I see. And the truth is you can't go to your own school." That ended that conversation.

It was then that I became disenchanted and started having all these feeling about the church and school. I wondered why it was we were, except for Bob Jones University, the last private schools in this country to integrate. I said, "There's something wrong with this." So when I got back to Toledo, my message has changed. I didn't have the courage to talk in public about what I thought was wrong with it. I just refused to preach the old stuff.

I went to hold a meeting for Brother Winston the last time. He said "Floyd, you might do a little better if you told the people the difference." Then, my Daddy came somewhere I was preaching at the River Street in Waldosta and he suggested the same thing. I never commented, I just didn't feel any different.

VB: They wanted what difference?

FR: The difference between the Church of Christ and the Baptist, Methodist, Catholic and other denominations. I didn't know about grace at that time but I talked about Jesus and some other things.

In 1973, after all the experience with Dwain Evans, Bill Banowsky, etc., we built the Ridgewood Church of Christ in Toledo, at that time the most modern black church in town and perhaps in the state. It just seated 300 people but it had all the modern conveniences. I had my own private rest room and shower which was new back then. I wanted to show off the house that Floyd built. I asked my wife and the sisters to prepare dinner for ministers and the community. I invited them all - Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Church of God, Catholic priests came, who was white.

And after dinner I ushered them through, pointing out all these beautiful conveniences, demonstrating the intercom system, and we were walking through there. One Baptist preacher named McClendon who had moved there from Memphis and who used to listen to A. J. Colston preach all the time on the radio said to the other preachers, "If you really want to hear the church preached, go to the Church of Christ. No body can preach the church like Church of Christ preachers." My chest kind of stuck out, then he said "If you want to know something about Jesus, you better go somewhere else." I'm telling you that hit me like a ton of bricks. I tried to laugh it off and I couldn't.

When all that was over, I went home and tried to talk to Ann but she didn't understand what I was going through. I got into the bed and tried to sleep. I shook her and said, "I can't

sleep.” She said “That’s your problem.” (laugh) I got up went to desk. At that time preachers used to have loose-leaf notebooks with sermon outlines in them. I had about three. I was thumbing through these: “The Church that Jesus Built,” “The Establishment of the Church.” Nothing on love, not a simple sermon called ‘Jesus.’ Nothing. That’s why today I don’t have a sermon book.

The next morning I dumped them. I opened my Bible and started reading Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I just wanted to know more about this man. The more I read the more I wanted to read. For the first time I felt like I was being introduced to him. I knew about them, I knew about it. I could dot all the I’s and cross all the t’s. I could quote all the Scriptures like a scripture-machine. But I didn’t know him. The more I came to know him, the less interested I was in castigating any of them. Because somehow I came to realize that the only people he ever pointed a finger at were the people who were pointing fingers at other people. And I just got to change it.

And I started praying. I used to just pray at church. I didn’t have a prayer life. And when I read the Bible, I read it to find Scriptures to prove that I was right and everybody else was wrong. I never read it like it was a letter written to me.

Then I started putting some of what I read into practice. I made a decision, as I was saying to the people this morning, that I would do unto others - all others - as I wanted all others to do to me. I would hold hands with all men and the only man’s hands I wouldn’t hold was that man, by holding his hand, stopped me from holding the hands of other men. Then I started talking like that and acting like that.

I invited non-Church of Christ preachers to the pulpit at Ridgewood. I invited Franklin Florence. They had what they called an Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. I joined that. They were sponsoring a revival every year and the first year I volunteered to preach and it was held in a Methodist Church. Franklin Florence was the only one who had enough nerve to come. He preached and what a beautiful time it was. The next year it was my time to host it and the time for the Baptist preacher to preach and he came. Well, by that time the word was getting out. The meetings started being canceled and I was being ‘written up.’ It really didn’t matter. I was on a roll and I saw something bigger and better than that.

But I didn’t know at that time how it would effect my family. (choked up) I started getting letters, people started calling. In 1976, we were talking about integrating the Ridgewood Church - they even did an article in the Christian Chronicle and two white families were going to move up to Toledo. I was pretty excited about this mainly because of my [value ? admiration? with rock.] I could see in them something different from had happened to me at ACC and other places. I was on my way with Rod Spaulding and a group from Shiloh to Southwestern to speak and to recruit kids to go there to work. We got to Memphis, TN when I got a call from a lady, Julia Green, said “Floyd, you’d better come home. Ann is in the hospital.” I said “What happened to her.” “I don’t know, but you just better come home.”

