

Interviewee: Julius Clark

Interviewer: Ivory Bridgewater

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Part 1

Ivory Bridgewater: Alright, my name is Ivory Bridgewater, I'm here with High Point University's History Detectives and the William Penn Project, and I'm interviewing Mr. Julius Clark. How you doing today Mr. Clark?

Julius Clark: I'm doing well. I normally say if it's any better I couldn't stand it. I'm doing fine.

IB: I just wanted to have this interview with you just to get to know you a little bit better and to understand your high school experience because that is something to us that we want to dig deeper into and we want to understand. We want to understand high school from a desegregational point, because we haven't experienced that.

JC: High school from a desegregation point. I'll tell you, I think it was an honor and a privilege to attend William Penn. I don't think I would have wanted to have it any other way, because we were fortunate to have teachers that grew up in the community, worshiped with us and was a part of the family. We were a close knit group, and the experience at William Penn and growing up in the community, it was just like having a family reunion almost every day. You saw people that you knew, and people that you didn't know or wasn't familiar with when you got around them, it was just a wonderful experience. The educational aspect of it was knowing that they had your personal interest at heart and they wanted to make sure that you succeeded. I was in the very last class of William Penn, Class of 1968, and very proud of it. I think our class, and I know there's others may differ, but I thought that we had the best class. From that last class we could reach

back and absorb all of the experiences that the other classes had left for us to learn by. Our class turn out to be very gifted because of the experience that we had gained over the years. Also, knowing that our people were from different parts of the city was a good experience, because when we got together we would share what we were going through because during that time trying to maneuver and get through life, in a sense everyday life, dealing with the oppositions that we had and the challenges was very strenuous, but we had one place that we all could gather and that was at Washington Terrace Park. I remember that very well. That was our place where we could sort of let our hair down for those that had hair, and we could just have a good time. At one time we would just gather there and see cars from all over the country for some reason. We would see cars from out of state and they would come to have picnics and we knew that we were very fortunate and we would just sit and wait on the cars and buses to arrive. We had a unique park. It was different from any other parks in the state. We had a park that had a dance floor on top of the building somewhat. It was a cement floor on top of the building with the juke box, but you could stand there and look across 27 acres of land and 27 acres of different activities going on at one time. So it was an experience of just camaraderie, unity, it was just a special time back then. It's nothing like it is today, as I was telling you earlier. We knew one another, or we knew of one another. We knew the families and so therefore we were closer than they are today. I don't see the closeness that we profess to be, even when the seemingly holidays come up, they try to pretend that they are close, but soon as that day is gone so are they. They seem to get away from each other, and I don't think that's good. I think that's probably the reason why we are in the situation we are in today.

IB: Well Mr. Clark can you tell me what about William Penn has stuck with you the most?

JC: Well, first as I said I was in the last class, but one of the things that stuck with me the most was guidance. I had someone always looking out for me. I pretty much came out of the Seventh Day Adventist faith. I came to school and right off the bat they knew I was different, because I didn't come from the same area they came from. I came out of an institution that was a little different, well a lot different. But what I remember most was there was people at William Penn that knew of me, even before I got there, but took me under their wing, and I'm going to mention this one person because she was from the same denomination and that's Mrs. Vertie B. Kendall. She was my biology teacher but she also was my home room teacher. And she would always press upon me that I had to set an example. I didn't like to wear that hat, I just did not like to wear that hat. I told her that I just couldn't do that. She said well you do the right thing and that will be an example enough. Do what you are told to do and that will be an example enough. Just do your work and you will be fine. And there was another woman, Mrs. Morehead she was another inspiration in my life. I could name all the teachers because each one of them had a vested interest in you. and they wanted to make sure you was successful and I was telling you earlier when I came out of Griffin, I only did one year at Griffin, but as you looked out of the window in Griffin and you looking up the hill at William Penn, you had the desire and that drive in you to know that if you could get on top of that hill you knew that you would be successful, and that's what the teachers always encouraged us, that you had to get to William Penn. And we believed that if you could get to William Penn, graduate from William Penn, that alone in itself would be the essence of success and they would make sure that you had the keys and the knowledge to be successful in society. So I attribute a lot of my success to listening to those folks that took an interest in my well-being. And so those were probably one of the most experience things I had, and I remember Mr. J.W. Atkinson, physical ed teacher, I remember one

year I was playing all, intramural baseball, and back then we didn't have those cloths pads for bases. We didn't have that. I managed to hit the ball and I thought I had a home run, well it looked like it was a home run. I took off running around the bases, and I went to slide into home plate, and I remember this because I have the scars on my legs to prove it. I slid in to home and I pulled the skin off of my thigh. And it was a cylinder block buried in the ground and I'll always remember the only thing I could do was call out for my brother, and Mr. Atkinson made sure somebody went to get my brother. I was bleeding but I wasn't that bad off, but it was just the fact I looked and saw my skin laying on top of the cylinder block I knew something was off. That was probably one of the fun parts but when you go to assembly and you listen to the wisdom that came out of Mr. Samuel E. Burford's mouth, and his instructions on life and directions on how to be successful, and then you hear the other teachers come behind him. They had their idea of what success was, all we had to do was follow the plan. When the civil rights part came in, that was something. But it had already happened before, and the biggest part had already happened before we got there, but we watched our community leaders come together, and that's again what we don't have today. The leaders came together and formed a plan on how we could get through this, and I think that non-violence was already here in High Point long before Dr. King came here, non-violence was here. They talk to us, like I said we had the ministerial leaders, because back then most families went to church. So when the ministerial leaders gave you instruction you pretty much followed them. So that was a common sense with us, we knew we had leaders that we could believe in and follow and today we don't have that. There's a lot of people are standing and professing but in what direction are you trying to lead us? We're not going anywhere so therefore the direction is null and void as far as I'm concerned. Again I get people say I complain a lot and I have different views. Somebody told me something at William Penn, she said you

