

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
602

Interview with
RAYMOND CLEMENT
July 6, 1983

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: Raymond Clement
(Signature)
Date: 7-6-83

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Oral History Collection

Raymond Clement

Interviewers: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello and Mr. Randy Cummings

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: July 6, 1983

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello with Randy Cummings interviewing Raymond Clement for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on July 6, 1983, in Denton, Texas. We are interviewing Mr. Clement in order to get his reminiscences and experiences concerning the integration of North Texas athletics.

Mr. Clement, to begin this interview, just very briefly give us a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Clement: I was born in 1938 in Bowie, Texas, the son of, I guess, what you'd call two extremely poor farmers. I went to a country school until I finished the eighth grade and then went to the large school system of Bowie High School, which at the time had probably 250 students in the high school; but you know, it was enormous from where I'd been. I graduated from there in 1956. Do you need to know anything about high school, or do you want to skip that?

Dr. Marcello: I think we will eventually talk about your athletic career in high school. When did you first start to play organized

sports--let's say football?

Clement: My freshman year in high school was the first time that I had seen...no, it was my second football game I'd ever seen, and I played in it. I had pretty fair athletic ability for my age at the time. I guess I scored four or five touchdowns in the first game I ever saw...or the second one. I'd seen one when I was in the fourth or fifth grade.

Marcello: Describe how the decision came about concerning your deciding to play organized football in high school. Had you always been interested in football and sports in general?

Clement: I'd always been interested in sports. We lived so far out in the country, and I went to a country school, so I never had the opportunity to play anything except at the little ol' country school level. But one day I just told this guy, "Hey, I'm gonna play college football." I hadn't seen but one game and I told him I was going to be a college football player. That was always my dream, so that's what happened.

Cummings: How did you know about the game of football? Had you listened to games on the radio or...

Clement: No, not really. I had seen one of Bowie's playoff games, I think, in 1948. I got to go into town to see one game. That makes it sound like I really lived out in the country, and it's almost true. But somehow or another, I'd heard about the game of football, and I wanted to play it. No, there wasn't any TV, really...oh, yes, I guess I'd have to say I started listening to the Humble Game of the Week on Saturday

afternoon. Who was the commentator? Oh, he was good. I don't even know who he was, but he brought the game of the week for Humble every Saturday afternoon. I can still remember when Bob Smith of Texas A&M, you know, scored four or five touchdowns, and so I just had to be one of them. So I decided I'd be one without ever seeing the game.

Cummings: Did you play any other sports while growing up as a youth?

Clement: I played basketball for two years, and our work schedule at the farm didn't coincide with basketball that much, so I dropped out of basketball. I ran some track. But, you know, we were twelve to fifteen miles from town and had no vehicle and with a daddy that hates athletics and especially hates football, so it limits what you can do. I was severely limited by parental attitude toward football.

Marcello: Describe what life was like on the farm during that period.

Clement: Oh, we baled hay. I can still remember baling it where we didn't have a tractor. We had the horses that cut it, and we raked with horses. We didn't have the automatic balers. I'll tell you...do you want to hear one farm story?

Cummings: Sure.

Clement: I'll tell you one farm story. We had an ol' boy that lived probably five or six miles from us, and he'd always walk over to our house every day in the summer to go to work. He wasn't real bright. As I say when I'm talking to kids in class now, he was about "as smart as the average football coach." Anyway, ol' Herb didn't get a full deck to play with. So we've

got one of these ol' balers which you hook a horse to the deal, and it walks around and around and around and makes the plunger go up and down. It doesn't have a thing to feed it, and so you had to have a guy that'd stand up there with his foot, and he'd push the hay down. I was six or seven at the time, and I was making the horse go around and around. That's the only world I knew--just sit there and watch that horse circle. Ol' Herb was feeding that thing, and all the sudden the whole place goes berserk, and they're running and they're grabbing the horse, and they're screaming and hollering. I don't know what's going on. Anyway, we finally get the baler stopped, and they drag ol' Herb out there, and there's blood coming out of his shoes and everything. Somebody says, "Herb, is your foot all right?" And he says, "Don't worry about the damn foot--it'll grow back. Did it ruin my shoes? I paid three dollars for them." That's a true story (chuckle), I promise you.

We raised our own food, our own cattle. Now before you think I'm an absolute poor dirt farmer at the time, we had several hundred acres of land. It was just a time in which there was no money, and my dad bought a bunch of cattle, and the cattle market failed; so we were hurting financially, and we just had to struggle.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that your dad had a rather negative attitude toward football. Can you elaborate on that?

Clement: Oh, you're just an idiot--anybody that plays, anybody that coaches or anybody that watches it. He absolutely detested

me ever playing. I can remember at the end of my junior year when I got a knee injury which today would necessitate surgery. In those times, you know, they'd look at it and say, "You tore up your knee," and they'd send you on. Anyway, I tore up my knee to the point that we would operate on it today immediately, and the next morning after the game, at eight o'clock, we're down in the plowed field. Now we got tractors and everything by this time, but I'm having to carry hundred-pound sacks of feed across the plowed field so we can plant those things. And if I limp, I catch pure hell, so I'm out there with a destroyed knee. Instead of trying to get sympathy with your injuries, you had to hide them. I got all my teeth kicked out across here in football, and I had a hard time ever convincing him to let me play again after that. Then I coached my own son in high school, and he's already had two major knee operations, so everything he ever told me about the game pretty well proved to be true (chuckle).

Marcello: Do you think one of the reasons that he was opposed to football was because it might take away from the time that you would be putting in on the farm?

Clement: Right. It had nothing to do with athletics per se--it was work ethic. He believed that you had to be working, that there wasn't any time for fun and games. It was just a waste of time. He still feels the same today. He came down to watch me play my junior and senior year in college and...I

was sitting in the living room and walked in the bathroom to put my contact lens in and go to the field, and he said, "If you'll quit, I'll pay the rest of your way so you can get through school." I said, "I ain't quitting!" He said, "Anybody who'd play this damn game is crazy!" Can you use those kind of words?

Marcello: Sure.

Clement: Okay.

Cummings: (Chuckle) Did you have a lot of arguments with him those first two years when you were playing?

Clement: No, you don't argue. Mama did all the arguing for me. I was dodging. That makes Daddy come out in a bad light, but he was a little bitty man that was very loud, and still is.

Cummings: But he never came out and flat said, "You cannot play."

Clement: No. "You ain't gonna play that damn game no more!" You know, it was always a threat, but he never stopped me. I went ahead and played all four years and played five years in college. He was just always threatening, always moaning, always griping, but he never did anything.

Marcello: Now I'm sure that we can assume that you went through segregated schools in Bowie.

Clement: Not only did I go through a segregated school, I went through a segregated town and a segregated community. The first black I ever talked to was Abner. I can tell you...if you want to go ahead and get that story.

When I got to North Texas, it was a little harder than I

thought it would be, you know, because I was a number one athlete in Bowie High School, and everybody knew I'd be All-American and all-everything because nobody could play the game like I could. That's the way, you know, a small town hero develops. So I come down here, and I found out that I was a little ol' bitty kid. All of a sudden, I look around, and everybody is bigger than me, older than me, meaner than me, louder than me, tougher than me, better than me. At least they've all got me convinced of that. So after one week of it...to back up on the story, well, I remember Odus Mitchell's first meeting. He called us in down there, and he said, "All right, freshmen, I want you to know we didn't bring you down here to be cannon fodder. We brought you down here to educate you and to teach you." And then from that moment on, we were cannon fodder. But (chuckle) we were promised we wouldn't be. That's all we did, was line up...and we had about twelve freshmen that could play, and they put us on defense, and they'd run three ball clubs at us--team number one, team number two, and team number three. And play after play, hour after hour, they'd run those people at you; and if you'd make a good play, the upper classmen would come over and say, "You damn freshman, if you do that again, I'll whip your ass after the workout. Do you understand?" Now, hey, I hadn't had to go through that, where if you do good you're fixing to get assaulted. And so we got called all sorts of names, harassed, and picked on. I guess--

looking back on it--since we had two blacks on the team, that made the other bunch hate us even worse.

So after about one week of it, I guess, I went home for the weekend. Man, I was tired, and I was sore, and I'd rather do anything than come back down here and play again. So I told Mama, "Now Daddy ain't gonna want me playing with some niggers, and we've got some niggers on our team." I'll clarify this right now. That's the way we were taught and instructed back home--that they were niggers, not Negroes. So anybody that's colored and that's going to read this, I apologize to you. But, anyway, I said, "Mama, Daddy ain't gonna want me to play with some niggers, and so I'm not going back." My mother is a tremendous woman, and she looked up, and she said, "If you want to play football, you play football. If you want to quit because it's too tough for you, you quit. But don't blame it on two colored people." So in the car I go (laughter), and I come back and I'm wanting to quit. I'm wanting to quit every day. Finally, I get through one semester, but that's the early story right there.

Marcello: Let's pick up on this a little bit. Awhile ago you mentioned that Bowie was a very, very segregated community. Why don't you expand on that and explain what you mean.

Clement: Okay, if you go back in the history of Bowie--and I teach American history up there right now and have been since the fall of 1964, I believe--right around the turn of the century, Bowie had a black community--a farming community--that got

established about six miles outside of town. Then supposedly one of the blacks assaulted a white girl. In the process, the white community moved in, hung the black person, burned the school house, and gave the others an ultimatum to be out of town by a certain time, which they didn't use all that time. They were out sooner. We still have a place where the young kids go. They don't know the story behind it, but they've got what is called "Hangman's Tree." They just know it's "Hangman's Tree." They don't know that it goes all the way back to the turn of the century where this black man was hung there.

So I was from...I can't say it was a racist community because we never saw black people to be racist. But yet, if you bring a black in, then immediately it becomes a racist community. But people didn't go around talking about blacks. They didn't talk about "niggers" then per se because there wasn't any. But the whole town...after I got back and had played with blacks and made real good friends with some blacks, then I could sit back and really feel how bad the town was. My old granddad ran a trade barn. He was a cattle trader, and I helped him a lot on Saturdays and Sundays and after football workouts. Because we lived so far out in the country, I had to stay with Grandma in town, and that's another thing that Daddy didn't like. So I can still remember, oh, I guess, when I was seventh or eighth grade. Somebody came through town, and they said, "There was a robbery last night." Old

Granddad looked up, and he said, "I saw a nigger on a train. He did it. We ought to go up the road here and stop that train and get him off and tar and feather him." You know, that's the way that the town operated. Even after I'd got back there and taught, I can remember when the first black came to Bowie to play a football game, and I'm coaching against him at this time. We had the county sheriff and all his deputies, the chief of police and his people, and the highway patrol there. This individual I'm talking about is Glenn King, who went on to become a very famous player at Oklahoma University--a tremendous individual. But he had to have police protection.

I know some of the blacks at Jacksboro that have told me about how they felt when they came to Bowie. I could go into some of these integrated stories if you want to hear something on that order. One of the better high school coaches in the State of Texas is Chuck Curtis. He's at Cleburne now, but when I used to coach against him, he was at Jacksboro. Anyway, Chuck...I don't guess he was at Jacksboro at this time, but when we came down to play them, Chuck had used ol' Earl Washington, a black cook at Jacksboro, as his mascot or good luck piece. Like, when they'd get in the playoffs, Chuck would take Earl with him to the state championship game. So when he moved to Garland down here, when he got in a state championship game, he calls ol' Earl; and Earl comes over with him, and they go down and they play. And so ol'

Earl was the most fond admirer of Chuck Curtis that you'd ever see.