I found out later that I had received a letter from Jack telling me not to come on the campus. That my being there would have an adverse influence on the young people. I went to school there. That was a part of my life and I wasn’t there to do anything with the young people except talk about Camp Shiloh. My wife had opened the letter and that was the straw that broke the camel’s back.

Earlier, we had gone to Cameron Avenue (in Detroit) to a meeting. I think Billy Washington had conducted it. And Alex Davenport had asked me to say the prayer. I went up

and sat down to wait until they finished the last song before prayer. One of the other brothers came up and whispered to me "Brother Rose, you can't pray. There's some question about your fellowship. Sorry. You'll have to step down."

VB: Did Alex do that?

FR: I don't think it was Alex. It could have been. If it was Alex it was because someone else asked me to pray. I don't remember who that was. When I went back and sat down next to my wife, she dropped her head and cried. That was the first time she had seen that kind of public rejection. So that had happened a week earlier. By the time she had gotten over this, that happened..

So I got on a plane and came back. I went on down to the hospital. She was in the room with a needle in both arms and [a tube] inserted in her nose. They explained to me something about nerves, I don't recall the medical term but it caused her bleeding. I took her by the hand and called "Ann." She turned over and had been crying. She said "I can't take it anymore. Why don't you stop. I can work! God has blessed you with so much talent (his voice cracking). I just want to live like everybody else and I can't take it no more. Not today." I said, "Don't cry. I got to preach. It's in my blood. Its in my bones. I promised my Mama before she left here in 1963 that I would preach until I die. I gotta preach."

She said if you love me and these children, you wouldn't put us through this." She jerked her hand away. I remember walking down the hall suddenly realizing that the strength that I had tried to give her, I didn't have. Strength that I tried to give God, I didn't have.

I went home and I couldn't sleep. I went down to the church and it was about midnight. I went into that little room that I called my prayer closet and for two hours I just cried and prayed. And that's when I found him. Somehow he revealed himself to me. I kept saying, "I know you know me, but I don't know you. I just need to know what you're doing to me. My wife is [high? hurting ?] in that hospital room and I don't know what wrong with her. I'm down here trying to do what is right. What I'm doing I think is right. All I want to do is just love everybody. That's all."

After about two hours it seemed that a strange strength surged through my body and I could hear that inner voice say "Floyd, love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that despitefully use you." And those Scriptures that I had heard all the years and didn't mean anything, just came alive. "Weeping men do for the night, but joy will come in the morning." "The youth may faint and the young may utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "_____ and not grow weary, walk but not faint." "And what you are going through is not as important as what you are going to."

I felt like a new person. I went home and went to sleep. On the way to the hospital later that morning I remember hearing the song we used to sing at Jackson Street in Nashville, "When we walk with the Lord, in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way. When we do his good will, he abides with us still, and with all who trust and obey." I got back to the hospital and Ann was asleep. I shook her and said "Ann, are you OK?" She said "Yeah." "Did you sleep good?" "Yes." "When did you go to sleep?" "About four hours ago." I said, "I know when you went to sleep. It's going to be all right."

We renewed our commitment to each other and to God. Ann had never sung before but for some reason she fell in love with "All on the Altar." We'd go places and churches started calling again, especially those with preachers who were leading. I came to Chicago with Dan [Harrison]'s place, and at Rochester, NY [Franklin Florence]. They knew how she could sing.

What I'd do, since she couldn't lead the song, I'd get up and say at the close of my message "I want you to help me with a song 'Is your all on the altar?' and I'd say let's sing it and I would look at her and she just started it. Interesting, nobody had a problem with that but if she stood up to sing, that would have been a problem. So we went through with that.

I was invited to speak at the National Lectureship prime time at night in Houston. I believe this was 1969 or 1972. I don't want to leave this out. But Brother G. P. Holt, Jacob McClendon along with a young man whose name then was Arthur Smith at the time, had written to Brother Scott asking him not to let me speak. I shall never forget the courage of Edgar Scott. He wouldn't back down. He said "No, he's speaking." I have to tell you that at the time Edgar Scott at the time really didn't know what I really believed because I'd never shared that with him. He never asked, he just stuck with what he already knew, I guess. I had held a meeting with them a year earlier. Although I was changing, I never made that a big issue. I just didn't preach what I didn't believe. But I didn't preach everything I did believe. That was not important to me at the time. Finally, we got through that.