think out of the box, you think different from others, and that's what makes you special. And I never thought of myself as being special, but I think I've been around special people. And so to have learn from them is an honor, and so I just try to tell people I'm just trying do what you told me to do. One of the things they said was when you grow up give back to the community, reach back, pull somebody along, teach them, help the young people. That's all I've been trying to do, my whole life that's all I've been trying to do. And I want to make sure this goes on record because the Rosetta Baldwin African American Museum was created to honor the legacy of Miss Rosetta Baldwin and her family, and other African Americans in High Point have made a contribution to the development of High Point. We're standing on the shoulders of folks here in High Point. I understand the education of Dr. King, W.E.B. DuBois, and Carver, George Washington Carver, I understand all that. But the people that taught it to us and the importance of It is the people I thought we should be reminded of, and remembered, and be taught to our younger people that we are standing on the shoulders of some folks that came through some tormented times. 'Cause Miss Baldwin started her school in 1942, but even prior to that growing up in the 20's, being born in 1902, to live through the Depression and be able to get to the other side of the mountain. You have to understand your history in order understand your strength. I think young people don't understand their strength and ability because they don't know the history. And once you know you history you find your inner strength and you realize the things you can do. When people tell me they can't do, well that's already the line of defeat. There is nothing you can't do if you put your mind and heart in. I will always say that growing up over here with Miss Baldwin, she always preached the biblical aspect of life and you have to have that in order to live in life. Going to school over here, you had to have a switch in order to keep you in line, and she would tell the parents if you don't want me to beat 'em don't leave them here,

cause they going to mind me. She had one bad thing, though- she would tell the parents on you when they come to pick you up if you had been acting up in school. And when the parents came to pick you up she would give the parents the switch to beat you in front of the students and that was the thing that kept a lot of our people in line, because the worst thing that could happen was for you to get a whopping in front of your classmates. .

Part 2

IB: Alright, you can start any time you want to, Mr. Clark

JC: Welcome to the William Penn Room. William Penn was actually closed the 1968 and behind that we decided to create an alumni room to remember those that walked the halls of William Penn and so we were able to get a lot of history. We have the only the original marching band uniforms, and I as I tell people when you see the movie Drumline and you hear Florida A&M William Penn was doing those kind of drills and exercises back in the early 50s and 60s, so we are very proud of William Penn and very proud of those who graduated. I liked to say Miss Baldwin was in the very first class and I was in the very last class 1968. So we're just happy about William Penn and I think anyone who went to William Penn have found memories of such.

IB: Tell me a little bit more about Miss.Baldwin, Mr.Clark

JC: Miss Rosetta.Baldwin attended William Penn. But before it was called William Penn Miss Baldwin attended the High Point Normal and Industrial Institute, and she was in the early class of that. And it changed its name to William Penn in 1923 [it actually was 1927] and Miss Baldwin had already graduated from there and went on to Oakwood College and when Rosetta

Baldwin came back she was one of the first teachers to teach at Leonard Street School which is now the High Point Police Department. And so Miss Baldwin opened up her own school here in this house in 1942 in the living room after the death of her father. And Rosetta Baldwin is probably the only teacher to have ever taught for seventy five years and she received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine in 1996 from Governor Hunt. Rosetta Baldwin lived to the right age of 98. She died November 25, 2000, and four years after her death the city of High Point proclaimed November 29th as Rosetta Baldwin's day, and the Guilford County commissioners unanimously proclaimed November the 29th as Rosetta Baldwin day. She is the only person I know that has a day not only in the city, but also recognized in the county. The flags that flies over this institution here were flown over the Capitol in Washington D.C, the American flag, and the North Carolina state flag was flown over the capital in Raleigh, both on November 29 2010 in honor of Rosetta Baldwin. So Rosetta Baldwin was well thought of not only in the city of High Point but all over North Carolina and throughout. She's had prominent students to go on and graduate and become prominent in society.

IB: Thank you, Mr.Clark, Now Mr.Clark, what would you say made the difference between Willam Penn and all the rest of the schools in this community, at the time you were going to school?

JC: The thing that made the difference probably most was there was a personal interest form the teachers to the students. Not only did they personally care, but they lived in the community with the students and they also attended church with the students so it was more like a family type setting and they were determined to and made sure you got to tools you need to be to be successful. Even though we were handicapped at times with the books that were given to us, they made sure we did not miss anything and we received all we could get to be successful

IB: Thank you Mr. Clark. And one last question. If you had to relive any part of high school what would it be?

JC: 1968, when I received my diploma. I think it was the best year because I think that same year we came out as state champions in basketball. We knew our class was very prominent and very equipped because Mr. Burford allowed us to come out with one great motto and it is one I think most of our alumni live by, and it's deeds, not words, and don't talk about it be about it. And if I think about it, I think that was probably my most fun year, the class of '68.

IB: Thank you, Mr. Clark. This is Ivory Bridgewater with the High Point History Detectives and I've interviewed Mr. Julius Clark today on December 4th, and I just want to say thank you to Mr. Clark for allowing us to record inside in his museum.

JC: Our museum

IB: Our museum, High Point's museum.

JC: It's called the Rosetta Baldwin Historical African American Museum. Indeed, I am honored and privileged to have you here. I hope I have shared something with you that you can share with others to share to others that the African Americans made a vital contribution to High Point as well as to this nation.

IB: Thank you, Mr. Clark.