Earl and I developed a real close relationship. Ours was just white and black, where his was hero worship to Chuck Curtis. But I can still remember old Earl when we were getting ready to play Booker T. Washington. That's when we were in AAA, having to play above our head schedule-wise. So I scouted Booker T. Washington seven straight nights on Saturday night. Every Saturday night I'm scouting Booker T. Washington; every Saturday night there's ol' Earl. Booker T. Washington's in Wichita Falls, and ol' Earl's from Jacksboro, but he would follow them. So the last time he came up to me, and he said, "Clement, you couldn't stop one when we had King. How are you gonna stop a whole flock of them?" (Chuckle) He was right. We couldn't.

Earl told me that he used to stand by the sheriff, and if the sheriff wanted to watch the football game down here (gesture), Earl said, "That's where I watched the football game." If the sheriff would come down here (gesture)...he said that wherever the sheriff went, he was with him.

I didn't like that attitude at all, so I got to where I made real good friends with Earl, and anytime I went to Jacksboro, I picked out Earl to go sit by. I put my arm around him...I'd do everything I can to let the Bowie people know, "Hey, I like this guy." I'm sure I antagonized a whole lot of people in the process, but Earl and I got to be real close. Then he

had a sudden heart attack and died.

We've had some incidents in the early sixties or middle sixties that I didn't like--black and white. Basically, it was us, not them.

Marcello: So those racial attitudes persisted in that area long after segregation was declared illegal and so on in 1954.

Clement: It stayed real severe up until the middle seventies, and it's much better; but until we get out the generation above me, we'll still be segregationist in these rural towns.

Marcello: What were your personal attitudes at that time toward blacks?

Clement: As I said, I'd never had any relationship with them, so I had no like or dislike. I didn't know what to expect or anything. It makes me appear to be naive or dumb, I guess, but I didn't like or dislike them at all either way. They were just somebody I didn't know or understand. Whether it'd be a Finnish or a Russian or whatever who just...it's a foreign group of people, is what it amounted to. That's just being pure honest (chuckle).

Cummings: You'd never seen a black person either working on the farm or...

Clement: Now I told you...now in Montague County, I had never seen a black, and it was very rare that my family ever went anywhere in which there would be blacks. Once or twice we may have gone to Fort Worth, and once or twice we'd gone to Wichita; but it was rare when we saw one, you know, in this part of Fort Worth or in that part of Wichita because the part

we went to, they weren't there. So I just flat hadn't seen any.

Cummings: Do you think your attitudes toward black people-- being good, bad, or indifferent--were influenced by your parents, your friends, your neighbors, your relatives? Who?

Clement: The whole community. It was just everybody. My dad and I farm and ranch together some now, or at least both of us are in the business. I have to be very careful when I'm out in public with him because he's still got the 1930's ways of speech and the 1930's attitude. He's developed a pretty good like for the blacks, but they're not blacks. They're not Negroes. They're still niggers. And he doesn't say it out of spite or out of hatred. They use the word "nigger." We had a guy that we bought several truckloads of alfalfa hay from in Vernon, Texas, and he's a colored man. He'd always come down and bring two or three black people with him to unload the hay. One day the weight ticket didn't match the amount of money he was charging us. My ol' dad knows where every penny in the world goes--not like I am-- and he takes care of every penny. That's why he's got something. Anyway, he says, "Hey, these figures don't match. There's a nigger in the woodpile somewhere." This guy looks up at him, and he says, "I ain't never heard nobody say it like that before." (Laughter) Daddy still doesn't realize that he done anything wrong or said anything wrong because that's a slang expression. So he can embarrass you when he's

out in public just by being Daddy.

Marcello: Now I assume that when you were playing football in high school, Bowie did not play any schools that had any blacks.

Clement: We never played a team that had a black. There was no blacks in the county and no blacks playing on a white team anywhere in the State of Texas.

Cummings: So even up until you graduated from Bowie, you had never seen a black athlete playing any kind of sports?

Clement: No, I had never seen a black athlete competing.

Cummings: Had you read about black athletes in the newspaper or heard about them over the radio?

Clement: Not a whole lot. Not really. Jackie Robinson was the only black that we were familiar with at that period of time, and then gradually Roy Campanella came into being, and Don Newcombe and some of those. Baseball was the only sport that was giving the black a chance, so other than baseball, no. And that was just what I'd seen on TV or what was on the radio.

Cummings: If those black baseball players were the only black athletes that you were aware of or remember being aware of, what was your attitude toward them playing with whites?

Clement: As I said before, it didn't bother me one bit. In fact, the story I told you awhile ago made it appear I didn't want to play with blacks. That had nothing to do with my wanting to quit school. It was just tougher than I wanted it to be.

Cummings: What about some of your friends, your peers in high school?

Surely, you talked about the fact that the Jackie Robinsons, and the Don Newcombes were playing in the major leagues with white players at that time. What were some of their reactions and attitudes toward that?

Clement: Basically, just like mine. It was just a different world. You don't really understand what I'm telling you when I say the black was in a different world than we were. We didn't see him; we didn't know about him. He didn't exist as far as we were concerned. He didn't compete against us. Just thinking back on it, I probably didn't give the black credit enough for being the good athlete that they turned out to be because we had never competed with them or saw how they could play. So I just assumed that the white was a superior athlete to the black until we started competing with them and against them.

That may sound funny, but it never entered my mind that they could be better football or basketball players than we were. And when we'd read about the good times that they were turning out in track, well, you know, we figured they were keeping their own time or they were not smart enough to read the clock or whatever it is. You just couldn't believe it. Not too long after I started coaching up there, Wichita Falls had a sprinter--Reginald Robinson--that ran a 9.0 in the hundred-yard dash. I couldn't believe that kid ran that fast because he was timed at the black UIL meet. He wasn't timed at the white meet. When I went to the state track meet, the whites

won everything. Now when I go down there, up until this year, the blacks won everything. The whites started winning some this time. I'm sure glad we're getting to where we can compete back with them.

Marcello: Talk a little bit about your own football career at Bowie. For instance, what position or positions did you play in high school, and what kind of football player were you? We'll let you brag a little bit about yourself.

Clement: This could get deep, I guess (laughter). At Bowie, we had the most successful high school basketball coach in the State of Texas. Through a process of lucky move-ins--recruiting or whatever word you want to use--he'd won four state championships in a row. As the basketball program got good, he let his football program go down, and they fired him the year after I left. He's in the Texas Hall of Fame now. But our football...he was still in the single wing era.

Cummings: Did he coach both sports?

Clement: He coached both sports and was the track coach at the same time.

Cummings: What was his name?

Clement: Raymond Mattingly. Tremendous coach. If you read the list of Texas Hall of Fame high school coaches, he's in it. Mattingly was in the single wing, and he hadn't made the adjustment over to the "T," and so we still ran the single wing. And we just had two other coaches in high school that worked with us. We didn't have a whole lot of athletic ability, and we were short a number of coaches, and we were behind in the

offense that we ran. So we didn't have a good ball club when I was in high school. I was a good football player. You knew I was going to tell you that (chuckle).

Cummings: What position did you play?

Clement: I played tailback on a single wing ball club. I was handi-capped because I couldn't see, which puts you in a bind. I had the opportunity--or at least I felt like I had the opportunity--to go to several other schools. I visited Oklahoma University and some other places, and then the more I'd look at it, the more I got to thinking, "I can't handle an environment that big," and so I knew I could come to North Texas and be the best player on the team for the next year. It didn't work out that way (chuckle), but, you know, in my own mind I knew I could play at North Texas the first year. I was so wrong it hurt (laughter).

Cummings: Were you recruited, as we know it today, by any colleges?

Clement: Colleges in those times...they'd send a college scout, and he'd stop off at the principal's office and ask if he had any prospects. If he had any, they'd come down and talk to you. Ol' "Slippy" Morgan down at SMU...you've probably heard some "Slippy" Morgan stories. There'd be somebody from TCU that'd come by every once in awhile.

I had to call or write North Texas and invite myself to come down. I had to convince them, you know, tell them that I would play for them. To me, you know, it was an honor for them to get me instead of me getting to come down here. But

a North Texas coach had never come to Bowie--never visited up there. I just wrote them a letter and told them I'd sign with them if they wanted to take me.

There happened to be a track meet down here one day, and I told them I was coming, and I got to compete against all the district winners out of all the AAAA high schools in Dallas and Fort Worth. They found out that even though I was "a slow tailback" in AA football, I could run with their people because I finished fourth in the North Texas Relays in the hundred-yard dash. I wasn't a sprinter. I was a hurdler and a shot-putter. But they didn't have the hurdles or the shot put, so my ol' coach entered me in the hundred-yard dash, and I like to have won the thing. I guess that's when they found out I could run a little bit. But I didn't have the sprinter speed that we've got today. But for a big ol' white football player, I could run.

Marcello: Who approached you?

Clement: No one. Not to this day, no one has ever asked me to come to North Texas to play. I got a commitment from Odus Mitchell through the mail that I could play, and I talked to Coach Mitchell after one of the football games that he played down here one time and told him I was coming. But North Texas never asked me to come down. At the time that I was playing football, you could take the North Texas recruitment budget, and you couldn't feed hamburgers to the coaching staff. They didn't recruit. It was word-of-mouth. Ex-players that they had had

would send them players, or somebody'd say, "Well, hey, we've got a good football player over here." But, no, I was not recruited, not by North Texas. Some other schools recruited me, but not North Texas.

Cummings: What influence, if any, did your parents have on your decision to come to North Texas?

Clement: They had none. They didn't enter the decision at all. They didn't even know about it until I told them I was coming, I guess. My dad said, "College is a waste of time. You don't do anything like that." So I came without their consent. In other words, the decision was totally made by me. They had nothing to do with the decision.

Marcello: Am I to assume that you were perhaps the first in your family to go to college?

Clement: The first in my family to stay in college, yes. I've got a brother that has a doctorate degree right now. He's the smart one in the family. I've got another brother that I coached one year in high school, and I got him a scholarship-- or we got him a scholarship--at North Texas. Daddy convinced him that farming was a better living, so he come down and worked out with them three days and went back to the farm. He's made better money than I have ever since.

Cummings: Was your desire to come to college based solely on the chance to play more football in your life, or was it based on furthering your education?

Clement: It had nothing to do with education. Oh, I take that back.

I told you a long time ago that I'd made up my mind that I was going to play college football. Then I decided I was going to coach, but I didn't know you had to teach to coach. That's the hard thing that a football player learns, that you've also got to teach to coach.

I can still remember that about my junior or senior year I decided that I'm coaching for a living. I'm sitting in a home and family class, and they've got one of these busy notebooks that some teachers give, and you had to fill out what you wanted to be in life--your first choice. I said, "Football coach." Then there was second choice. I said, "I don't have a second choice." And she said, "You've gotta put something down."

So I put jockey down (laughter), and that was absurd because here I am, two hundred pounds, so that eliminated jockey. In other words, I told you I was going to play college football, and then I decided I was going to coach. So that was my background.

Cummings: What sparked your desire as early as your junior year to want to become a football coach and/or to play college football?

Clement: If you got up on the farm with my dad every day, it wouldn't have been any decision at all (laughter). There wasn't any decision at all. I couldn't wait to get away from that place.