Then by 1978, I had become so disenchanted because then the people at the church at Ridgewood were being isolated and I felt sorry for them. None of the congregations would come around. Of course, Baptists and Methodist would come. They stopped coming. Not all of them, but most of them. So I decided to just work and I resigned and Jimmy took the church. I still gave my money there but for almost a year I visited around.

Then one day, Walter Holston, who owned a grocery store and was sponsoring my radio program, after I left Ridgewood he still wanted to do that. He felt I should stay on the air and I did. But I didn't talk about the church. Just about Jesus and motivation kind of thing. One morning about 5 o'clock while we were in the bed, we never kept the door locked, he came in and was sitting in the kitchen drinking coffee until we got up. He said, "Floyd, why don't you start a church? These people, a lot of people would come." Ann said, "No, we are not going through that no more. Nooo. We're not going through that." I didn't say anything because, you know, if you are a preacher, you're a preacher. He went on "I've got some property that if I need to, I'll be glad to put it up to get the building."

A few days later I was doing a workshop for high school teachers. When it was over, one of sort of brushed passed me and said, "I guess I'll go on over here and vote." I said "Vote? What's going on that I don't know?" "Our church wants to sell this building, so I guess I'll go vote." I knew which one it was. "First Church of God? Y'all selling that building?" She said "Yeah." Something just clicked. I went home and called the preacher, Bob Culp. "Y'all selling the building?" Same thing I did with the Jehovah's Witnesses. He said "We are thinking about it." I said "I'll buy it." He said "You don't have a church do you?" I said "Naw, but I'll get some." He said "Rose, you got any money?" I said "No, but I'll get some." "I don't know, but I'll talk to the trustees about it."

So one woman trustee who listened to me on the radio all the time, although another church had made an offer and they had about 100 people. She said, "I don't know how he's going to do it, but if he said he could do it, I think he can do it. And I want to give him the chance." So they leased the building to us for \$1,500 a month plus we paid all the expenses. I went on the radio for two weeks, not every day as I was only on once a week on Sunday mornings. Didn't have any idea the kind of audience I had. I told them the kind of church I was going to start. It was going to be non-denominational although it would be Family Baptist, etc. I said "We won't see everything alike or like everything we see, but we ~~feeling (?)~~ Christ to see

will be free

were burning, she said "Look what he did. It was all right for him to get himself killed but now he getting everybody else killed." I said "And that's all that means to you?" And that hurt.

I got to meet Dr. King one time. Just once, but I became an ardent admirer of his. I read every thing that he had ever written, and every book that had been written about him. And I finally got to meet him. I shall never forget how I felt when I shook his hand. That he was not like any other man. I just looked at him. He didn't know me from Adam.

We were in a receiving line like everyone else. But I knew he was different when he stepped of the plane when he stepped off the plane and was surrounded by preachers - one on one arm and one on the other and they were saying there were 35 reporters waiting on you over at Mr. Lamb's house who was a rich, white industrialist. Preachers and teachers and doctors and lawyers had been invited to Mr. Lamb's house for a special reception for Dr. King. But the poor people were not.

I will never forget the look in his eye. Dr. King looked at Rev. Roach and he looked at all these people who had gathered at the airport, the poor and the oppressed who never got an invitation to Mr. Lamb's house. He looked at Rev. Roach and said "Excuse me. I need to go meet with the people who made me Dr. King." Rev. Roach wanted to protest but King said "Just a minute. I've got time to meet with them." He walked over there and spent about 15 minutes with the poor. I never will forget that. He was different. He never demanded money or set a fee before him to come. He accepted contributions. All this stuff with Jesse [Jackson] and all that that happened later on, that wasn't Dr. King. He was different, but that's another story.

VB: Could we get back to the beginning of the Civil Rights movement and how it impacted you. Maybe you have already done that.

FR: I had two experiences that impacted my feelings towards whites which deeply hurt. This was just before I started preaching, I might have been 10 years old. The Simpson Street church chartered a bus to Birmingham, AL for a service. I was on the bus seated next to an old woman, one of the elderly sisters. As we were crossing the AL state line she her whispering to me "Son, I have to use the rest room." At that time there were no rest rooms on busses.

I had on a new blue surge suit Mama had bought me, so I jumped out of my seat, went down the aisle and told the white bus driver, there were no black Greyhound bus drivers at the time, and I told him that a lady needed to use the rest room and could we stop. As soon as we got to a service station around the bend, he pulled over to the side of the road and stopped. I thought he was going to go see about it. He didn't move, so I jumped off the bus. When I got to the door there were four white men sitting at a card table playing cards.

