

Dillon O’Gorman
Hank Wall Interview

DO: My Name is Dillon O’Gorman it is currently about 12:15 on April 10th, 2015 sitting here with Hank Wall, member of the class of 68’ from William Penn High School. Hank, thank you for sitting down with me today. If you could begin, just tell me a little about your life growing up before high school, you know your childhood.

HW: Well before childhood I was actually born about three or four blocks from William Penn High School. I was born in a house, I wasn’t born in a hospital, I was born on 1114 Downey Street, and it was kind of at a bottom of a hill and if you came to the top of the hill you actually came to what is now Kivett Dr., which is soon to be changed to Martin Luther King, and if you came to the top of that hill you could just look well maybe 500-600 yards and you could see William Penn. So I actually came up in the neighborhood where William Penn was at. I went to elementary school at Leonard Street Elementary School, where the police department now sits, and then I went to middle school at Griffin, which is now Penn Griffin and then ended up at William Penn High School. I have a kind of, I guess I have a kind of a unique background. I was raised by my aunt, my mothers sister, but my mother lived about a half mile from us, so my biological mother had 11 children, actually she had 12 with me I was the first, and 10 of them were boys.

DO: Wow

HW: So they lived, like I said, about a half mile from me. So with me being raised by my aunt who had 2 girls, I was the only boy, and when I was born they were already teenagers. So I actually came up as an only child, and I also came up as the oldest child. So it was interesting because I was big brother, when ever times of trouble came, and you know my brothers would call me if they got jumped by somebody or something like that and then I got to go across the tracks. That’s what separated us, the railroad tracks, so I would run over there and find out what is going on then I’d come back home and do whatever. But what it did was it taught me how to adapt because in my neighborhood during the 50’s, I’ll be 65 tomorrow, so during my time the big families were the norm. So you learned how to get along, and you learned how to defend yourself. I was pretty much an athlete, and I played basketball at Penn-Griffin and they didn’t have a football team there but during that time you couldn’t stay in the house all day, especially on a day like this, you had to go out, you’re not staying around grown folks conversations so you learn how to go out. And in the winter time, we would pack up, I can remember during the snow, the only inside recreational faculty inside we had was the YMCA, which was up the street from William Penn on 4th street. So what we would do during the snow was put our sneaker in a bag, put on what we used to call our Brogans, and what’s the name of the boots that are popular now? ...Timberlands. We had boots that would come up to the knees almost and we would go out in the snow, you know 2-3 feet of snow and trek up to the Y. We would come in, take our boots off, put our sneakers on, go to the gym, and stay all day. So that was our only recreation during the winter months. Now during the summer months we played whatever the game of the day was; baseball, football,

basketball, whatever it was. But it was mostly played in the neighborhood. We could walk to Washington Terrace Park, but usually the park would be reserved for those who lived in that area. So we'd find places in our own neighborhoods to play. During that time, during the 50's and the early 60's, the cemetery of on Leonard street is not as full as it is now, course that was 50 years ago, so we would play softball, baseball, football, on the cemetery. So it wasn't unusual because it was so huge but you had a large area that was unused at the time, and that's where we played. So that kind of demonstrates a little bit of the childhood I had. I saw a lot of, in my childhood there was a lot of...during that time you didn't have a ABC store. High Point was what you call a dry city, so you didn't have a liquor store in the city, and even then the first liquor store I knew about was in Jamestown, it wasn't in High Point you had to go to Jamestown. So you had these liquor houses along the streets. Now I was talking about how I was born on Downey Street but I was raised on Hayes Street and Woodbury Street, which was right off Kivett, and that was in the same eastern part of High Point. And all of this, all during school we had to walk; the buses that brought kids into High Point to (all of these years were years of segregation), the buses came from Trinity and the buses came from the Florence area. Otherwise you had to walk. Now the people on the south side, they could ride the city bus, I think it was either for a dime or something like that, but even some of the kids on the South side walked from the south side to William Penn and to Griffin. Of course they had Fairview elementary on the south side so they didn't have to walk to elementary school. But like I was saying during that time when you had these liquor houses they were plentiful in my neighborhood, and I was just talking to somebody else about that a while back in Greensboro, the morticians we had Hoover Funeral Home and (8:11) Haizlip funeral home at that time. And the same hearse that would carry the bodies to the cemetery were the same hearse that they would pick up people that were wounded to carry to the hospital. So you know the same stretcher that they carried someone dead on was the same one that if you got cut, shot, whatever, that's what they would carry you to the hospital in. So that's one reason that even to this day, now I'm a veteran, I went into the military, I'm an Army veteran, I did two years in the Army, but I've never learned how to play cards and the reason for that was because of the violence that I saw in my neighborhood coming up. A lot of people ask me "Why you don't play cards?" "You went to military you don't know how to play cards?" I say, "No I don't play cards." Because I mean in my eyesight and what I saw learning that led to gambling, and gambling led to violence. I saw a lot of people who were killed, a lot of people that were wounded or maimed because they lost their grocery money. You know they get paid Friday, they wouldn't go home they would go to the liquor house 'cause most of the time gambling was going on in the same location. So that's pretty much my childhood, that's a lot of stuff there.

Dillon: Wow, yeah. If you don't mind me asking why did you grow up with your Aunt instead of your...

Hank: Well my biological mom was a single parent, and she had me when she was 16. My aunt was an adult, and like I said she had 2 girls and she didn't have a boy, and so my mom was putting a lot on my grandmother, who was older, and so my Aunt said, "No

you're not going to put it all on mom. I'll just raise him." So I was raised by my aunt from 3 months old.

Dillon: And do you still have the connection, like you said across the tracks?