Marcello: We've had several other guys that we've interviewed tell us the same thing.

Clement: I had to get away. I wasn't about to stay out there.

Cummings: You decided playing football was easier than baling hay.

Clement: I can have teeth knocked out all day rather than plowing and baling hay and all that stuff. I told you that we just barely had enough money to keep the ol' farm operating.

Cummings: I was just curious--were you aware, as early as your junior year in high school, that you could go to college on an athletic scholarship and play football and further your education at the same time?

Clement: Yes, I guess. I'm going to tell you...you know, people can get a false sense of security about themselves, and to me I always felt that I was a very, very, very good high school football player. But I played in an absolute losing program, and it was the kind that nobody ever sees, nobody ever knows. We were winning one or two or three ballgames at the most every year, and I'm thinking I'm one of the best players in the State of Texas. I honestly felt like I was. And with my track ability to go with it, I think I was, because I could run the hundred and then run the hurdles in a speed that takes you to Austin today. Yet here we are, losing. So nobody ever knows that I exist up there--just a big ol' blind tailback. So I always just felt like that I would be recruited to play college football, and it never entered my mind because I knew I was good enough. That doesn't mean that I was, but I'm telling that you in my own mind there was never any doubt but what the college coaches...and as I said, the recruiting was different, but there would always be an official come up to you in a ball game and say, "Where are you going to

school? We want you down at TCE," or something like that. And so that was pretty well the way people recruited then.

You ought to mention a question to me about Abner Haynes here. I'm weighting 185-190 pounds, and I'm a lineman in my second year at North Texas. I can outrun Abner Haynes in a hundred-yard dash and outrun him bad. Yet, he's one of the best running backs in America, and when you put me on the other side of the line trying to tackle him, I can't tackle the son-of-a-gun because he won't stay in the same spot long enough to go tackle him. But straight away speed, I could run. So I'm not going to give you any false sense of beliefs here. I was a good white athlete.

Marcello: When you came to North Texas, who was the first coach you met?

Clement: Coach Mitchell was the first coach that I met. You know, coming from a small school, you associate the head coach as the only coach. I found out that Coach Mitchell was the head coach, but probably Fred McCain had to do more with the running of the athletic program than anybody. Fred and I over the years--on my part--grew real close. I can't say anything on Fred's part.

But Fred is a totally different man than Odus, and I never will forget...it was probably my first year out there, and, as I told you, I wore goggles in high school, and here we are ...they're punting the ball...and in the old days, we played

one-platoon football. If you were a fullback, you were a linebacker; if you were a guard, you either played nose guard or the other linebacker; if you were a tackle, you played defensive tackle; if you were an end, you played defensive end. And the fullbacks in the North Texas scheme of things often had to go back and field punts, or at least they ran the drills. There was no way I could catch a punt because they kicked that thing so far and so high, and I was limited in eyesight, so I know I was missing some. I came down here, and they're running the "T," and I've always run the single wing. My first step was backwards, and their first step is "gone."

It was a whole different world! You talk about a kid that's lost! I came out of the little ol' town of Bowie and came down here and had to adjust to a new offense and a new coaching philosophy. I know it had to be eating on me, and one day Fred came up to me, and he says, "Clement, let me tell you something." He'd just got through chewing my butt out, and Fred could chew you out harder, quicker, than anybody I've ever seen--just cut you to the bone and zap you. And he just got through zapping me, and, you know, I hadn't ever had a coach ever say anything bad to me in my life. Then all of the sudden, Fred's cutting me down. I know that he can see the droop on my face and the hurt in my eyes. Anyway, he came over, and he said, "Clement, I want to tell you something. As long as I'm chewing on your ass, you're going to get to

stay. Cheer up." And so that was it. So I got to where I learned to associate with Fred because he was my coach for the first year. He coached the backs. I probably got closer to Bahnsen because Bahnsen was a bachelor and lived in the dorm with us, but Fred's the one that I really had the most respect for. I've got tremendous respect for him as a coach. I really liked Bahnsen, too, but Fred...I developed a special liking for him over the years. I really liked to watch him operate.

Cummings: So you connected up with North Texas through the mail. Relate to us in as much detail as you can your first arrival at North Texas. I assume it was prior to school opening--getting ready for fall workouts. Relate that whole initial arrival.

Clement: Okay, I don't remember the exact day. It was close to September 1st or somewhere around there, and we come in one Sunday afternoon. I had my old 1953 Chevrolet that I drove up. I probably had an extra pair of Levis and another T-shirt with me. I'm pretty sure I did. That made two pairs of Levis and two shirts. If I had another shirt, it'd be a homemade one that Mama made me. So we pulled in, and I'd never seen anything as big as the ol' North Texas campus was at that time. We stayed in the old Quads. They brought us in there, and, you know, I don't know a soul down here. They say, "All right, you're rooming with this one and this one." It was two boys from Sequin--Frank Klein and Eugene Haecker. So they become my new roommates--first time I'd met them.

And then after we got our room assignments, we went down, and Coach Mitchell met us all under the old Fouts Field bleachers down there and told us he welcomed us down here and that this was the first year he'd ever brought a bunch of freshmen in. You know, they always came in after the season started, but somehow or another, he decided to bring this bunch in early. I guess it was because he was playing a freshmen schedule for the first time. And so he got us in there and gave us that ol' pitch that we wouldn't be cannon fodder, that he brought us down here to teach us how to play the game. That was the way I got introduced to football.

Marcello: Now were Abner Haynes and Leon King among this group?

Clement: Abner Haynes and Leon King were among this group. I'd have to think back the best I can...I think that we'll find that Abner and Leon were off to themselves, and no one else associated with them. I'm sure that all the dumb freshmen were off to themselves, too, or paired up--probably twelve or thirteen freshmen. Then you had the regular North Texas players down here, and as I've talked before the interview started, most of them were Korean War veterans, and so they're in the twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight year neighborhood. I was shocked to find out that college players drank beer, gambled, smoked cigarettes, and all of those things. I won't go into any stories on that unless you ask specifically because I can tell you Korean War veteran stories forever.

Cummings: Do you recall, in that initial meeting over there at the quads,

the players whispering about Leon and Abner or any rumblings among the players, the veterans?

Clement: I don't remember any of it because I'm so scared at this time that I'm just trying to get Clement alive and through the first meeting and getting in the uniform the next day. I can remember seeing the two blacks--Abner and Leon--standing off to the side down there, and then everybody is talking, you know. Then we got the whole deal. But I'm still not worried about the two blacks because I'm interested in trying to get Clement to survive because this is harder on him than it was the blacks, I think. So I can remember that they showed up the next day, and the big issue was were we going to let them suit up or not.

Marcello: Now when you say the "big issue," was whether or not they were going to be allowed to suit up or not, this was something that the coaches were talking about?

Clement: No, the players are betting that the coaches won't let them suit up: "Ain't no way." "Don't worry." "They're not going to be suiting up." "Blacks don't play." And then the next thing we heard was that Abner was going to Colorado, I think, and play up there because they wasn't going to let him play at North Texas. Those were just some of the stories. You know, I hadn't even thought on this until you asked some of these questions here.

So by the time we leave the meeting, I've probably got the feeling that they're not going to play football. They were

just down there. They asked for a uniform. They weren't going to be given the uniform.

And then the next morning they come back. I don't know if the coaches had told them they could play yet or not, but the next morning they're there again, and they ask for the uniform. And we're still not expecting them to be given a uniform. But they are.

And so then the question starts being asked of the coaches, "How long are these niggers gonna be here? Are we gonna let them play?" The coaches--the ones that I associated with--pretty well just tried to either ignore the issue or say, "Hey, don't worry about it. They won't stay long. They won't stay. It'll be too rough on them. They'll drop out." That's the impression that I got. Now that does not mean that that was the way it happened, but in my mind, this is the part that I saw. As I told you, I wasn't anywhere near with the inside group that was operating at North Texas at that time, so you'd have to get a four year older group or five or six years older to find out how they were thinking. But as a young freshman, we were under the impression that they wouldn't be given a uniform to play.

Marcello: So they were at that initial meeting.

Clement: They were at the initial meeting.

Marcello: But they were off to themselves.

Clement: Oh, they had grouped up by themselves. They were leaning against a different pillar than we were.

Marcello: After they had received their uniforms and it was clear that they were at least going to be allowed to suit up, what were the reactions and remarks that you heard among you teammates at that time?

Clement: Well, probably I need to clarify one or two things right here, and that is that the 1956 team that come in had eight to twelve top-notch white football players. Some of them later played pro football; others would have had the opportunity to play some pro football. I had the chance to sign some free agent contracts, but I refused to sign a free agent contract. I wasn't even interested because my dad's work ethics were still rubbing off on me. Here I am, I've been out of school five years, and I hadn't earned a dollar in my life. I'm now married, and am I going to risk fifty dollars a week expense money while I'm trying to make a pro football team against \$3,800 that Grapevine, Texas, is going to pay me to be their first assistant? So I can't turn down \$3,800. So I refused to even...when Coach Mitchell asked me, he said, "I'll get you some free agent contracts and let you go wherever you want to." I said, "No, I'm not interested." I'd had all the football that I wanted. I regretted it at the time because the new league had just started, and Abner always told me I had the ability to play with them. He may have just been nice to me--probably was. But those farm work ethics took over, and I had to get a job and go to work. I ended up in the Army--got drafted or mobilized in the army immediately then

--so I couldn't have played pro football, anyway. I got in the Berlin Crisis.

Cummings: You mentioned a second ago that those first few days in the fall workout that some of the players started...

Clement: Oh, let me go back with what I started telling you. This freshman class of 1956 was very, very, very close in ever so many ways, and as I said, there were eight to twelve very good football players in there. I think that North Texas football went through the total change with my class. We went from small football to big-time football. We went from the old Korean War veteran to the young high school athlete all in one drastic switch and threw in integration at the same time. So we went to the choice athletes, better than, you know, what they'd been getting. I'm not knocking the veterans, but they were down here for different reasons than to play football. Now to a lot of them, it was a good living. They made more money going to school and getting the GI Bill and so forth, and they didn't want to graduate. We were down here to get a degree and get out in the business world. And so to me, you had a total change in North Texas athletics. You went to integration, you went to the good high school athlete, and you got rid of the war veteran. Some of those Korean War veterans are my very best friends, so I'm not knocking them in this interview.

When you asked me how they felt, my class probably adjusted to Abner real quick. Possibly even by the second week, we

were feeling some closeness to him. Now the older people... I don't know if they ever adjusted that year or the next year. But my class adjusted and most of that crew that was older than us graduated that year. We got rid of most of the veterans at that time.

By the second or third ball game, Abner was one of us. He was us. Now we didn't even bother to question why he couldn't stay in a dorm, why he couldn't eat with us, and all of that. We just assumed that he was staying where he wanted and doing what he wanted. But he was a friend--very close friend.

Cummings: During those first few days of the fall workouts when everybody was getting adjusted to college life and so forth, you said that after Abner and Leon received their uniforms, some of the players started talking among themselves about how long is he going to be out here, and is he going to stay and so forth and so on. Was that strictly the older players, or do you recall some of the incoming freshmen also having questions.