A big burly guy was smoking a big cigar. I just knocked and opened the door at the same time and said "There is an older lady on the bus who needs to use the rest room." The big guy said "We ain't got no nigger rest rooms." I said "She's an old lady and she needs to use the rest room." He looked at me, got up out of his seat, pulled the door as wide as he could get it, put his big hand in the pit of my stomach an shoved me out of that door. I was stumbling back when my back hit the gas pump, that made me drop straight down, seven feet pool of oil. I started crying.

My clothes were not just dirty, it wasn't just that. My feelings were hurt. And I turned around and all these black folk looking out the window, their faces frozen with fear, and nobody moved. Of course, today is another day, but nobody moved. I got back on that bus only to hear that old woman say she had soiled her clothes.

I was going to Montgomery to hold a meeting for Kelly Mitchell at the old Holt Street church. It must have been 1962 or 63 because King was still at Montgomery, had not moved to Atlanta. I was on the highway almost into the city, it was raining when here comes a state trooper - two of them. I knew I wasn't speeding. I pulled over. It's raining, so I just sat there. I didn't get out of the car and they didn't either. They spoke through a loud speaker and told me to get out of the car.

It was raining, so I sort of sat there thinking they didn't really mean 'right then.' He called "Nigger, I said get out of the car, now!" I got out of the car. "Come to the back." Still raining. "Open the trunk." I went back and got my keys out of the ignition, opened the trunk and turned around for further instructions. "Take all your clothes out and put them on the ground." I took them out and put them on the ground. They sat there and laughed to each other.

Finally, "You can put them back into the trunk now." I put them back in and waited for I didn't know what he wanted me to do next. He said "You can close it." I did, but by that time I was soaking wet. They laughed a little while longer. Then he said, "You can go now." They never gave me a ticket. I'm drenched. I got back in the car with wet clothes on, went on to Montgomery.

Those two things plus my experience at Abilene Christian College probably had the greatest impact on my feelings about white people. But you see, those first two instances had nothing to do with the church and Christians. You could somewhat accept it for the times, even when you don't like it.

The next thing was with ACC. I went out there with Billie Sol after I finished at Southwestern. Billie Sol rented an apartment near the campus for me to stay there. I didn't know that they had already told him "No." He brought me out there anyway. I learned after a while that my application had been turned down. I went to the school, up those steps of the Administration Building, went down the hall. I didn't stop by the Registrar's office, or the Dean's office, I went straight to the office of the President.

He welcomed me in and I walked in. He was sitting behind his wooden desk. I leaned up over and put my hands on the desk, he was safe behind it, and I said "Brother Morris, I didn't stop by the Dean's office and I didn't stop by the Registrar's office, I came to you. I want you to tell me why I can't come here. If it's because I'm dirty, I can wash; if it's because I'm poor, Billie Sol has already made arrangements for my tuition; if it's because I'm ignorant, that's why I'm here. But if it's because I'm black, there's nothing I can do about it. God made me like I am."

He shuffled his feet, looked at his hands, then looked up at me and said "Floyd, I'm sorry." I looked at him and never said anything else. I turned around and walked out of his office, going down those steps, the same feelings of hatred welled up.

I didn't hate white people. I accepted as valid, because I had a white mind, the unspoken reason for my rejection, my own blackness and I said, "Oh, if I wasn't black, if I wasn't black! I could one day sit down at this same desk and run this school. But I'm black." I thought about all the cliché's that somehow suggested that there was something wrong with blackness: 'Black cat crossing your trail you're in for a streak of bad luck;' my mother used to say "Son, you can't have coffee because it'll make you black;" then when I'd get in trouble and she wanted to make sure I got the message she said "If you don't straighten up and fly right I bet I'll beat all the black off you." All that kind of stuff. All of a sudden I'm overwhelmed with this thing that

what we see. For the differences that make no difference to God, make no difference to us, etc." I talked that Christ would be our all and love would be our only law.

That Sunday morning, I said "If you want a good seat, you'd better come early because people are going to be there from all over." Nobody but me and this man and my wife. Vernon, when I showed up there were 300 people there! Forty people joined the first service and an average of 15 joined the next months. And that was the beginning of that. I did that for 15 years until that was no longer a challenge for me.

VB: I still want to know more about the impact of the Civil Rights Movement and King's influence on your life.

FR: In 1962 or 63, I went to Macon, GA. I told the people in Toledo I was going down there so that would give them an opportunity to save money to build the church. But I really went down because I wanted to get involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

VB: Who was there and why were you attracted there?