Hank: Oh yeah. Well you know, we all went to the same church. So I mean I saw them every Sunday, every Wednesday. We kinda have an ongoing joke in the family that my nickname is Biscuit, because when my biological mom would cook biscuits she wouldn't let my brothers touch them until I came. She'd call me and say "OK, I'm cooking biscuits today, so they'd be sitting around waiting on me to get over there so I can get mine first. Some people say half-brothers; there is no such thing, because we came up as brothers. So we never broke ties, the ties were always there.

Dillon: So you refer to her as your biological mother do you refer to your aunt mom?

Hank: Yeah I called my aunt mom. And then I called my mom, my biological mom by her name until she passed, she passed in 08 and even then I would call her mom. Because see my biological mom passed in '73 when I was in Korea. When I was in the Army I hadn't been in Korea but 2 weeks and she had a massive stroke. So I had to fly back, so she died when I was 23. So I was fortunate to have two mothers, so my biological mom took over, so I had 2 moms. One to bring me up and one to keep me when I became an adult. It was a unique position to be in.

Dillon: Could you go into a bit more depth about the dynamic between the south side and the east side?

Hank: Yeah, well that was always sort of a competition there. I didn't really get into the competition until I guess I was my teenage years. Like I was saying you could walk to Washington Terrace Park, which was the main meeting place for all the blacks in the city, because it had everything there. And sometimes there would be confrontations, guys from this side trying to talk to girls from over there. You know somebody from south side didn't like, or whatever, and then you might have a fight break out or something like that. It wasn't really actually gangs it was just like I live in the south side and you on this side. It was...

Dillon: Neighborhood pride?

Hank: Yeah, basically. Because we all went to school together, and we played together everybody is Griffin or Penn. But then in another setting it was neighborhood pride; a lot of times, it was who you knew, or what your status was. As I grew older, well, certain guys could operate on both sides of town, and that was mostly athletes. Guys that were athletes, guys that had cars. Most of us, shoot I didn't get my first car till I was about 19 I guess, but we had to depend on the bus if you were going either way. So the last bus coming out of the south side coming to the East side was at 10 o'clock. So if you missed that one you had to walk back, and that was treacherous. That was the neighborhood

thing, you know neighborhood pride. It was neighborhood pride at certain time, and then when it was time to go to school it was school pride.

Dillon: Did you have any favorite memories growing up, like a favorite game played in the cemetery or something?

Hank: Probably (pause) I remember when we were coming up, when I was coming up, mostly until about '63-'64 maybe, they decided to pave the streets in my neighborhood. So probably for those 12-13 years that I was in that neighborhood all the streets were dirt. Summer time they would come by, the city would come by, and water truck would water the street down to keep the dust from flying so high. My mom had a green thumb she actually could grow flowers from anywhere. And so she... I can remember distinctly when we were on Hayes Streets so I had to be around 9-10 years old. She grew Holland tulips that grew to be about this tall; her garden was probably about 10 by 20 square in the neighborhood. There were some woods that were about a couple of blocks over and she would send me and some of the guys with buckets over to the woods to get rich black dirt, and we would come back and spend all day pouring dirt for her and her garden. There was a path right by our house that would go to the neighborhood store, and I can remember people going past there and they wouldn't touch those flowers. They would just look at 'em, and the different colors, all different color tulips, blue, yellow, purple, green, whatever color. But I can always remember about those tulips were how high they stood, I've never seen anything, well I probably seen 'em down at Duke Gardens or someplace like that, but they were about 4 feet tall. She grew those, my father coming up was a hunter, who was my uncle, his name was Jacob, and he was a hunter. So he used to go hunting a lot with men in the neighborhood for our food, for our meat. So he'd come back with rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, I don't think we ever ate possum; turtles, whatever. My mom could cook anything. Actually she was a cook by profession so she could cook about anything. A lot of the guys in the neighborhood would come to our house because like I said I was an only child, and she usually worked somewhere where there was a restaurant, so we usually had extra food. So I would help feed some of the guys when they were hungry and things like that. They knew to come to my house, and they were gonna get fed. Course that was the neighborhood, if I was at your house and you lived in the neighborhood your mom would say, "Dillon, do you wanna eat? Well, come on and eat". That's just the way it was according to where you were at the time, at dinner time. Childhood memories, I started playing trombone in the 5th grade, course everyone wanted to play drums, because you could hear William Penn band practicing at the elementary school because it was just across the bridge. A day like this they didn't have air conditioning at the school so they would raise the windows so about the time the school was out you could hear the drums from William Penn practicing. So everybody wanted to play drums. My band director Mr. J.Y. Bell tested me out and I didn't have the dexterity to do that. So he ended up testing me with mouthpieces and I ended up starting on trumpet, but that didn't work out, ended up playing trombone for the next 7 years. From 5th grade through 12th grade.

Dillon: Did you play in the band?

Hank: Oh yeah, I played in William Penn band. The last year I was captain of the marching band, captain of the trombone section. And so we would battle for 1st seat, 2nd seat during the concert. So I lost 1st seat for concert, which didn't matter to me because I'd rather be in the marching band. I had 2nd seat in the concert band. So what he would do is battle and make us play different pieces and stuff to see who gets what seat order. I guess we probably had about 8 or 9 trombone players. I think that last year of the band we had maybe 120, 125 members in the band, something like that. That was the pride, you're talking about. That band was well known, I've seen some documents online that Paul put out about them not being able to travel to different locations, they were invited even as far as the rose bowl, which I didn't know about. But anyway, when we would see the band marching, and the band would practice in the neighborhood, they would march on the field and then through the neighborhood by Daniel Brooks housing projects and down on the hill and so forth, that neighborhood. And when they actually marched in the parade they had black pants on and sweatshirt, white sweatshirt, and then I think about my, maybe 6th or 7th grade year, they got uniforms. And when they got uniforms it was the prettiest, most beautiful... Julius Clark has a uniform over there at his Rosetta Baldwin Center. So it was like academy award night, therefore I knew then that OK I don't have to wear them sweatshirts and black pants; I would have a uniform as long as I stay in this band. When you would walk through that neighborhood to go to a parade, I mean you would have kids coming up to you and they would want to touch it and everything. Smaller kids, I mean it was like, believe it or not like the Dream Team. You were like a celebrity if you were in Penn's band and it was a lot of pride to walk through the neighborhood to the school. We would even walk during the concert. When we did a concert we had tux on and bow ties, but we'd walk. So our parents had cars and they would offer to take us but we said "Nah, well walk," 'cause my partner that played the trombone with me lived on the next street and we'd walk up there together. So we'd walked because just to show off. They would be like, "Where you all going? It ain't prom time." We'd actually have our instruments in our hand, we'd actually be carrying the trombone, so they would know what we were doing. So that was the pride that that and had, and it had a reputation all over the state as one of the best marching bands in the state. So those are some of the childhood memories there.