Clement: I don't remember. All I remember is the freshmen. The freshmen were worried about how long they were going to stay because it was a different environment for them. Two of them were from San Antonio, Seguin, down there. One was from Snyder. Ol' Vernon Cole was over here at Pilot Point, so I was from a bigger school than old Vernon was. Salsman, who was an outstanding high school running back for a little bitty boy, was from Lewisville. So we were still pretty big-eyed ourselves. And our main deal...Abner was a survivor because

we were the eighteen-year-old whites competing against the twenty-five-year old Korean War veterans.

Marcello: One of the reactions that some of the players seem to have with reference to the blacks was: "What position do they play? Are they going to be competing against me, or am I going to be competing against them for the same position?" Was this generally an attitude, do you think, in the beginning?

Clement: I don't know. It didn't take long to find out that Abner was in a class by himself, and Leon could catch the football. King had tremendous hands, and he could kick it. He was the best kick-off man that we had. Three steps and he'd put it over the goal post. And then all of the sudden, Leon got gun-shy. Leon, if you hear the tape, I'll have to apologize to you! But Leon got to where he couldn't compete. I don't know what it was. I don't know if the pressure got to him, if the contact got to him. But I've never seen a guy that could catch the ball any better as a freshman and then all the sudden, as a sophomore, wasn't able to compete. The same kick-offs that used to go seventy yards now go ten, fifteen, twenty. And so we find Leon gone. I don't know what the story was, but at the end of his sophomore year, he was gone. I hope you don't let him hear that because I've met Leon only once or twice since then.

Cummings: Going back to that incoming freshman class, do you recall any team meeting without Abner and Leon where the coaches got up and came right out and said, "Hey, we've got two Negro players

out. Let's try to act so-and-so. Let's try to do this. Let's try to make it smooth, make it quiet and calm, and have no problems."

Clement: I don't know. It sounds like you've been talking to Bahnsen. Bahnsen treated us all the same. He treated us all like dirt. Abner probably won most of us over because after Mitchell would get through with us...we'd scrimmage the first team, then we'd scrimmage the second team, then we'd scrimmage the third team. And we're talking about eleven players going against their thirty-three. We'd do it hour after hour, it seemed like. Then when we got through, Mitchell would take all the varsity players over there and give them a pep talk, and Bahnsen would take us over here and give us our little pep talk. And then he'd say, "All right, you can go in after we run so many in the end zone down here." He'd take us down there at the end of the little ol' workout field, and we'd run sprints--sprint up that thing and sprint back, sprint up and sprint back, sprint up and sprint back. I never got so tired of running that dern hill. The varsity ain't never run that hill, but we run the hill forty or fifty times a day! And then we'd leap frog all the way around that football field--time after time after time. You're just down there hoping you can die. Now we've already been through a three-hour workout, and we're having to do all this stuff for Bahnsen, and I don't understand it. I still don't know if I understand it today.

Ken just got released or had quit the San Francisco 49ers, and he could still compete. And so all the sudden, he'd call us all together, and he'd say, "Okay, catch me and you can go in. And I'm going to run backwards." He'd get a little head start, and he'd take off running backwards. I ain't been able to catch nobody. I'm just trying to find out if I'm going to live to get to the mess hall. Dern Abner could catch him, and so it got to be a game between Abner and Bahnsen to see if he could catch him. So Abner won us over (chuckle) right there because he'd catch ol' Bahnsen in a hurry. So Abner becomes our hero because he gets us...we might still be out there chasing ol' Bahnsen if it hadn't have been for Abner. You haven't heard this story yet? We couldn't go in the first several weeks until we'd catch Bahnsen, and there wasn't anybody down here that could catch Bahnsen but Abner. Abner always had that big grin. Even his freshman year, while he'd be chasing ol' Bahnsen, you know, you could hear him laughing and cutting up and having fun. And the harder they'd work him, the better he seemed to like it. I don't know if Bahnsen knows it, but probably the one thing--and I didn't realize it until I was sitting here telling you this story--the one thing that may have helped Abner integrate in was his ability to catch Bahnsen so we'd get off that dern workout field. Bahnsen was a sadistic devil.

Cummings: (Chuckle) But you don't recall, in a team meeting or in the locker room, the coaches saying, you know, "We've got a

couple of black players coming out."

Clement: I can remember a few things that way. I remember Odus telling us that there were going to be a couple of blacks on the team. Coach Mitchell may be the nicest man I've ever known, and I'm sure that he just assumed, since he told us there'd be two blacks on the team and that he wanted to treat them right, that everybody would do what he wanted them to. As somebody may have pointed out, I doubt if Coach Mitchell ever knew some of the things that went on behind his back by the players and so forth. I'm sure it would have broke his heart if he'd have known some of the things that happened. I can remember him telling us that there'd be some blacks out there and to treat them right.

I cannot remember a North Texas coach saying anything derogatory about either one of the two blacks. I can remember the one saying, "They probably won't stay." But I never heard anything derogatory from any of them. Probably Ken Bahnsen had a lot to do with that because I'm sure the 49ers were integrated by that time, and so he had played with them. Bahnsen pretty well took us under his wing. He'd go to the UB with us, and he'd tell us war stories and girl stories and where to go chase the girls and so forth. Bahnsen was one of us--six years older--and you'd have thought he'd been one of the old war vets, and he may have been when he left us. I don't know, But he just really brought us in and indoctrinated us to the ways of North Texas and did a real good job of it.

Cummings: It kind of sounds like the coaches that were running the show then did not want to make a big deal out of the fact that two blacks were joining the program.

Clement: No, there wasn't anything...I don't remember a big deal of it at all, as far as them telling the players anything or trying to make it hard on the blacks. I don't remember anything like that going on. Some of the upper class were hollering, "We're gonna kill that black so-and-so." But they were telling me the same thing. They were just changing the color. So to me we were all fighting for survival because they enjoyed seeing how many could be carted off to the hospital. That's what the old veterans liked. When they could see you have to go off to the infirmary, then they had had a good workout. I can remember those days.

Marcello: Describe the first time that you observed Abner on the football field--on the practice field--and knew that he was something special--in terms of being an athlete, not in terms of being black.

Clement: The one I remember him being special is where I told you he could catch Ken Bahnsen, and I could go in from workout. But I can remember when we were scrimmaging the varsity, and there was two fullbacks. That was the only position we had two quality football players at. And both of us became centers. North Texas in those days and time, like most colleges did, recruited the best athlete. They took the best athlete, and your best high school athlete is going to be a high school

running back or a high school quarterback. But me and ol' Sammy were the best two athletes on our team, and we was both "fullbacks" in college. So they lined both of us up and played us a little bit at fullback, and they found out that neither one of us had what it took to be a fullback in the North Texas type of plan. Both of us would tell you that we were, but we weren't. Anyway, I got to rest half of the time because Sammy would play some fullback, and then I'd play.

So whenever I wasn't playing, I could watch Abner carry the ball, and you could find out he was different because he could find a way to get to the other end of the football field--fantastic moves, balance, anticipation. I've watched a lot of college games, watched a lot of high school games, coached for twenty-two years, and there's never been a football player that had the moves and anticipation and the running smarts that Abner Haynes had. I firmly believe that. I've played against all-pros and all-everything, but I've never seen an Abner Haynes. He's in a league by himself. He wasn't fast... oh, he was just...I used to love just to sit down and listen to him talk about carrying the ball. He could give you a lecture on just how to carry the ball.

Back to your question, you could tell when Abner got the ball and ran--I think it was the twenty-eight sweep in the Odus Mitchell play thing--that Abner was different because he could make things happen.

Marcello: On the practice field, did you observe some of those older

players kind of putting an extra pop on him?

Clement: I would say the first couple of weeks that everybody wanted some of him. In fact, I'm sure that the veterans went out of their way. I'm sure that they were telling some line-men up there, "You don't block, and you get out of the way so I can get him." I'm pretty sure that there was a whole lot of that going on. But as I told you before, he won them over fairly quick, at least as much as you could win a bunch over that was probably as prejudiced as most of them were.

Cummings: You probably didn't hear very much of that if you're a running back, also.

Clement: No, I didn't get to hear most of it. That's what I say. I wasn't where I could hear that because I'm trying to throw a block or trying to keep one of them from stomping your face in. I've been told more than once I better not make that block again or I better not be out there again. I'm sure they were telling everybody that. But they had you believing it.

This is what I was wondering as a coach, whether a freshman could play major college football or not because when I was a freshman, I don't think you could because of the psychological barriers. The twenty-six-year-old wasn't going to let an eighteen-year-old come in and play. I don't care what color you were. You had better not get one of their positions. And it was a status quo. Once you got a position down here, it was hard to lose that thing. You may have heard this from

some other players, but if you ever got in with the right group at the right time, it was hard to get you out of that spot. Abner didn't get to start his sophomore year, and he was probably the best running back in America; but we had an older kid running in front of him, and they never would move Abner up to play in front of him. He'd just get to come in quite often (chuckle).

Cummings: Quite often. You mentioned a moment ago that during workouts you and Sammy alternated. Are you referring to Sammy Stanger?

Clement: Sammy Stanger. Sammy was a big ol' red-headed fullback from Van, Texas. He was probably about the same background as I had in life. Sammy wore an eight-and-a-half headgear, and I could take Sammy's headgear and put it on my head and take the thing and spin it round and round. I never have seen a headgear as big since. Every player at North Texas could set it on his head any way he wanted to.

Cummings: Isn't he the player that they said had to go back to his high school to get his old headgear?

Clement: Yes, he had to send back and get his high school. They didn't have a headgear anywhere in the world to fit Sammy.

Cummings: How many running backs out of that freshman bunch were in camp that very first year when you came in besides Sammy and Abner?

Clement: Vernon Cole was a quarterback and a very good one. He played some pro ball in Canada. He could have played other places,

I think, but didn't. Abner Haynes was a running back, and he was from Dallas Lincoln. Me and Sammy were the fullbacks. We didn't stay long. Both of us became centers at North Texas the next year.

Then Gordon Salsman was the little running back from Lewisville. Then we had one other running back from one of the Dallas schools. He didn't have the ability to compete at this level at all, so he left the first year and become a golf pro somewhere. And that was the entire backfield, I'm talking about, right there--one quarterback, three running backs, two fullbacks.

That is what went into battle, and they rarely let me or Sammy carry the ball. It was just to kill time or try to make one of us happy when we got to see the ball, you know. If it was fourth down, eighteen yards to go, and we're ahead 30-0 or something, Sammy and I got to carry the ball once or twice. No, I take it back. We had a second team quarterback named Jim Adams, an ol' Denton boy. I don't know...he used to be on the police force here. He didn't stay around in athletics long. But Vernon was a lot better football player than he was. The only two backs that had college ability was Abner and Vernon. Gordon went to a smaller school in New Mexico and played. He was a very, very good athlete, but he was probably too small for North Texas football.

Marcello: Describe what the personalities of Leon and Abner were like. Start with Abner first of all, and then talk a little bit

about Leon.

Clement: Okay. Probably it was in my sophomore year before I ever had got close enough to either one of them that I can judge personalities and so forth. When it really started showing up-- that I noticed...because you got to remember that we'd just work out. We go back to the dorm. Abner goes back to colored town, so we don't socialize before or after. The only time we see Abner is during workouts and the little bit before workouts. They usually kept you humping, so there wasn't... all the athletes stayed in the dorm, and they played poker right up to the last minute, and then they'd run to the football field. They may stop at a little ol' grocery store down there that didn't survive long on the corner of where the soccer field is. There's a hamburger joint there now, I think. Y'all know which one I'm talking about--pretty good hamburger joint. There was a little ol' two-bit grocery store there, and so a whole lot of the players, after they'd leave the dorm, would go down there and drink them a coke and smoke a cigarette before they went to the workout. So there's no Abner here. Well, when the workout is over, it's supertime. There's no Abner here, so I'm not running into Abner in a social situation until my sophomore year.