FR: I did not know who was down there but I knew that there was a Civil Rights Movement there. The church was the Lesban Avenue Church of Christ at the time. They hired me. In less than two weeks, I found out who was running what, that David Randall was the president or coordinator of the Bibb County Coordinating Committee which was an umbrella of the other committees and they would have mass meetings every Tuesday night. Incidentally, Dad came through there and I arranged for him to speak on night. I shall never forget his message. He turned out the place with "A Knock at Midnight." He closed by talking about the different churches, but that's a different story.

I got involved in that and they were impressed with me, primarily because I was from the North. So when a white man took his finger and sexually misused a little 6-year-old black girl, the white people didn't mention it. We were up in arms. We decided what we needed was a newspaper. We brought in a fellow, Charles Ware, who had expertise in putting together a newspaper but said he couldn't be an editor. They said, "Well, Floyd, you speak OK. Can't you be the editor?" I said "I'm not an editor, never had any experience. Yeah, I can do it." So I became the editor of that little paper. By the way, they've changed names and it is still going now, the Macon Reporter.

I forget the church where it was, somehow, somebody told them about me. The speaker didn't show up one night so someone said "Why don't you let Floyd Rose speak?" That was my time. By that time I had memorized some of King's stuff, added a little bit of my own, and they gave me a good applause, being courteous, of course. But after that, I started being "the man" around there to speak.

I never met King there, but I met Hosea Williams when he came in. I didn't meet Abernathy until later in Birmingham in 1963. Billie Sol was there, too. We went to the hotel. We didn't get to see King. They felt with all the publicity about Billie Sol, that wouldn't mix.

In Macon, we developed this strategy: good cop/bad cop. I was always the good guy and the other guy would be the bad guy. We'd go in to see the Mayor about something and I would be the calm, cool one like King and he would be the Malcolm X. I'd say "We need to do this and this and this." He'd say, "No. We can't do this." 'Malcolm X' and I had an understanding on the outside knowing we would ask for this knowing we wouldn't get that. But we also wouldn't settle for this. I would talk and he would hit a rut - go off. "What we need to do is to burn this so-and-so thing down, blah, blah." I'd say, "No, man what we don't to go that far. That's against everything Martin Luther King taught." He's say "So and so that

Martin Luther King.” Then I’d tell the Mayor, “Listen, if you don’t meet with me, you’re going to have to meet with him. We’ve got to work this out.” He preferred to meet with me. When it was over, we just walked down the street and laughed.

I really got turned on to Dr. King just through hearing his speeches and news clips.

-----end of tape 2-----

There were some places where the Movement never caught on so nothing was going on. But it was all through the South. We got so attached to Macon my wife didn’t want to go back to Toledo, but I had made a commitment to the people that I was coming back in 9 months. That hurt Ann. She felt closer to the people down there. I had this thing about keeping my word and they kept calling and calling. I put it off another month but finally went back. My twins were born in Macon, Billie had been born in Toledo. In coming back I was not in the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement but I used to walk behind Bob Culp who was a minister for the First Church of God from whom we bought the building later.

By the time I got back things had started to happen in Toledo. Black Panthers came out on the streets with their guns. Nobody knew Floyd Rose but I got involved in the background and would put my 2 cents worth in the meetings. Bob Culp was the man and the President of the NAACP and President of another political group called [Pair peels ?], and President of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, and the President of Christian Brothers and the minister of his church, which was a substantially large one.

VB: Did the Alliance involve blacks and whites?

FR: The only whites were the Catholic priests and the Lutheran preacher who was in the black community.

What I discovered was ‘What we don’t understand, we fear, and what we fear, we fight.’ Brother Keeble thought about the Civil Rights Movement. One time I was bragging about Fred Gray being so smart in being Dr. King’s lawyer and we were all proud of that. Brother Keeble said, “Too smart. Not smart, too smart. He has no business in there.” I didn’t understand that.

He also told me that Dr. King’s daddy was the worst enemy that the Church of Christ had in Atlanta. He was so far out of it he didn’t understand the depth of Martin Luther King’s influence. But he finally realized when he came to Detroit to speak he bragged about King one Sunday morning. “If it hadn’t been for Dr. King we’d still be riding on the back of the bus. Thank God for Dr. King. Thank God for him.” The people said “Amen” loudly. We noticed that afternoon that the crowd was predominantly white, so he never mentioned King’s name. He said “Thank God for the white brethren. If it weren’t for them we still be running around in Africa, naked.” Then he’d look at us and say “Get the baskets, boys, they’re ready.”