Dillon: So lets move on to William Penn. What's some of your favorite memories at William Penn?

Hank: Well, first of all just getting there. And when we started it was 10th grade. My older sister, that was my older sibling, she started in the 6th or 7th grade. But, like I said it was 10th grade for us. I was very excited. I participated in basketball. I played on the JV basketball team. I went out for track, but the coach wanted me to do the shot-put, so I said "No." Coach Atkinson wanted me to do shot-put. I said, "Nahh." I took that thing home a few days, and practiced in the backyard, and my shoulder was hurting, so I dropped that. So, I stuck with basketball, the first year.

Dillon: And you said Coach Atkinson—he did track as well?

Hank: Yea he was the track coach. He coached football and track. We didn't have any other teams. It was mainly just football and track. But, first year, it was very exciting. Probably the most exciting thing about the first year was the band, you know, because you had these juniors and seniors, and you'd take trips, and you at another level. We did the same thing in middle school, but now you in high school at William Penn, so it makes it a lot more exciting. I can remember a parade. My brother, who was a classmate, we were both 10th graders, he was the drum major, and he later became my brother-in-law. We were in a parade in Salisbury, and Salisbury was known for the Klan, and we had just marched in a parade in Spencer, which is right next to Salisbury. We got out the bus, went about three blocks, and started marching in Salisbury, which was a night parade. This was my first experience at a night parade, you know, Christmas lights and everything. So, it was very, very beautiful. And we had something that we called a "snake walk." And what it was at the end of the parade, we would stop, the whole band would stop. So you might have 12-15 rows of instruments, and the drums always in the middle. So, what would happen, the drums would come out in a straight line, and they would come out, and they would just stand and play, and then the rest of the band, like us with the trombones, since we were in the front, we would follow. And then what we would do is just keep walking. Now, the drums would be constantly playing, but it's at the end of the parade, so it would look like a snake. And, when we got to the end of the parade, this was the first time we were trying this, and my brother-in-law held the baton up, stopped the band, and the state trooper came up to him. And he said, "Move this band!" [laughter] Now, here he is, a sophomore, you got juniors and seniors ahead in the band. So the drums [are] already coming. I'm on the front row of trombone, so I can hear everything going on, and the state trooper told him, "I said move this band!" At this time, the drums were getting close, and he used some words, some few choice words, "move this G D band! I said move this-" And 'bout that time the drums, the bass drummers, they were what we call whuppin', and that's when they'd cross over like that, and when they went by his head [laughter], and then the basses, the big sousaphones, were coming behind, they were like this, and they were just missing him, and he just finally stepped back and just moved back, and let us do what we were gonna do. I'll never forget that, that was very funny. I still pick up my ex-, he's my ex-brother-in-law now, and I say, "I bet you were just about to mess your pants." The band, and the traveling, traveling for the basketball team, that was very exciting too. Going places that I had only heard about. You know I was a pretty good basketball player. I started on the JV, so I got a lot of playing time. The next year, I played football. And my basketball coach, Mr. Foree, had told me not to play football because he said, "you know we're gonna have a pretty good basketball team. We're going to need you. You don't need to be getting out there playing no football. Why you playing football?" He didn't know it, but I was actually trying to prove a point to somebody in the neighborhood. We would play neighborhood, sandlot football together, but he said "you won't put on no pads." So I surprised him, and when I did put on pads. And I started out as what we call a scrub. You gotta work your way up 'cause I didn't play the year before. And the last game of the season we were playing Greensboro Dudley, and I had gone from a scrub to a starter, and I got my leg broke in the last game of the season, that Friday night, and basketball practice started that Monday. So what Mr. Foree did, he said "I told you not to go out there." So, what he did, he made me, every home game, he made me keep book. I had a cast from my ankle to my hip. So since

I couldn't play, and at that time, you had to wear that cast for 6-8 weeks, so he would make me keep books just to punish me for playing football. And I guess the worst thing I remember out of that was that the night the great Earl the Pearl Monroe night, cause see my coach went to Winston-Salem State, so he was actually All-American in high school or college, and our varsity team in high school, at that time the colleges had freshman team. So our varsity would play the preliminary game of the college game. We would play the freshman team. So that particular night that Earl Monroe played against Fayetteville State, he hit 68 points, and I didn't make the trip because I had that cast on my leg. I didn't play in the game, and I wasn't playing that whole season. But then all my fellas came back telling me Earl "the Pearl," "Black Magic," "Black Jesus," and what he did. And I "Aw man, I don't wanna hear about that." I wasn't there, this and that. But my senior year came back, and that's when we won the state championship in basketball. We were actually the last all-black 4A state champions. That year, '69 is when integration, total integration went across the state, but we were the last all-black 4A state champions in basketball.

