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INTERVIEWEE: G. Holmes Braddock

INTERVIEWER: Unknown 1 and Unknown 2

TRANSCRIBER: Andrea Benitez

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Unknown1: Okay. We're still here with Mr. Braddock. We are at William H. Turner Technical Arts Senior High School. This is our interview with Mr. G. Holmes Braddock. The next question is what were your perspectives about integrating schools and how were they different from the way things turned out? At the end, what do you-- what did you and school felt you had accomplished?

Braddock: Well, I'm not quite sure. In other words, my perspective-- I thought, obviously, once we started integrating that we would integrate. I never had any doubts that we would succeed. As I kept saying in those days, and I was (an important?) person being chair when it was on television all the time, all the stations, I kept saying that this board was going to abide by the court order. There was never going to be any question about that. Whatever the court said to do that we would do and that the-- there was no way that the board could not abide by the law. In other words, we couldn't expect students to abide by rules and laws and then have us not do the same thing. And I was never challenged by any of the board members, although I know that there were several board members who personally didn't approve of integration, but they never challenged me on anything I said in that regard to me personally, I mean, to my face or did I ever

hear that they ever did to my back. We had taken position-- the board had-- the court had ordered and we were going to follow the court order and that was it. So it came out, probably- as I said earlier- it came out better than I thought it was going to be. That is, we came through with less problems- I should put it like that- than I thought we were going to have compared to what some other places had been going through. I would have preferred it, though, had every school in the county become integrated. I thought that's what we-- we should have had a program. In fact, the board (did agree to?) do that and-- in fact, Eldridge Williams and Don (Bowes?) did come to the board with a plan that would have integrated every school in the county. But the board finally-- one of the board members changed his mind and decided he would be getting a lot of heat and he said he just didn't think that he could go through with it. So rather than being more than the judge had ordered or the court had ordered, but we were going beyond what the court had ordered. I would like to have seen that done, it never was done, and so now it can probably never get done. But at that time, I thought the door was open- that once we were doing things, to do them all at one time, get all the flack at one time, and everything then would be behind us. But that didn't happen. So to that extent, we didn't get what I had hoped we would get and I was disappointed in that, but compared to what could've been, I had to be pleased. Yeah.

Unknown2: Um, well you seem to have knowledge of Hitler. Can you tell me how life was living through a Holocaust?

B: Of course, I really don't know how-- I'll say again, the Holocaust only happened over in Europe and Germany-- well, of course, in Poland and places like that, but the Holocaust didn't happen here. I don't even know that I even-- I didn't even know about it

at that time. Again, I'm (?). The news media was not much in those days, news didn't travel as much. I don't think I had ever even heard of the Holocaust until after-- I mean, during the war because it wasn't a factor here among most people and I'm sure some of the Jewish communities in say, New York and Philadelphia maybe, and maybe a Jewish community here in Miami known about it. But basically, the media didn't -- just didn't cover things like that and then during the war because everyone was shut-off from Germany. So I didn't live-- I lived through that time, but I didn't live through the Holocaust. Now I've been to Yad Vashem in Israel which is in-- is a memorial. I've been through that and it's awful what went on and I've been to the one in Washington, D.C. a couple of times. And if none of you have ever been to either one of those, (certainly?) go to the one in Washington D.C. if you get that chance because you'll see what went on. I mean, things went on here in this country were bad during the-- when we were segregated, but you see pictures over there that the Germans had, they'd line up-- there would be women and children lined up, they had a big trench dug, long trench maybe four or five feet deep. They'd line up all these women and children there, then the firing squad would be back there and you'd see the firing, boom, just seeing these people knocked over in the grave, hundreds of them at a time just knocked-- then guys go and shovel dirt on them, you know. Or see pictures in there, you see pictures of women and children and men, but a lot of women and children marched to the gas chambers there. They're going to into the gas chambers knowing they're going-- not come out alive, they're gonna-- just lines of them, but just Jews only because they were Jews, see, marched in there. Now, I didn't know any of that was going on. I didn't know that until later.

U2: Well, going back to desegregation. What do you feel about the times of Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks?