I met Dr. King in 1968, the year that he died. He came there to speak at Scott High School. He was conducting voter registration drives in Cleveland trying to get Carl Stokes in office. He was elected the first black mayor of a major city. I got to hear his speak and meet him in a reception line. My respect for him really heightened when I saw what he did with those poor people who had come out to the airport just to see him.

VB: How did the business with Dwain Evans and Rod Spaulding get started?

FR: I believe the order is correct. I was first invited, and I don’t know by whom, I was in a meeting in Morristown, NJ, the minister from West Islip was over and heard me speak. He invited me to participate in the Mendham lectures or whatever they called it. It was then that I met Dwain Evans, Rod Spaulding, Walter Burch, Chuck Lucas, John Allen Chalk, and Bill

Banowsky. I thought it was real interesting in that they had this Methodist preacher, a very famous man, he and Banowsky had a dialogue that was very interesting. It wasn't a debate. I was deeply touched by the openness. These men represented to me - and I don't like the word - a more liberal wing of the Church of Christ. Then I was invited to most of their churches to speak.

VB: What was Banowsky doing up there? That wasn't his normal territory.

FR: At that time he was connected with Pepperdine. He was here for the friendly dialogue.

VB: Was it [Joseph] Fletcher?

FR: No. I can't remember his name. This was 1969 or 70 when I got to meet these fellows.

VB: You traveled with Rod.

FR: I was invited to come to Camp Shiloh to speak to the kids. Talk about embarrassed, oh, someone had given me some alligator shoes. I was sharp. Didn't realize what it was, like I didn't realize what this was. I got there and got dressed up to the hilt. Came down to speak, looked around, all these kids in worn-out blue jeans, old gym shoes. Talk about out of place. I could hardly wait until that first section was over so I could - I still didn't bring any clothes like that - but I could get out of that shirt, tie and coat.

I was so touched by what they were trying to do, that I agreed to travel with Rod and Brian Hill, the other fellow there. Phil Rosebury, what a beautiful, beautiful guy. Oh, my God, he and his wife. Went to Brooklyn where he worked in Bedford-Styverson area, I got to see all that.

I gave up some gospel meetings - a few that was still coming in - because I really wanted to be involved with this work. I traveled with them to recruit students. In all the places we went I might have been helpful in getting one black student. I explained to Rod, "The problem we have with getting blacks here, what you're asking them to do is simply relive an experience. For you it is an experiment. Not for them. They've lived that way all their lives so they are not that turned on by doing that. Plus the white students will come from homes where if they have money, they can drop out of college and year and go back and pick up where they left off. We can hardly get through the first year. So you are not going to be that successful." And we were not but I really appreciate going with them.

I had some good experiences. Rod and I slept together - you could do that in those days without anybody worrying about it. (laugh) We went to Harding and stayed in a white home. One of the school wouldn't let us recruit. That was Freed-Hardeman. We spoke at Lipscomb. We didn't go to Oklahoma Christian - they may have gone - but we were going to Terrell and that is when I got the call to come see about Ann. Later, Jack called and apologized.

I flew back out there and met them in TX. We got there, thinking I was going to speak. Walked into Eugene Lawton's office who was Dean at the time and he informed me I couldn't speak. I told him I had a call from Jack and I understood it was all right. He said "No, you can come on campus but you can't speak." I was staying in Jack's house and I went out of that office and around to Jack's office, looked at him and said "I don't have to be treated like this. I'm a man. I don't stay here to be insulted like this."

He didn't say nothing. I walked out of his office, went over there and started packing my clothes. Pat came to the door. She said "What are you doing?" I said "I'm getting ready to leave." She said "Why?" I told her. She said "Just a minute." And she went to the phone, I don't know who she called but I do know one thing. Within 15 minutes I was invited not only to speak that Wednesday night in chapel, but to do a special speech to the sophomores, to come

back to do a speech for the sophomore annual banquet. All in 15 minutes! I don't know what she told who, but I know that happened. (laugh)

That's my involvement with Rod. We went to some other places. I think we went to Indianapolis, too. They would set up these dinners that Shiloh would paid for - actually you paid but Shiloh sponsored but by the time it was over you were writing a check for Shiloh. I spoke for some of these, and he spoke - kind of shared this, but he was the principle person. Then I got this job as director of human relations for the Toledo Board of Education and I began to bring Rod Spaulding there to do workshops. But then I couldn't travel any more with them.

VB: When did the job in Toledo start?

FR: On August 1, 1970.

-----end of tape #3-----