Now I can tell you a few stories after games during our freshman year. You know, we're on that ol' "Green Lizard" bus that we got, and it's horrible. But we run into Abner on a plane coming back from out-of-town ball games, and he takes over

the pilot's intercom and starts singing songs. He and Leon would just turn the place upside down. They were into the rock and roll music real good, so we could never make a plane trip unless we could get Abner and Leon to give us some rock and roll Negro music. That's the social aspect. That's when I got to meet Leon.

But regardless of what these other people are going to tell you, Abner and Leon were more or less social outcasts when we traveled from the standpoint that they didn't room with us. They roomed by themselves. I can still remember more than once after ball games when we were playing Brigham Young my junior year--Abner's senior year--or places like that, that a whole lot of the players were saying, "Hey, let's get out of here before they get here because if they get here, we can't do anything." Whoever went with Abner and Leon, you weren't allowed in any places of business or so forth, so a lot of people dodged them after ball games for that reason. If you got in their group, you don't go. So it got to where Abner and Leon went their way, and the whites went their way.

I told you the story...I told you about going to Corsicana--and Bahnsen told me a lot of stories about this since I've been coaching in Bowie--with threats on his life and Abner's life. He didn't tell us all this because here we are, twelve or thirteen little stupid freshmen out there. Anyway, we beat Navarro. We kick an extra point, and it'd go right

through the uprights, and we don't get nothing. We'd score; it'd get called back. They're not going to let a nigger come down there in a white country and beat them in a football game. But we beat them, anyway.

After the game is over, we went to probably the only restaurant in town--because in Denton there wasn't but two or three restaurants at that time--and as we all walked in...you know, it was the second or third ball game of the year, so we're pretty proud of ourselves. We're walking in, and the waitress stopped Leon and Abner: "Y'all come with me." Well, in Bowie that's the way it operated. I didn't know any different.

"Sorry, Abner; sorry, Leon."

But ol' George Herring, who died as a result of a Vietnam accident and so forth--car wreck--looked up at the waitress, and he said, "They're with us. They'll eat with us." Lo and behold, he got away with it. George Herring integrated Corsicana, Texas, by telling the waitress, "They're with us, and they'll eat with us." George Herring will have my utmost respect forever. I know he's dead now, but I'll never quit admiring that one move--quite a move for an eighteen-year-old college freshman. "Hey, ma'am, he's with us." He wasn't rude; he wasn't anything. He says, "Ma'am, they're with us. If we eat, they eat." Bahnsen didn't tell them that. It was a dern offensive tackle. And so God rest his soul.

Cummings: That was, I believe, either the first or second game of that freshman season.

- Clement: Probably the first game.
- Cummings: That's a pretty good indication of how quickly the closeness and unity of that freshman bunch had developed and formed.
- Clement: Unreal. That's why I have trouble explaining anything bad that went on because to me nothing bad went on, really, because, boy, we got close in a hurry--the whole team.
- Marcello: The reason I asked you that question about describing their personalities was because I was wondering what role that played in their acceptance as part of the team.
- Clement: I would say Abner's personality had a tremendous amount to do with it. He could fit in with the group so quick, so easy. He was the life of whichever group he was with. He never met a stranger. He could talk to anybody and everybody. He'd probably "con-artist" you to death right now--probably still can. I just liked ol' Abner. He was fun to be around. Now Leon was quiet and solemn, reserved--very little personality at all.
- But Abner could make friends and get along with more people than possibly anybody I've been associated with all through high school and college and in the twenty-something years I've coached. I've never met a man that could make friends like Abner could. He had a very outgoing personality. Abner just became everybody's favorite. You know, instead of trying to run him off, everybody loved the guy.
- You might say, "Well, you just lied awhile ago because you said nobody wanted to be with him after a ball game." That

throws it into a different situation. There was still at times some black-white reservations deep down, but yet everybody loved Abner. The same people that might not go out to eat with him that night because we're going to get turned down by a restaurant and so forth...and Abner was probably hating to go with us just as bad. I'm not really saying that you hated to go with him, but you didn't want to be put in a spot in which you're going to embarrass somebody. For some of us, you know, it was play a ball game, go home and eat, and that was it. And then there was others that life just started after a ball game, but I never was in that crowd.

But Abner really fit in great. By his sophomore year, he was the most popular guy on campus. Possibly even in his freshman year, he was the most popular guy on campus.

Marcello: I guess we've talked about several things already that perhaps made the integration go rather smoothly. There was Abner's personality; there was Abner's ability as a football player, which certainly didn't hurt the process; and evidently the attitude of the coaches was a factor.

Clement: It had to be because I never heard a coach, one, bad-mouth any of the blacks. I never heard any of it. And I think the closeness of the 1956 ball club helped Abner because he's a very good friend to all of us even today.

Marcello: If you had to select a team leader on that 1956 group, who would it be?

Clement: Vernon Cole. In an entirely different way. Vernon's the one

that gets you in a huddle and says, "All right, we're gonna get it going. We're gonna do this. I'll get the ball to Abner. We're gonna do this." Vernon could just walk into a group, take over, take charge--dynamic personality. It's a shame that the Good Lord didn't let him live.

Marcello: We've heard that Vernon was also one of the first people on that team to really befriend or become close to Abner.

Clement: I would say that Vernon would have to be the first one because Vernon was the leader of the freshman class. He had the athletic ability; he had the looks. His personality would be second to Abner's of nearly anybody I've ever met. He wasn't quite as outgoing and didn't bounce from group to group quite as good as Abner could, but he could relate to groups. He could just do whatever Vernon wanted to.

I've been in an Exes game playing against some of the best teams North Texas had, and the one year that we definitely won the ball game Vernon Cole came back. When Vernon walked in the huddle: "We're fixing to take that son-of-a-pooch and score." There wasn't any doubt in anybody's mind. Vernon said we're going to go score, so we'll go score.

I still remember a North Texas coach--Bahnsen--telling me that if they had the choice of any quarterback in America, they'd take Vernon Cole. Don Meredith was the quarterback at SMU, but they like Vernon better than they liked Meredith. So we're talking about a top flight football player; we're not talking about the average run-of-the-mill player. Vernon

was up above the rest of us--and Abner was up above the rest of us--as football players. We're talking about two of the better college athletes to come through Texas in a while.

Marcello: Without putting words in your mouth, then, is it safe to say that if Vernon Cole says this black is okay, then this black must be okay.

Clement: Then it's okay, yes. Nobody questioned Vernon's leadership. He was it. And Vernon never did call any of us off to the side and say, "Hey, you're going to accept him." If Vernon accepts him, I think it's just pretty well understood--kind of what you're telling me. But Vernon was the leader of the ball club. Abner, when he got the ball, was leader of the ball club (chuckle).

Cummings: Well, we understand that the bond--the friendship bond--between Vernon and Abner probably evolved a little faster and a little deeper than Abner's friendship with any of the other white players that freshman year. Is that true in your estimation?

Clement: I don't know. I'd have to sit back and think. Since Vernon was a quarterback and he had the decision of who to give the ball to, I'm sure that (chuckle) it may have because Vernon could have absolutely kept Abner from ever getting the ball. Because of the way football was played thirty years ago--twenty-five or twenty-six years ago--the quarterback called the plays, and the coach didn't call the plays. So he determined who carried the ball next time, not the coach. And so I think

Vernon realized right quick that he either needed to give it to Abner. There wasn't any doubt in our minds. We knew who needed the ball.

Cummings: But even off the field, just personality-wise, did their friendship maybe evolve a little quicker than...

Clement: I couldn't answer that either way, I don't think.

Marcello: For instance, we do know that Vernon invited Abner up to Pilot Point on several occasions, and they attended games together at Pilot Point, and I think on occasions Abner and Vernon went over to Lincoln High and watched some games.

Clement: Really? I didn't know that. But it doesn't surprise me because they were both top flight athletes with great personalities. So it doesn't surprise me that they did. Probably while this was happening, I was still running back to Bowie to see the Jackrabbits play (chuckle), so I wasn't interested in what Pilot Point was doing.

Cummings: With consideration of your background and upbringing, you must have been going through a lot of changes mentally as far as coming to a college and suddenly playing with blacks, a race of people whom you'd never had any contact with up until this time. Do you recall going through those changes and thinking about it in your own mind as to, "Hey, these people are different from me, but they still are good athletes; and they're friendly people, and they're fun to be around."

Clement: I don't even know if I could really sit down and tell you a story either way on that. I guess I've got some religious

upbringings that I got from my mother, and I like people. So I didn't judge Abner or Leon on what color they were, and I'm not saying this for a record. I'm not trying to pull that goody-goody crap. I'm just telling you that...Abner was the one black that everybody loved to talk to; Leon was a good ol' boy. Then we brought in two or three other blacks that came here while I was here that I got pretty close to. So I would have to tell you, yes, I'm prejudiced. You are, too. I don't know what the issue would be, but everybody has some prejudiced blood in them on something. It may be my religion or my looks or whatever. But I am not that prejudiced against blacks even though I was raised in that atmosphere.

I know we were coming back from the Sun Bowl, and there was four or five or six of us sitting down playing "Crazy Eight," I think, is what they call the game or something. We're sitting there, and my wife's riding the train back with us. We're kind of in back, and she can play cards about like I can be an astronaut. I hope she don't read that. Anyway, we're sitting there, and Billy Joe Christle...have y'all come up with Billy Joe's name in any of these interviews? Billy Joe was a little ol' bitty running back. He wasn't big enough to play football, but he was good--good little ol' football player. He's about ten times as quiet and reserved as Leon is even. Billy Joe just don't talk. I've got an uncle that works with him in Fort Worth, and he still don't talk today. Billy Joe's just an absolute...if y'all interview him, you

won't get anything out of him, I don't think. But Billy Joe comes by, and we said, "Billy Joe, you want to play?" He kind of hesitated. "Come on, Billy Joe, play." So there's an empty chair right here by my wife, and then there's the aisle right here (gestures), and so Billy Joe sits down--sits on the arm. Well, he's been riding there several miles, and I said, "Billy Joe, I don't know what your problem is, but she ain't gonna bite you. Sit down." WHSEEW! He gets in and sits down.

But, you know, they had more of the reservations than we do. Billy Joe had been taught that he wasn't supposed to sit by the whites, or apparently that's what it was. Oh, he was nice--a nice human being. But he was not going to take a chance on offending my wife by sitting down by her, so I had to tell him, "Hey, sit down," so he does.

Abner was probably put in more of a bind than most of us were because, you know, they've got the same basic upbringing about how to act around whites that we do.

Marcello: We were talking about the Corsicana game awhile ago, and in one of our earlier interviews with Leon, he was relating the story where he and Abner heard a chant from the stands, a chant to the effect, "Get the niggers off the field. Get the niggers off the field." Do you remember that at the Navarro game?

Clement: I don't remember the chant. I don't even know if most of the whites that were playing realized what was going on at the

time. Bahnsen told me about it two or three years ago.