I was also a part of the drama club, I was in drama club. I was in humanities, what we called humanities at the time, some people called it civics. But we were able to take trips, my senior year, we went to Williamsburg, Virginia, and visited colleges up in that area, Richmond, HBCUs, Hampton University, Norfolk State, Virginia Union up in the Virginia area. And then we made a second trip. That trip, I think that trip was on the train. We went to Washington D.C., saw all the landmarks and everything. My biological father actually lived in Washington, so I'll never forget the Sidney Poitier movie, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner was out then, and my class was going to see that, but I went to visit with my father. My teacher allowed me to go visit with my father. I didn't see my biological father, I saw my biological father for the first time when I was 9 and then I saw him again when I was 18, you know, on that trip. So that was kinda special. He and I had a later relationship, after I got out of the military, in my 20s we got a little close. He died, when did he die in '07, '06. But the William Penn memories, we had teachers that were really concerned about us. Our teachers lived in the same neighborhood that we lived in. They shopped the same places that our parents shopped. They were actually like an extension of my parents. They were just much, much closer, more caring than the teachers now. A lot of the teachers now they're just there for a check. I have a mentoring program that I've been working with boys, well this program, for the last 22 years, call BOTS (Brothers Organized To Serve Others). And because of what I have seen in this city, compared to Greensboro and Winston-Salem, in reference to athletes, I started, when I got out of the military, I started coming back, working with the athletes, personally, high school athletes, to try to mentor them. And I was given the privilege to use Carl Chavis YMCA as my facility to help them. I've mentored there, I've coached there, I've actually served on the board there, so you know I did a lot of things at Carl Chavis. And because of what I've seen with the athletes from that time in my 20s to I guess '93, when we formed BOTS, I was 40, for that 20-25 year span. In my organization, I focus on academics and character development, athletics is last because I've seen so many athletes in this city abused. I mean you see this ring here [points to finger] that's Andrews State Championship ring. It was 22-23 years before they won a state championship a couple of years ago. And when they won that championship, my

son and I were mentoring their players. So, I'm not taking credit for that, but I will take some. [laughter] Because the team that, the first year we started mentoring, they actually had, talent-wise, a better team, but they weren't united, they didn't play together. The team the year that they did win, those juniors that had become seniors, they learned different character traits that they needed to display and stuff, and they ended up winning the championship. But, I had just always been disheartened, because like I said, me being an athlete and all my ten brothers after me came to be athletes. They played at Ragsdale, mostly played football. Most of the people in this area know them for football, their last names is Adams. Two of them made it to the pros. One made it to the, at that time, Los Angeles Raiders, his name was Stefon Adams, and my other brother, Calvin Adams actually played in the CFL. They were playing in both levels of professional at the same time. I had another brother, that everybody thought was going to make it, and he was a high school All-American at Ragsdale. His name was Ricky Adams, he went to NC State. So all my siblings after me, followed in my footsteps, playing either basketball, football, whatever. And I just didn't like the way that the city treated their athletes. In Greensboro and Winston, they were going to Big10 schools, they were going to ACC schools, they were going to college, but here they just used them for athletics and did not prepare them. I still don't like it because it's still happening.

Dillon: What was your typical day like, with your teachers, you could talk about either your typical day at school, or do you remember any specific teachers that really had a larger impact on you?

Hank: I can remember Ms. Jones, Lillian Jones, she was our drama instructor, and I think she was our English teacher as well. She was very hard-nosed. She was a little petite woman, but she was rough. She didn't take no jive. She was small in stature, but she kind of had a heavy voice. On the regular day, I guess Mr. Burford was the principal. Mr. Russell was the dean, mainly boys' dean. He would make sure the halls were clear. Mr. Foree, Mr. Atkinson, they were the coaches, so they would be patrolling the halls. Of course, you didn't skip class. If you skipped class, you left campus. You didn't skip class, you skipped school. So, if you skippin' class, you don't hang around, you left, because somebody's gonna catch you. Of course, I never got involved in that most of the time, people that were skipping, they were having parties and things like that. I didn't drink, smoke, or anything like that, so I just heard about those types of things. So mainly, I just kinda made sure I went to class, did my work. You didn't have a lot of fights. At school, you didn't. Most people really got along pretty well. You know, you had them, but it was sporadic. Not like it is a lot of times now. And then also during that time, especially guys, occasionally girls would fight, but especially guys. Guys would fight, they fought fair, they used their hands. You know, if anybody tried to pick up a brick, stick, anything like that other guys would say nahh, you ain't doing that, you gotta use your hands. And that's the way it was. It was fair, So it wasn't as much like the violence it is now, you know, guns and all that stuff, man. So, the typical day, you know, lunch time, lotta times good weather like this, a lot of people would eat outside. There was an area that was outside, I can't remember, I think we called it "the square," something like that, where you could sit, you didn't necessarily eat over there, but during lunch time, if you didn't wanna eat, you could just go and sit. It was paved. It was sorta like behind the school, but it was in