I've visited with Bahnsen for eighteen years, and he never had bothered to tell me about all that. I don't know if you'll find out whether the whites knew all this was going on or not. It may have been that Leon and Abner would be listening to this stuff, whereas to us it was just noise coming from the stands.

But I do know that the officiating was one-sided. It was horrible. We got cheated every way there can be. I think that was the night that I played nearly the whole football game, so I'm not going to hear anything from the stands because I'm always out on the field that night. I didn't hear nothing coming from the stands that night. But Bahnsen has since told me that there was death threats and everything else made at that ball game.

Marcello: Do you remember that you didn't tarry after the game, that is, that you went straight to the bus?

Clement: Yes.

Cummings: How did that come about? Do you recall the details?

Clement: I don't even remember where we dressed or undressed. I don't have any idea. I cannot in my mind...I don't remember anything about that. I just know that...I don't know. Bahnsen may have had us dress and undress on the ol' bus while we were riding down the road. That may have been the way it is, you know, when you're a little freshman coming in. Bahnsen probably did a good job keeping a lot of that from us.

- Marcello: That Navarro game brings another question to mind. Were you as white players ever subjected to any ridicule, name-calling, and so on across the line of scrimmage because you were playing on the same team with two blacks?
- Clement: I never got any of it. As a freshman, I would have been lined up in the backfield, so I wouldn't have heard it. On defense, you know, the offense is not going to talk to you. So I didn't hear it if it went on, not in the games; but I would guess that there had to be a lot of it going on. Like I told you, I was a little naive freshman, so it's all new to me.
- Cummings: In those early freshman games, do you recall any cheap shots by the opponents directed at Abner or Leon?
- Clement: Probably not. I don't. Not that I can tell you and sit here and be absolutely totally true.
- Cummings: None that were obvious and that incensed the rest of the players on your team.
- Clement: Yes, I don't remember Leon and Abner ever coming back and just saying, "Hey, it's worse than it should be." What are you finding out in the other interviews? Are the rest of them telling you there was?
- Marcello: Well, some of them are telling us that, you know, that epithets were hurled across the line of scrimmage and so on at white ball players.
- Clement: Okay, are you talking about...you may not be talking about our class. You may be talking about some of the interviews with players who were a year older and when Abner was playing

varsity ball. The way North Texas athletics operated on the varsity level, Abner and I were never on the field at the same time--ever--because we ran two offensive plays; and I wasn't on Abner's team, and so I never played with him on the varsity level. I played on the same ball club with him, but we weren't ever on the field at the same time. So I would guess that they probably got some of it when he was a sophomore. In fact, I'm pretty sure that we got a whole lot of it his sophomore year, but I wasn't on the field where I could hear it, so I wouldn't tell you I did.

Cummings: Did you say you played running back--fullback--your freshman year?

Clement: Entire freshman year. Then I started out playing fullback my sophomore year, and then all a sudden, one day...I couldn't catch the punts, like I told you while ago...so they started getting the fullbacks to catch in. The centers would snap it. Herb had all the linemen working them somewhere, and then the receivers and the ends would...two of them would cover punts, and the others would field them. Then they'd run them back, and the fullbacks would catch in. So one day I just got to messing around, and I started snapping them to the punter. The next thing I know, they've made a center out of me, so they red-shirt me. I don't play any that year.

Cummings: Your sophomore year?

Clement: My sophomore year I'm red-shirted entirely. I don't hit the field at all. We're playing Tulsa, I guess, at Tulsa my red-

shirt year, and Fred Way got hurt. Sammy Stanger was second team center, and I was third team center even though I was red-shirted. So when Fred got hurt, they hollered, "Clement!" I thought, "Oh, my God! I don't want to get in there! I'll lose a year of eligibility!" And he hollered, "Get your headgear!" So I got all the way out on the football field... and Fred said I can go ahead and play. So that's how close I come to losing a year of eligibility. I'd got on the field. Instead of just going ahead and grabbing Sammy...you know, like I told you, they had a unit here and a unit here, and they didn't integrate the two units if they could keep from it at all.

I don't know what the whole purpose was on that. But, like, if a first team player got hurt, if it was a temporary situation, they went to the third team player and used him and let the second team player stay with his unit. Now the second team players we're talking about, that was the second eleven. You had the starters, who went both ways, and then the second team, who also went both ways. Today it's two-platoon football. One would be an offensive starter, and one could be a defensive starter. But at that time, I know my senior year I played as much as fifty-six, fifty-seven minutes in a football game--just wear you out.

Cummings: That freshman season, during the two-a-days, does one incident there during the very first few workouts when the newness of having two blacks out there has not worn off...does one

incident stand out in your mind as maybe shocking to you in your eyes?

Clement: I don't know. I've heard people make this statement, that after Coach Mitchell watched him run a little bit, he said that, "That guy's not a nigger; he's a black." Or Mitchell said, "He's an Indian" or something. I've heard that. Is that the story you're trying to get out? I've heard that story.

Cummings: I'm just curious if there was ever one or two major incidences that occurred during those first few days, first few workouts, because--let's face it--this is 1956, and this is a very new thing to integrate athletics.

Clement: I would just tell you probably that the first three or four or five days, it wouldn't have bothered me if they could have run Abner and them off. In fact, we anticipated it; we expected it. We were shocked that it didn't happen. So anything that the older kids said to Abner and so forth the first three or four or five days--probably the first week or maybe even the first two weeks--didn't bother most of us because, you know, as you say, they're blacks and they're trying to integrate, and if they want to harass them and cheap-shot them, okay. So what I'm telling you is, it didn't...I didn't know Abner when he was playing that first week or two. I didn't know him at all until we started traveling on trips. That's the only time we see him. Like I told you, I don't know Abner Haynes, and the other kids don't know him except during

that football workout. So we have no relationship after the football workout. They have to go to their part of town, and we go to ours. So in those first two weeks, it wouldn't have bothered me a bit if they'd have run him off.

Cummings: Do you think that was the attitude of the rest of the team?

Clement: Probably. And here I am, I'm telling you that we got close.

We got close after the season started, after he has to catch Bahnsen and help us on those things. But there couldn't be any closeness develop. That'd be like a guy coming in here and sweeping this floor for you every day, and you never talk to him. There can't be any closeness develop.

So Abner was just doing the same thing we were--trying to make the football team. He happened to be the wrong color at the time and lived on the wrong side of the tracks. When they're hollering all these insults at him, they're hollering them at the rest of us, too. He just happened to be black. But he's supposed to take them. That's the way it was. He had to take that stuff, and I guess he did a good job of taking it.

Marcello: You may have mentioned this awhile ago, and forgive me if I'm asking you to repeat something. Did you ever think very much about the fact that Abner and Leon had to live over in the black section of town and that they could not live in the dormitory or eat in the dormitory?

Clement: No. At the chance of offending Leon and Abner here, even though we had a close relationship and other whites had a

close relationship with them--at games, on the trips, and so forth--we still pretty well expected them to stay over there. I know that one year that they lived in the dorms--they got to stay in the dorm in pre-season one year--there was some little grumbling about a nigger here and a nigger eating here. And the same people that just loved the devil out of him while we're on game trips and so forth weren't quite ready yet for them to move into the dorms. So what I'm telling you is, it was pretty well expected that Abner was supposed to stay over there. Yet, we could discriminate against him because he was one of us. I can talk about my wife. You can't. We could talk about Abner maybe, or we could expect that Abner was supposed to stay on the other side of town; but when other people started making him do that, we would resent it.

I guess Coach Mitchell was the one--and I don't know which football player was the main one--but my junior year we go down to play the University of Houston, and, you know, Alabama just beat them 3-0 the week before, I think. They had a pretty good football team, but they just couldn't win. So Coach Mitchell told us at a team meeting--I don't know--earlier in the week, "Abner can't stay in the hotel with us. Do you want to stay on a train or do you want to stay in another hotel?" Immediately a couple of the leaders...I don't know who it was. I think maybe Bill Groce, maybe ol' Vernon Cole, spoke up and said, "We'll stay on the train if they can't stay with us."

So we probably subconsciously segregated them in Denton but then protected them when Houston tries to segregate them. So every one of us slept on a dern pullman train when we were playing the University of Houston because the hotel wouldn't let Abner in. It seems funny, but...we had some very good pro football players that came here--Ernie Green from Louisville and people like that--that couldn't stay in our motels, and we never thought anything about it. I've often wondered who arranged their staying when they got here. Abner had to do it.

He was assigned to entertain Oscar Robinson when the University of Cincinnati came here, and Abner was telling me this story himself. I'll try to word it real proper. He would take Oscar out and see to it that he had a very, very, very good night before, and then come ball game time Oscar Robinson couldn't play a lick. Now they blame it on North Texas fans harassing him. The way I understand it, it was the night in which Abner was in charge of entertainment that did Oscar Robinson in. Ol' Abner told me one time that he hadn't seen ol' Oscar since we played time down here, and that's when they beat us in overtime, and we didn't have a basketball player on the team. They were number one in the nation, and we took them into overtime. Ray Toole was one of the good players then. Anyway, ol' Abner says, "I saw ol' Oscar at a benefit basketball game at Kansas City or somewhere the next year, and I says, 'Oscar, what're you doing?'" And he looked up

at him and started chunking basketballs. He knew what Abner had done to him (chuckle). So I won't tell you everything that Abner told me on that. Abner got a kick out of it. Oscar never did perform as good as he should have down here, and Abner had something to do with that.

Marcello: Do you recall when the house where Leon and Abner were staying burned down?

Clement: No, I didn't know that. Was that while they were here that year?

Marcello: I think it was that first year, wasn't it?

Cummings: That was in February of their first year, right after the football season.

Clement: No, I never heard that talked in the dorm or anywhere. Have other players come out and mentioned it to you?

Cummings: A few remember it. G.A. Moore and those people knew.

Clement: Some of the local people here?

Cummings: Yes.

Clement: The rest of...

Cummings: But a lot are like you. They were just unaware of it.

Clement: I had no idea that it happened.

Cummings: I'd like to get back, just for a second, on this two-sided attitude that you say some of the players had as far as protecting their own blacks out on the road, but when it came back to coming back home, they fell back into that same segregationist attitude. Why was that? Why was there that two-sided attitude among the white players?

Clement: I don't know. I guess when you're around your own--let's say your own family or something--you can be the real you. I guess we'd got to the point around Abner that we were probably the real us. We probably were a little more inconsiderate of him when we were in contact with him than we were on the road. Plus, I guess, some of your old upbringing comes back in, and, you know, most of them were from a white-dominated society. I guess if you go back to the Civil War or pre-Civil War times, it's all right for my slave to do this, but yours better not do it if you want to concoct a story such as that. But I think, if you probably check some of the other interviews, you may have found the same thing if they got honest with you. And this is what you're wanting--pure honest--isn't it?

Cummings: Sure.

Clement: And this is at the chance of hurting some feelings. I haven't seen Abner in years, but I sure hope we have as a good relationship as we used to because I sure like the guy.

Cummings: Well, you know, I ask that because I want to find out to the best of our ability the reason behind some of these players... when they go into restaurants out of town, they stand up and they're proud to be able to say, "We want to eat together." But those same players, once you get them back home here, would have no sooner thought of inviting Abner to eat with them at their house, at their dormitories, in the same restaurants here in Denton probably. But on the road, they stand up, and

they're proud to state that. Not having been around that period of time, I'm just curious as to what thought process went through their mind?

Clement: But then on the road...I don't know if I can explain it to you, but there was some of those feelings that went on. We just more or less took it for granted that they live here, they did that, we didn't eat with them. Yet we go to the UB, and we visit and we socialize, and we have fun. But the dorm wasn't ready for them.

I think Coach Mitchell and them probably did a great job of knowing when the dorm was ready for the blacks to come in. If you think back on it, they sent them in for two weeks, and I guess they got the feeling right quick that it wasn't ready for them, so it was probably two or three more years before they integrated the dorms here. I may not be able to explain it to you, but that was the general feeling.

Cummings: Again, talking about those first few weeks of workouts during your freshman year, do you recall any players quitting precisely because they were having to play with black players?

Clement: No, I don't know. Other than that story I told you on myself, anybody else that would have left was a non-athlete. There wasn't any athletes that left, and I don't know who would have told you that any did, if anybody told you that. I don't know of a white, one, that left because of Abner--none. In fact, I think that whole class that we brought in...nearly every one of them stayed and graduated.

- Cummings: Is there one incident during that season--maybe the first time you ran into problems at a hotel or the first time that you ran into problems in a restaurant--where you personally became very, very aware of the problem of integration?
- Clement: The biggest one I've told you about was at Corsicana, which we've already covered, and the Houston trip. But, no, I guess we kind of felt like we were kind of unique in being the first team to have the blacks, and I didn't notice anything that much different.
- Cummings: Do you remember any notoriety that the team, the program, or the school received because of Abner's and Leon's presence?
- Clement: Only in Corsicana again. Basically, all the write-ups that I got hold of treated North Texas right. They gave Abner some good write-ups and so forth, so I didn't see any bad publicity or anything. I just don't know of any that went on, so I'm going to be shocked, or I'm going to be educated, if y'all tell me that there was a lot going on that was.
- Marcello: Do you recall the episode when Ole Miss and Mississippi State dropped North Texas from the schedule?
- Clement: I know that when I was coming down here, we'd played Ole Miss the year before, and then all the sudden we're not playing Ole Miss and Mississippi State. I don't know why. It was never explained to us, so you have just opened my eyes to something. But they would have have to have dropped us the year before, and we didn't have any blacks then, so I don't know if they dropped us because of blacks. I don't really

think they did because we weren't on their schedule that year, and you couldn't get on it after that. We played Hardin-Simmons, Houston, New Mexico State, Cincinnati, San Jose State. San Jose State was my sophomore year, which was my junior year, really, and they were integrated. They had a black sprinter--Ray Norten. But that wasn't as bad being integrated in California as it is in Texas. Has anybody ever told you Abner's story at San Jose State?

Marcello: We may have heard this story from Coach Mitchell, but go ahead and repeat it.

Clement: Okay, I'll give you pretty close to the same story. Now the year we played San Jose State, I'm a red-shirt; but I make all trips just in case somebody gets hurt so I've got to play. It was me and one more quarterback that never got into the ball game. Well, I fight Golden Gloves some back at this time, quite a bit, I guess, so I could pretty well--at least the players thought--whip everybody on the ball club. I don't know if they'll tell you this or not, but it was true. I didn't have to worry about anybody. By my sophomore or junior year, I had everybody believing I could whip them at North Texas. I never did try to change anybody's mind on that, even though I was a lot smaller. Anyway, I fought in some Golden Gloves and won several fights.

We're out playing San Jose State, and they got Ray Norten, the world's fastest human being at that time. He had the world's record in the 100 and the 220. He choked in the Olympics, but

was the world's fastest. So we're ahead of them by six points or so, time is running out, and they're throwing bombs to Ray. So Mitchell puts Abner on Ray.

I can still remember this because I'm not playing. Abner, as I told you, was extremely quick, but he couldn't run fast. Norten was so much faster than Abner it wasn't funny. So ol' Mitchell stood over there on the sidelines, and he'd pull up grass, and he'd holler, "Watch the sweep! Watch the pass! Watch the quick kick! Watch everything!" (Laughter) Oh, man, just nobody was listening to him.

But, anyway, ol' Fred's got the secondary backed way up, and ol' Abner is so far back that you can't believe it. And ol' Ray Norten takes off down that field, and that quarterback just hauls off and throws it. I don't know what happened, but let's say all four of them we incomplete. But ol' Abner is giving him twenty-five and thirty yards trying to cover him, and they're not trying to hit the underneath. You know, they got to get it all.

So they had an ol' boy named Jim Sherburn, I believe was his name, who was playing offensive guard for us, and ol' Sherburn jumps offsides. He's playing defense, I guess, and when he does...or we're killing the clock right there at the last or something.

Anyway, when he jumps offsides, San Jose State is upset, so one of them hauls off and hits him, and when he does, the whole dern place goes berserk. Everybody's fighting everybody.

We had a big ol' tackle, Joe Mac Pryor. He used to teach in a junior high over here. Ol' Joe was up in the 315, 320, 330-pound neighborhood, and he was running out there, and he was grabbing people. And ol' Vernon Cole was in on it. It's quite a fight. Vernon hit an ol' boy and broke his jaw, I think, paralyzed his face. I don't know what ol' Mitchell told you on that.

So ol' Abner, he's the one I got tickled at. He said, "That damn nigger! I never got so tired of a nigger!" He was calling Norton a nigger. He said, "I couldn't cover him, and he's so fast!" He says, "When that fight broke out, I kept reaching for my switchblade, but I couldn't find it!"

(Laughter) So they started playing the national anthem, and we had one heck of a fight. I caught a lot of harassment because the films showed me standing over there on the bench watching the fight. I'm the Golden Gloves fighter, and me and this ol' quarterback are sitting over there watching the fight. I caught a lot of harassment on that. And then we got in a fight at Brigham Young a year or two later, and I didn't get in on it. This is my junior year.

Ol' Jerrell Shaw, he's the feistiest little ol' fullback if you'd ever come up with. Ol' Jerrell and I were on the same unit. We're playing Louisville in Kentucky, and the officials think it's an eight o'clock ball game, but it's a two o'clock ball game. I don't know if this story has come out anywhere or not. So nobody shows up, so they get some officials out

of the stands. Oh, they're horrible. So we're going along out there...and ol' Shaw had been kicked out of two or three ball games, and Mitchell suspends him from eating on the athletic side. He has to eat with the girls over there on the other side. He can't eat in "Animal Hall." He has to go with the people, and, you know, that's a disgrace to have to eat over there. You don't get all you want, and you can't throw food and all that stuff. And so he told ol' Shaw, "One more time, and you're through! One more time, and you're through!"

So we're playing ol' Louisville, Kentucky. We give the ball to ol' Jerrell, and something happens and this one player starts beating ol' Shaw just something fierce. Ol' Shaw can't do nothing. He's through at North Texas. So he's just laying there like this (gesture), and I thought, "Clement, you've taken all of the nonsense you're going to take because you won't fight."

So I ran up there and reached back and hit me one and got hit upside my mouth and just scattered chips of teeth everywhere, so that ended my fighting career at North Texas.

But ol' Shaw...it was so funny: "I can't hit him! I can't hit him!" He was just laying there covered up, just protecting himself, so Mitchell won't run him off for fighting.

We ran into several episodes. You probably found out about Abner's family and interviewed them. They're a preacher's family, and Abner's told me a lot of stories about selling

seats to the women and making money that way...passing the collection plate again. Abner always had a good story.

Cummings: What was the early reaction once school got started that first year you were up here? What was the early reaction of the faculty and the other students?

Clement: Probably like all the rest of us. They were trying to learn to tolerate it. I wasn't in a class with Abner. Now if you want to get into some situations that I observed in some other situations, I can tell you those. I can't because I was never in class with Abner.

Cummings: Surely, you heard teachers and faculty and other students talking about the fact that two blacks were out on the football field or the team.

Clement: I walked into an English class one time, and it was probably my freshman year--either freshman or sophomore year--and there was a seat between me and whoever this other individual was. And a real cute colored girl walked in and sat down between me and this one student. I've never seen the student before or since. He just picks up his books and everything and moved. He refused to sit by her. That was a general attitude or feeling on campus.

Now Abner and Leon were somewhat different because they were in athletics, and they fit into kind of a different situation with the average student. Here again, you're getting some of that same old prejudice. You can talk to Abner, and you can talk to Leon; but you let that other black walk down and

sit by you in class, and you get up and move. I have seen that happen at North Texas. Now it wouldn't happen to Abner or to Leon because they were "something special." But for the other blacks, it happened too many times.

Cummings: The fact that they were athletes definitely had something to do with the fact that they moved in as normal students a little easier.

Clement: It had a tremendous effect, right. It gave them...if Abner hadn't been out for athletics and tried to integrate North Texas, it would have been a total different integration setup than what you see today. His athletic ability plus his charm integrated North Texas. If Abner had walked in as a student from Dallas Lincoln, it wouldn't have worked. Personality would have meant nothing. But when he got to be the football player, then teachers could relate to him because North Texas had just 4800 or so students then--maybe 4,000 or so--and so teachers pretty well knew who the athletes were. And for some it was good for them to know you was an athlete, and for others you had to hope like mad that they didn't find out you was an athlete. I've had to hide it from many a teacher. And then others, you let them know right quick you're an athlete. Sometimes it helped, and sometimes it'd demolish you.

Cummings: Do you recall the court decision coming out of a federal district court in Sherman in 1955 against North Texas State, saying that they had to allow black undergraduate students to enroll?

Clement: Yes, I remember that because I had a cousin that was going to

school down here. That had been brought up a little bit before I enrolled at North Texas: "The niggers will be going to school there next year." But nobody really thought they'd come. We didn't really anticipate it. Yes, I remember the decision, and I remember it being discussed, but nobody really anticipated them being here.

Cummings: Or believed that it would actually come off.

Clement: Yes. It didn't enter my mind that there would be a black in North Texas even though a cousin of mine had told me that they would be there. He'd had one in class. I don't know how many we had. We had more than I really thought we would, though.

Marcello: What are your thoughts concerning J.C. Matthews?

Clement: I guess that we'd have to discuss J.C. only as football players knew him. The circles that I traveled in didn't have a good attitude toward J.C. Matthews at all. He was a skinflint; he wouldn't spend any money. He wasn't interested in anything on the betterment of North Texas. He was from a different cultural background. He was small, dignified, talked different, lived in the big house, segregated himself from everybody. Because of the stories we heard on him on how he watched the budget and wouldn't spend anything, we had no use for J.C. Matthews, just to be blunt with you.

Marcello: Was he more or less regarded as an authoritarian figure on campus...that is, was there a feeling that he ruled with an iron hand?

Clement: There was a feeling that he controlled the purse strings. Now what control he had over the other people, we didn't know. But we knew that he wouldn't turn loose any money. No, we did not like Matthews.

In fact...I wasn't in on it; I just went along with the group. You know how that goes. But we protested in front of Matthews's house and things like that. I guess it was when he decided to fire ol' Pete Shands. I like ol' Pete. I guess I was with that group, too. You know how people can be somewhere where you shouldn't be, and then you can't explain why you're there. I didn't consider myself with the group, but yet I followed along behind the group that went down and hung Pete Shands in effigy.

No, I never heard a good thing said about J.C. Matthews while I was at North Texas. Have you heard that from everybody else?

Marcello: Oh, the reason I asked the question is because...

Clement: Is he dead?