the area, where, it wasn't closed, but it was away from everybody else, but it was open. That's where people would, during their lunch time, even during the study hall time, you had the choice of staying in your class or teachers would give you the option of going outside to study. So it was a lot of freedom, it was a lot of freedom. I guess the difference now versus then, was you had to take gym. Everybody had to take gym. So everybody pretty much stayed fit, the girls and the boys. So a lot of times, in my senior year, Mr. Atkinson would just tell me to take the class, and especially if they were playing basketball, or football, or softball, whatever, he'd say, he'd call me Henry, he'd say, "Henry, you're responsible for the class today." He was responsible for me and my brother-in-law I was telling you about that was the band drum major. He was responsible for us at the age of 16, we got a chance to go to Black Mountain, for a Fellowship of Christian Athletes camp. We were the only representatives from the school that went. We got up there and it was a one week camp. And we got up there and it was probably 500 athletes up there, and we got a chance to see professional athletes, some of my heroes, Green Bay Packers Carroll Dale, Bart Starr. We got a chance to see professional basketball players, football players that came through. And so that was a very eye-opening experience to see other athletes from, 'cause it was athletes from all over the Southeast, it wasn't just North Carolina. So you might think you're pretty good, but then you'd get a chance to see the cream of the crop. [laughs] It was very interesting. It was my first interaction with white athletes. It was actually the first time I really understood that they were just like I was. As the old saying goes, they put on their pants one leg at a time too. And I also, realized, 'cause we had sort of a stereotypical thing that white guys can't jump, they can't play, they can only shoot free throws, and then we saw different. At 16, it was a real eye-opening experience. At 13, my father actually drove, in the middle of the civil rights movement, actually 1964, not '66, my father drove from High Point to Compton, California, across the country. So I read the map for him, and that's a whole different book right there in itself, to drive across country, can't stay in a hotel, had to sleep in the car, had to keep moving, things like that. At 14, I was exposed to a different world, which a lot of my peers were not exposed to because being able to go to the West Coast, I was able to see, go to Malibu Beach, go to Rose Bowl, Hollywood Bowl. I mean all these places people would see on TV, I actually went there. My brother-in-law actually made sure that we went to all of those spots. My sister has a picture of me standing on the turf in the Rose Bowl at 14. I went to Malibu beach, I saw the blondest ladies, fine young ladies, with the darkest men, walking on Malibu Beach. So we were riding bicycles around High Point, well three blocks from where my sister lived, the Honda motorcycle factory was, 'cause Honda made motorcycles before they made cars. So, three blocks from where my sister lived in the '60s, they had--we had-- we were teenagers 14, 15, riding around on bicycles, out there they were riding around what we call mopeds. They were actually riding motorcycles. They wasn't the big ones, but they were small motorcycles, 13, 14 years old. You didn't see no bicycles. They was riding motorcycles at 14. So it was a whole different world than I was exposed to. When I came back, I guess I told my father later on as an adult that I really didn't appreciate and didn't understand what that trip meant to me at that age because later on in life, really nothing scared me about traveling, no matter where I was. You know, okay, you gotta go here, you gotta go there, OK, no problem, give me a map, I'm following you, let/s go. Seeing the country, like I did, Chattanooga Lookout Mountain, and then you get across and then

you get to Oklahoma, and then you get to the Painted Desert in Arizona, New Mexico, stuff like that. One of the most beautiful sunsets I can ever remember was looking out of the back window in Albuquerque, New Mexico, coming back home and seeing the sun on the mountains and stuff. I mean those things at 14, most black people didn't get a chance to see. And I got a chance to also see some good white folk. Because we were traveling through the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas and stuff, and we couldn't stop, so we had to keep moving. We actually stopped at like a movie set would be one of them spooky restaurants. Guy came out, we had to get gas, it was about 12, 1 in the morning. He came out with one of them hillbilly beards, hillbilly hat, and coveralls. "What can I do for ya today?" My dad said. "Fill it up." So, he told us to stay in the car. When I say us, it was my mom, my sister, and her two little boys. So we sat in the car, he went in, he came back out, he said, "They want us to come in." and he said, "c'mon." So I was wondering why we were going in. So when we went in, maybe 10-12 people in there, everybody white, and they says, "make yourself at home!" They brought us food, fed us, and from my understanding, my dad told me later, he said they didn't even charge him. This is in the middle of the night, in the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas, and we got in the car, kept driving until daylight. Still in the mountains, my sister almost ran off the mountain. She just ran off the road. The car, you could feel the car going off the road. My dad was always sitting in the front when she was driving. He reached over and snatched the wheel back on the road, snatched the car back on the road, and he said, "well you won't be driving no more until we hit the desert." Cause we were about probably 1200-1500 feet up in the air on the mountain. Sure enough, she didn't drive again until we hit Texas, New Mexico, where obviously if you went off the road you're just rolling into the sand. So that was very interesting as a child, young boy.

Dillon: So how did you feel, you said you were exposed to white people at an early age, how was the feel, in High Point, maybe from everyone else's perspective between whites and blacks?

Hank: It was pretty tense. Pretty tense. Even in my neighborhood, the only two white people that I remember that could come through our neighborhood was the insurance man and what we called the Rawleigh man. The Rawleigh man was the guy that sold home remedies, your liniment, your different home remedies that the drug store didn't sell. It was a company called Rawleigh I think it was, so we called him the Rawleigh man. You didn't bother them, though. But, after dark, you didn't see whites in our community. We didn't go into white communities. That's just the way it was. I think I can remember one of the worse whuppings I got, me and one of my friends, we had hedges in front of our house, and we were crazy enough to throw rocks at the Rawleigh man's car as he went by, and we didn't have sense enough to know that all he had to do was just say, "okay well it was in this area, right here." So, we went in the house, and man, me, I could hear him getting a whoopin' and I was getting a whoopin' for both of us throwing rocks at his car. You didn't touch it. You didn't bother the Rawleigh man's car, and the insurance man's car. And when you went downtown, I can understand now why, when my parents left me home while they would go shopping. Sometimes they would take us downtown, but the thing was you had the white and the black water fountains, you had the white and the black bathrooms. I didn't mention this earlier, as a child, even before I

went to California, my sister actually took me out there when I was 5. I can remember I rode out there on the train. I can remember New Orleans at Christmas time, and I can remember getting lost on the train, but I didn't get too far because they had segregated cars. But you had to get up and go to the bathroom. I got up and went to the bathroom during the middle of the night, and came back and sat with the wrong person. And so my sister was looking for me all over that car in the middle of the night. Finally, she found me and I was sitting with the wrong person. Those were just examples of how segregation, it can also benefit you, if it hadn't been integrated, I could've gone to another car, I could've been anywhere on that train. Well because of segregation, we were segregated with one or two cars. All the blacks had to be on one or two cars, even going that far. But, in reference to your question, I did not see a lot of, most of the violence that I saw between the races was during the civil rights movement on TV. That's what'd you see. You'd hear about stuff. You'd hear about guys, especially guys from the South Side, they may venture down too far south toward Trinity, that being the town, and they would get jumped, or whatever like that. Then you hear about white guys in black neighborhoods getting jumped and stuff. But most of the time I didn't see a lot of racial in the whole tension. I didn't see that. Actually, when I was 16, and I moved. We moved into a house that was closer to the Five Points area. Moved into my parents, their first home, only home. There was a guy across the street, this white guy, I can't remember his name, but he would be out in the yard, and so he was an older gentleman. So I sorta made friends with him, I'd go over there and do certain things for him, helped him in the yard, he'd give me \$5, \$10, whatever. So he invited me in the house one day, and we sat down and talked. And I can remember he had a sword, a long sword, And I can't remember whether it was a sword had captured in World War II or World War I, 'cause he was real old, he might have been in World War I. But we talked and he became a real good friend. I was 16, 17 then, still in high school, and he was actually the one that kind of broke the ice for me to be comfortable talking to a white person because even up to that point, I mean, I really wasn't comfortable, like a lot of others because we didn't interact. Only interaction you had was business transactions and we wasn't doing business- parents were. That was kinda the way it was. It was kinda like that old saying about, you know, you know your place, so just stay in your place. So like I said, most of the violence I saw was on TV.

Dillon: You were the last graduating class, so for the desegregation process, what was it like for the kids who knew that they weren't going to graduate from William Penn?

Hank: Oh wow! Wooo! Tears! Tears! I mean I've still got friends now who bring that up, and they get very emotional now. It's like Christmas being taken away. I guess that's probably the best comparison I can do. I mean literally, especially those 9th graders that were at Griffin Middle School. They knew they were getting ready to come to Penn, and then all of a sudden you hear it's going to be closing. It was all over for even for those, not only at Griffin, but at Ferndale, was the South Side. You had a few people at Ferndale, it wasn't that many because it still hadn't integrated a whole lot. So, you had a few people, a few blacks that had gone to Ferndale that would be coming to Penn. But most of them, 95-97-8% was going to Griffin, and they just looked forward to it, especially those in the band. That hurt those guys in the band because that band was just,

just... I don't know, you've probably heard this before, but the band would be at the end of the parade. They would put the band at the end of the parade, right before Santa Claus. They would put us at the end of the parade because they knew that all the black people would stay for the parade until Penn band got down Main Street. Whenever we marched from one end of Main Street to the other, people would just flow with us as we marched. So, the last year they thought they were smart, my last year, and the last year for Penn, they put us in the front of the parade. People still did the same thing. They followed us the whole parade and went home. [Laughter] After they saw us they went home. That- it hurt those underclassmen, who were not going to get the opportunity to come to William Penn. They were just devastated. And then with us winning the state championship that year before, a lot of the athletes that would've come up, they were kinda devastated as well. For those that ended up, the majority of those students that would've gone to Penn, most of them went to High Point Andrews. And that's why I decided to, two or three years ago, I and my son decided to give back. I said well, "this is my school. They closed William Penn to open Andrews." So I started doing volunteer work over there.

Dillon: What would you say would be the lasting identity of William Penn?

Hank: (Pause) A number of things. A number of things. I guess, it's according to each individual's experience there. Some people would say the band, some people would say just like when I said I was in the Class of '68. Most people would say, okay that's the last class, or "Well, y'all were state champs!" Things like that. But also, when you talk to my sister, people like my sister, who is probably close to 80, when I talk to her, it was about the academics because you had people like Bob Brown, who worked with Nixon's cabinet. Even my class, the year before, Dr. Gerald Truesdale was one of the top plastic surgeons in the state, right over in Greensboro. Gerald was a super-- he could've been a prolific jazz trumpet player. He and Wynton Marsalis are close friends right now because Gerald, his hands were so good with that trumpet, and-- So a lot of people, you know, the academia. We've got a lot of professors, people that actually helped to- I think one of the Yokelys helped to design one of the suits for NASA for the astronauts. I think it was Ronald Yokely, might have been Clarence. I know Ronald graduated from William Penn.

Dillon: One of the sons of Clarence Yokely, the principal at Griffin?

Hank: Yea, and one of his sons actually worked for NASA, he recently passed maybe 3 or 4 years ago, and he helped train the astronauts. So you have a lot of academia that came from that school that's not recognized because they didn't come back here. They left and they stayed gone. So, what I guess the legacy would be that it was just THE school for African-Americans in this city, that produced all kinds of contributors to society in every aspect. Guess that's the best way I can put it.

Dillon: That's, like you said, they had an incredible impact on the people who went on- What do you think the closing of the school was the impact on the Washington Street community?

Hank: That was the knife to the heart. After you get a knife to the heart-- Well, let me say a knife to the belly. Knife to the heart, you probably going to die instantly. Knife to the belly, you going to bleed out. Okay, so it was slow bleeding after that because that was the center of the community. Everything, you know, when you close that school, then you don't have any of that activity going on on Washington Street. So, then everything just started closing down because you don't have the activity up there. And, I don't think necessarily it was actually the closing of the school as much as it was the-- Well, I guess it was because that was the biggest thing in High Point that produced integration. That was the largest thing. Then at that time, then the blacks realized they could start going to City Lake, to High Point City Lake to swim and to utilize the facility, so then Washington Terrace started declining. Your restaurants, you can go to K&W now, and you can go in the front door instead of the back door. K&W was the number one restaurant, I think, at that time. So we, when I say we, our generation, and our parents started taking advantage of those things because it was like Christmas, it was new. You know, so I'm going to go try this, I'm going to go try that. And so we took business away from Washington Street, and it really hurt the whole economy of Washington Street. Therefore, the decline of that whole street and the theaters, 'cause up until that time you had the Rich Theater up there, where we could go anytime, and now, all of a sudden, you can go to Paramount Center and you can sit anywhere you want to. So, people wanted to experience that. Can't blame them. But it really hurt the business community. Probably the only thing that kept thriving was Dr. Tillman, because he was pretty much our only doctor for the whole black community. So, you still had to go there, still that was like this distrust going to other doctors. So Dr. Tillman and Dr. Perry, he was the dentist. You know, people kept supporting them, the restaurants, the theaters, other things, pharmacists. You had stores up there, little convenient stores, so people stop going to them because they started popping up in your neighborhoods. We always had neighborhood stores too, but there were the restaurants mostly owned on Washington Street that you could go and get sit-down in restaurants. So the black restaurants really lost out.