Marcello: No, he's still alive.

Clement: WHEW!!! Sorry about that!

Marcello: But the reason I raised the whole subject of Matthews is that he was president when this took place, he did rule the university more or less with an iron hand, and evidently he said, "Look, blacks are coming. It's the law. That's the way it is. Now we're gonna make the best of it. I don't want any trouble."

Clement: He may have. I can tell you...this goes down a year or two

later. You know, freshmen had to be initiated at North Texas, and so...my initiation wasn't too bad. It wasn't really bad. Then about my second or third year here--third year, I guess--we started getting new athletes coming in, and hair was coming into style a little bit more. When we come in nobody had any hair. So we started shaving "N" and "T" on the sides their head. If you get some of those old annuals, you'll find this big ol' "NT." I helped shave those things. Anyway, we got some tremendous publicity on that. But Mitchell came down and told us that Matthews had forbid it, and if there was anymore head-shaving, we could consider ourselves gone from North Texas football team. I didn't challenge it. I've always been taught if somebody told you that, that's the way it would be.

But that same year we had an ol' veteran move in, an ol' Marine veteran. He was working out with the football team but didn't associate with any of us. He had nothing to do with anybody, and he stayed in his own room downstairs. Come freshman initiation night, he didn't show up. You just don't do this. You come to freshman initiation. He still was older than all of the rest of us. He was twenty-three or twenty-four, and we're nineteen or twenty. He's four or five years older than we are, anyway. And so somebody told him, "You missed freshman initiation." He said, "I don't put up with that shit." And so I felt, "That's all right with me." It appeared to me that he could whip me if it got down to (chuckle)

which one of us would initiate him or not. So all the sudden, the next morning...I don't even know who did it. I'm not even sure it was one of the leaders. They said, "We got one down here that didn't get initiated! Let's go!" And the next thing I know, "WHOOSH!" Three floors walk in, and they say, "All right, freshman, get over here." They cut the "N" and the "T" in his hair. He got his bags and went home. That ended his North Texas career--right there. When he looked up and there was fifty, sixty athletes...and I don't know who got it up, but somebody said, "Let's go get him!" It wasn't going to be one or two. Every one of us went (chuckle). So we shaved that big "NT" in his head. I don't know, if I'd been a veteran, if I'd have taken that stuff or not, either.

Marcello: Do you recall any of the local townspeople who may have eased or helped facilitate the coming of Abner and Leon? I'm referring to somebody who maybe was a booster of the athletic program or something along those lines.

Clement: I didn't know the politics that went on at North Texas that much then. There was a local drugstore right there on campus --it's not there anymore--but it seemed like that ol' boy that owned that was a booster of North Texas, and then ol' Ed Lane, who ran a little ol' ice cream joint over across town...I don't know if y'all remember his brother Vernon, who coached in Denton. An then I'm sure that some of these and the big Rotary people and so forth that showed up for the introduction of players and all that stuff were boosters. That was just

something that we had to tolerate. It wasn't anything we looked forward to. Other than that and maybe Walt Parker and...well, ol' Magill was coaching at Denton then, so he wouldn't have been involved in any of that. But I don't remember any real outsiders that had that much to do with it. It was just North Texas football and four coaches.

Cummings: Do you recall...or does one particular performance by Abner stand out in your mind?

Clement: I don't remember the game. One really stood out, and that was when we beat a little ol' team out of Ohio or something-- Youngstown or something. He ran wild that day, but it wasn't against good-caliber competition. Abner, against good competition...we were playing Wichita State, and Wichita State was giving us some bad publicity because we felt like we could play, and Wichita State and those Big Eight sportswriters said we couldn't finish sixth up there in the Big Eight. So we didn't appreciate that kind of publicity. When we played Wichita State, Abner was hurt, you know, to the point that he shouldn't be playing. He'd get some kind of magic treatment right before the game, probably called novocain. He just grins when you ask him. They shot him up real good, and I don't know who "they" is, but I'm pretty sure Abner was shot up. He scored two touchdowns against Wichita State when he shouldn't have been playing, and we beat them 12 - 0. We take a lot of bad publicity because we can't beat them that much, but nobody knows the real story--that Abner shouldn't be

playing.

Then we're playing Tulsa. We're behind 6 - 0, and Bill Groce pops forty-something yards for a touchdown. No, we're behind 7 - 0, and Bill Groce breaks forty-something yards for a touchdown--fluke play, I think. I don't know because, you know, we had just about given up hope of scoring, and all the sudden the whole world just opens up, and ol' Groce goes and scores. I guess everybody's defending Abner, and they leave the fullback alone.

Anyway, I can remember that during the week we'd worked on an extra point play. Poor ol' Mitchell would line up three people out here, I think, behind each other. He'd put an end...and it seemed like he put another back and then Abner back there, and then when the ball is snapped, one went this way, one went this way, and they raised up and threw the ball to Abner.

Well, the way it happened, nobody covered this one, and nobody covered this one, and everybody was waiting on Abner. He caught the ball at about the twelve or fourteen yard line with probably three people on him and scored, and we won the football game. You know, we thought Mitchell had devised a beautiful play--tremendous coaching--but it was Abner. When it was all said and done, it was Abner.

He could just...at the Youngstown game, he went wild. But if you'll ever check Abner's "stats," he doesn't have big "stats" at North Texas. He does not have great "stats," and part of it being the reason...one is that Mitchell let

everybody touch the ball, and even when Abner was going good, when it came time for second unit to go in...and he had a designated time during the ball game when they went in, and come hell or high water, they're going in at that time. And so that took Abner away from the ball some. Plus Groce was a very good fullback. Vernon was a tremendous quarterback. So that was a three-way split on the ball right there.

And then the second team...nobody knows this, but Billy Joe Christle played some pro ball, and Arthur Perkins started for the Los Angeles Rams. So when we went in, there wasn't that much of a drop off. In fact, if when we went in and the other team sent its other unit in, we were just kicking the dog out of their unit. We had two other blacks--this is Abner's junior year--that nobody knows about--Billy Joe and Arthur. I know we went out and played Sammy Baugh at Hardin-Simmons, and I think the second unit scored five or six touchdowns that night. We just ate them up.

And so what I guess I'm telling you is, if you check North Texas's record, Abner's not going to show up in it, and he may be the best football player that ever came through here. But he had so many other good blacks that come along that had to have the ball...and ol' Mitchell somehow or another didn't let a guy hog the show too much. That was probably planning on his part. We never realized it at the time.

Marcello: Did you ever detect any changes in Abner's personality over

the time that he was here or as time went on after that first year?

Clement: Oh, the older he got, the more solemn he got. He got out of...okay, let's just get honest. In Abner's first year here, it was pure 100 percent action that we expected out of a colored boy. He had the jive--the rhythm. He'd bounce. He had it all. He was just magic walking. Then by the second and third year, he would be singing on the buses and that stuff. But the older he got, the more subdued he got. Are you hearing this from the others, too?

Marcello: I don't think I ever asked that question before.

Cummings: I don't think it ever came up.

Clement: I think he got more subdued all the way up and down the line.

Cummings: Could it have been in part at least because of the notoriety he was receiving for his talent as a football player?

Clement: I think--and Abner, I hope this doesn't offend you--I think Abner knew what role he had to play when he come in the first time, and I think the older he got, the more publicity he got, the more he could resort back to being a regular one. In other words, I maybe telling you that Abner played a little bit of Uncle Tom early because he may have been...we thought this was the way that he was supposed to act. And the more he stayed with us, the more subdued he got, the more dignified he got, the more reserved he got. Now you could still get him out and cut up with him and have fun, but he quit playing the colored role. I definitely think that he played the

colored role the first year or two that he was here. I hope I don't hurt his feelings in saying that, but I definitely believe that.

Marcello: I think probably most blacks who came into a white-dominated situation felt that they had to play a certain role.

Clement: Yes, yes.

Marcello: It was probably something that they had been taught a long time ago.

Clement: Yes. I know I've come back to some "exes" games in the spring, and we've talked to Abner, and we could visit and have fun, and he could laugh and joke. But he was an entirely different Abner. I've visited with him in some hotels and motels when I'd stumble across him on a coaching trip, and he was subdued --a totally different Abner. Yes, there was two Abners--the one that came the first two years, and then the one that graduated.

Marcello: I suspect that in part this could have resulted from his becoming more mature, and also, I guess, by the time he left North Texas, the movement toward integration throughout the country was really beginning to pick up steam.

Clement: Yes, it was everywhere. Houston was playing them, Cincinnati was playing them, Louisville was playing them, New Mexico... we weren't the only ones by then.

Marcello: And, you know, it reaches the point where, by the time he becomes a pro, he is what I guess we could call an activist, perhaps even a militant with regard to...

Clement: I think Abner eventually went through some militant parts. I think it started possibly four or five years after he got into pro ball. I think some of his militancy may have started over the death of Stone Jackson, if you've ever talked to him on Stone Jackson's death, and he and Hank Stram didn't see eye-to-eye on a lot of things, and Hank probably left an insinuation in everybody's mind that he was a dumb nigger on that flip call that he made in the playoff game. I've heard Abner's story on that, and it just flat was a mix-up, but it caused Abner his job. He was gone. But Abner's told me more than once that he said, "I would play for that man, get in traction, stay in a hospital bed until time to leave, get out of the hospital bed, come and play, and then he treats me like this." But Stone Jackson's death... wasn't the guy's name Jackson—Stone Jackson? That had a tremendous effect on Abner. It really bothered him. And then, I guess, Kansas City trading him affected him a whole lot. I talked to him right before he went to Denver. He tried to get me to come up and visit him at Denver even. He was always trying to get me to come out and try out for one of his ball clubs. I think it was just a courtesy move on Abner. It was still the same old financial situation on my part. I think the Kansas City deal burned him real deep, and Abner, for four or five years after he got into pro ball ...Pittsburgh in the NFL was still wanting him, and I think he hung that over some people's head every once in awhile.

Then all of a sudden, Abner finds out, you know, they've used him.

And Abner was used by pro football. I don't know if he's told you that or not, but when they milked him dry, they let him go.

I don't know the story on the Zales. Did he ever tell you that? He was vice-president in charge of public relations for Zales, and then all of a sudden he's not with Zales. He's got an apartment in New York, and then all the sudden that comes to a halt.

Cummings: Just to conclude this, I want to know how you reflect back some twenty-five, thirty years later to this time. Do you see yourself and your white teammates and your white coaches as pioneers in a movement, or do you see it as being no big deal, that it just happened? How do you view this whole incident?

Clement: It was just an experience of life. You just go off and try to make a football team and try to get out of college. It just so happened that there was two blacks trying to do the same thing. Nothing special either way. And I don't think anybody that was on the football team looked at it any different. We were trying to make it. There may have been two blacks on the team that some of them resented because they were blacks, and they resented it more because they were getting their spot. I have heard some substitute freshmen that couldn't play anyway fussing because the nigger got the ball all the time. But if

I had the choice, I know which one was going to get the ball (chuckle).

But, no, it wasn't any pioneer stuff. Don't let anybody tell you it was pioneer stuff. We're eighteen-year-old kids trying to get through college and make a living and play football. It just so happened that there were two blacks thrown into it. I saw nothing pioneer about it--none. It wasn't ever mentioned. I don't think anybody told you anything otherwise, either.

Cummings: Okay, well we appreciate your time and the information that you've given us. It has been very interesting.