Dillon: Do you experience any bitterness or sadness about this experience?

Hank: Mixed feelings, because my organization, my mentoring organization is in High Point and Greensboro, and I worked for 30 years in Greensboro with the postal service, so I have to deal with a lot of Dudley students, alumni, and Dudley is still there. Dudley is still a predominantly black school. I still have friends in Winston-Salem, Carver High school. Carver High School is still predominantly black. Those were our arch rivals, Carver, Dudley, Atkins, those were pretty much the rival schools for us, William Penn. I don't, like I say, integration brought some good things, but to the economy, the African-American economy here it was devastating.

So, I mean as far as bitter? No, No. I'm not bitter because just like right here, the way I'm sitting here at High Point University here, a lot of people that's bitter about a lot of things happening here, and the growth, and how it's taken over the African-American community, a lot of homes and people. But, that's progress. That's life. I'm pretty sure, see the difference is, like I told somebody a couple of days ago, I'm sure that A&T did

the same thing. I'm sure that UNCG did the same thing. Chapel Hill, you know, I don't care what major university that you have, it didn't start out as big as it is now. So, they had to expand, and so, you know, you can't have it both ways. So High Point University students bring a lot of revenue to this city. They bring more revenue than a lot of the black population, as far as spending. A lot of people, even myself, when you are younger, you know you have a different set of values. But like I said, I'll be 65 tomorrow. I'm not looking to try to get my blood pressure up. So, I'm trying to stay away from stress. So when you get into conversations about, even when I get into conversations about High Point University and they're taking over the city and this and this and this and this. And I know your president personally, I've known him probably 20 years. I know his story. I've been at events where he's spoken. I applaud his successes from whence he came. I don't care whether you black, white, Native American... you know, as much negative as is in this country, it's still the best country to live in. So, a lot of the people that criticize integration, a lot of people that criticize progress, and so forth, a lot of them have not been exposed to different, other environments. So, when you're exposed to other environments, where people are, where true poverty is, where true oppression is, then you realize okay, well it may not be as bad as I think it is. And those things that I'm looking at through these eyes, that I'm so hard on, maybe I need to take another look at that.

So through my life experiences, and see I try to teach this to my young men that I mentor. Now, in our program we've had Native Americans, we've had white young men in our program. But the program is designed for African-American males in order to teach them how to survive in this society. And so that calls for being real, that calls for teaching them how to handle almost all kinds of situations. See the uniqueness of my program BOTSOS is that let's say a young man comes in, OK my great-nephew is in, he's 8 years old, he came in at 6. I expect to keep him 'til he's 18. So it's like raising a child. It's not like a program, 12 month program, 2 year program. No. You stay in here until you become an adult. You come in at 12, I expect to keep you for six years, you know? And it's a year round program, the fact of the matter is, just because you are 12 years old and I instruct you for a year on what certain things I can get into your head for twelve months. Then, you still gotta go 13 to 18, so who's there to advise you then? Life goes on. So my mentoring program is set up to prepare, educate, character development, to let them know their history, as well as American history. World history, yeah you going to learn that and United States history in school, but most African Americans don't get a chance to learn their own history. So that's what we teach them.

But there's a balance there. At one time in my life, when I was 18, 19 years old. I was Stokeley Carmichael Black Power! And I would sit my brothers down on the step and I would preach to them Black Power. But then after I came from the military, and I not only learned but experienced two or three white friends that went to battle for me, that would fight back to back with me, then I had a total different perception. So I had to come back and say, "Look, big brother was wrong. You need to look at this, you need to look at that." During that time, when I came back, my brothers were in school with whites at Ragsdale. So I was telling them you need to make friends, you need to keep your friends. Those are lifelong friends. So you need to make sure the ones that you're going to be lifelong friends with, your teammates whatever, that you need to stay in touch

with them. You know, this and that, so it was a totally different story than when I left. But that was because of a lack of—that was because of this environment and what was going on in the movement. You have to remember in '68 Bobby Kennedy was killed, Martin Luther King was killed, Malcolm X was killed in '64, and in '68, the same year I graduated, it was burn baby burn. I think they said that in '68 it was something like 38 riots in this country, so it was hot, it was tough. And there was a lot of hatred. But you learned how to evolve. Some people never got over that. Some people because of their experiences, still have that hatred. You know, vice versa- white against black, black against white. But it's just according to what your life experiences are. That's what motivates me to keep mentoring our young men because just like what you saw down in Columbia or Charleston, North Myrtle Beach in South Carolina, wherever it was where the policeman shot the guy running away and stuff. But you can't put all policemen in that bag. All cops aren't like that. But when a young person that's 15, 16 years old looks at that, they got a totally different perception for that. And I have to, I'm not that hard on them because I reflect back when I was that age, the things that impressed me. When I was 15, 16 years old, I was looking at Walter Cronkite on Channel 2 and hoses being turned on my people, then I'm mad too. So, it's according to what's being fed. So, no I don't think there's-- I know I don't have any hatred because like I said the military taught me that there is some white guys that covered my back And then I also did a lot of reading while I was in there because I broke my leg again playing football in Korea. That was an order. That wasn't voluntarily, that was an order. My captain ordered to play because it was a sorry team, that's why I wasn't playing with them, but they still...I couldn't not follow a direct order. So I was closed up again in the winter time, so I did a lot of reading. That's when I really got to be somewhat of a black history buff. I read a lot of my history, world history, United States history. You got a lot of black magazines, Jet magazine, Ebony magazine, Black Digest, Black History Digest, all kinds of stuff that was coming out during the early '70s. But like I say that I still feel that even though we have our own problems, I wouldn't wanna live anywhere else.

Dillon: So, I guess this is my last question for you, how does it feel to know that you were the last class at William Penn?

Hank: That's pride. That's the first word that comes out, pride. We like to use the term "we locked the doors." We closed the doors behind us. It's really just pride, a sense of pride that we have. Different people had different experiences. I guess it's sorta like being part of a championship team when the stadium is being torn down. Like Yankee Stadium, I think they tore down Yankee Stadium to build a new one. Candlestick Park in San Francisco, they tore that down now the 49ers are in another place. Boston Garden, you know, those historical sites, to be a part of those memories, those fans that can say they were there for 49ers, Celtics and the Yankees in the old stadium, that's just pride. That's the same way it is with us. I guess the only difference is, the building is still standing, and hopefully it will continue to stand and we can tell the story. It's all wrapped up into one word, Pride. And that was instilled into us from the very time we walked in there. It wasn't taught, it didn't have to be taught, it was just understood, that you don't—I mean, to give you an example, 1976, the bicentennial year, one of my other friends, Mr. Fred Wright, who was an entrepreneur here and myself. Fred was the president of the

board for the Carl Chavis Y. And we were looking at moving the YMCA into that building. And Bob Rule, who was the president of the High Point YMCA board, a white gentleman said, "Well I've got the keys, so we gonna go and walk through the building." And when we walked through the building had been closed '68 to '76, so that's about what? About 8 years? And he was expecting to go in there and see windows broken out, vandals, maybe even staying in there, you know, just torn up stuff. But when he went in there, the building look almost like this [HPU] classroom. I mean whatever the school system, Guilford County School system pulled out, that's what they pulled out, but they left stuff in, and everything was all neat. And he said, "hey, I expected windows to be broken, you know, this and this and this." And so Fred told him before I could even say. He said, "Bob, this is holy ground. I don't care whether you're a wino, drug addict, you don't destroy, you don't do anything to this building. This is holy ground." And that's the way it was perceived in the black community. It would have to be the drunkest drunk to break out windows there because most of them went to school there, or they had their parents went to school there. So that's the way it was in the black community. That ground was considered holy ground. So that's about the...and if it was one word to describe that last class, it was pride. We were proud to represent that last class.

Dillon: So is there anything that you'd like to add? Anything you thought I would ask about that didn't get brought up that you'd like to mention?

Hank: Not really, I mean the coaches, both male and female, we had female mentors, and we had male mentors. The teachers weren't just teachers, they were mentors. Actually, Joe Turner was our chemistry teacher at the time. He was also our football coach. So, a lot of the teachers were coaches at the time as well, so they served a dual role. I guess, probably the main thing was that they always encouraged us always to be on our best behavior and always to do our best. They taught us strength. And like I said through the trips that we took, they gave us exposure. I never thought I would receive a national award, but I received a national award for mentoring from Susan Taylor, who is part of the Essence magazine family. She was actually Essence magazine's senior editor for a number of years and she formed her own mentoring program called National Cares, back in 2006, and Oprah Winfrey gave her a million dollars to start it off, and now we have about 60 sites in the United States, and I was actually her first national mentor of the year.

Dillon: Congratulations!

Hank: So I mean, you know, the thing is, to think that a little guy from a little old town, High Point, North Carolina, single parent, you know, 30 year postal worker, I don't have degrees all over the wall. I went to college, I went to Fayetteville State, I went to Guilford College, I didn't graduate from either one. So, I've got some college behind me. But the thing is, I teach my young men, you can accomplish what you want to accomplish. The thing is to find your passion, and then go after it. That's the thing about it now. There's a difference in a job and finding your passion. When you find your passion, then you'll do that for nothing. You don't even have to be paid for that. You do it because that's what you love. I was fortunate enough to find my passion, which is mentoring. I don't get

involved in politics, I don't get involved in all that stuff on the side. In fact that's what I do at my church, I work with the men and the young men at my church. I enjoy life by giving. So once you find your passion, and that's my goal is to help young men find out what their passions are, and to be able to survive in that area. Like I said, all of that came from the community and it came from William Penn, that those-- the end result was William Penn, you know, elementary, middle, but the end result, they really instilled that pride into us was, the most injection of pride was William Penn. And so that's the way it will always be remembered by us. That we have sort of a standard. We have sort of an unwritten standard to hold up. What I'm finding out a lot about same thing over at Andrews, you know those guys that went in, those first classes in the '60s and 70's. First class was I '68, in the fall of '68. Those guys, they went through a lot, and they have a lot of tradition and pride about Andrews High School as well. That sort of rolled over. It has eroded mainly because the media, and because of a lot of the instructors, a lot of the people, administrators there who don't really know the tradition there. And that bothers me because when you don't know the tradition of an institution, it hurts. It hurts because you don't have that sense of pride. Once again, it goes back to, you're just there for your check. And I tell people all the time now I'm at the age nowhere I can say what I wanna say. I'm still gonna say it in the right way. But if you're not about the success of our young people, then I usually try to stay away from your presence. I'd rather be around people that are positive about our young people rather than putting them down and so forth.

Dillon: Well, thank you so much! This has been an incredible interview. I've learned a lot, you have lived an incredible life, so thank you so much.

Hank: OK, Dillon.