B: Well obviously, King's non-violent-- non-violent methods or his philosophy was obviously (route to have gone?). And so even though we went through difficult times and it's hard to turn the other cheek because we learned out-- at least Christians learned out of the bible, you know, we're supposed to turn the other cheek and that's literally what King did- Martin Luther King did- turn the other cheek. There's no question in my mind that it got us through the desegregation process a lot easier and that doesn't mean people didn't get killed and some people maimed and some other things, but if you were to compare the numbers against the number it could have been if you would've taken the other approach, (there wouldn't be a?) comparison. So he has to be the one individual, I guess, who'd be given the most credit for our getting through desegregation as well as we did across the country, because that-- that plus the fact that he was a (?). Ralph Abernathy took his place. And I never met King, I met Ralph Abernathy, I met-- had lunch with him at (FIU?) one time. Probably, I'm sure, as a person as dedicated as Martin Luther King was but didn't have that kind of dynamism about him or that-- he was not dynamic like King was, was not (the oracle?) Martin Luther King was; he couldn't move a crowd like King could. And so I think, obviously, this-- I think the Lord picked King. I think King was picked because maybe of those talents he had or maybe the Lord gave him the talents for that purpose. But I often-- always said this too: I think in any situation such as that, I think that there's a person for the times and obviously, Martin Luther King was the person for that time. Those who followed-- (look at?) Andrew Young who was one of his, you know-- King's lieutenant so to speak-- (very dynamic person?) much more so

than Ralph Abernathy was. And I had the privilege of meeting Andrew Young a couple of times, also. So (I said?) I never met Martin Luther King but I met Jesse Jackson on a number of occasions. And then (most all?)-- James Farmer who died here awhile back. I met most of the black leaders except Martin Luther King. But, they all had a different thing to offer but I guess King was special, he could do things others couldn't do.

U1: In the 1980s, were there any problems that had occurred that you are familiar with such as the Arthur McGill riot-- I mean-- I'm sorry, the Arthur McDuffie riot? How did you feel about these issues?

B: Well, of course the schools-- we were kind of indirectly affected (there?) but we were not part of that. In other words, the Arthur McDuffie riot or the Arthur McDuffie situation and the riots that followed were not connected to the school district. Obviously, the school district is part of the community, but the thing that always amazed us was that the schools were left unscathed, basically, in all of that. All of the burnings and things that went on and so forth, the schools were left unscathed which I can't say why, I can have-- guess the reason it might be. (Even though?) the black community that were-- the part of the community that was involved in the rioting and burning buildings down still respected what the schools represented maybe, and that the schools were not part of the things that they felt-- either the (bigoted?) people in some instances probably had been-- I'm assuming some of the (bigoted?) people had not been treating the black community properly maybe, although I know there were some there who hadn't. But the schools were basically left unscathed. They weren't burned down or painted or anything like that. The school-- but we had to close schools for a couple of days but they weren't-- they were not part of it. (Meanwhile I was very pleased?) and so I (said?) we just always felt

that the black community in total respected what the schools meant to the community and that the school system by now is not a (party?) to any of the problems that had caused the McDuffie situation. So we were left out of it because, obviously, it had affected some of our operations for a few days. We couldn't send kids into areas that were, you know, dangerous and so forth so we were-- as I said, we were indirectly affected; the kids couldn't go in there and so forth. And during one of the-- I think it was a separate riot, not the McDuffie, it was probably two or three years later and I was invited to speak in Overtown to the Black Ministerial Association and this is when the riots had been going on. They were still in part during that time, this (went over a?) three day period at a time. And I showed up on Saturday morning and they were surprised I was there and they said, "We felt sure you weren't going to show up because of all the problems." I said, "No, I said I'd be here and I came and nothing happened." And they were pleased that I showed up but they said that if I hadn't of showed up they wouldn't have been surprised nor would they have been, you know, upset about it because they just figured for my own safety I might not have come down. But I came (on?) down to Overtown and I didn't have any problems.

U2: Well, do you have anything else to add such as coming into the new 2000 millennium, about September 11<sup>th</sup>, and President Bush, and the FCAT? Such things like that?

B: You don't want to get-- me to get started on the Bushes'.

[all laugh]

B: 9/11, I really can't-- I say can't comment on it, I can, but I don't know anymore than anybody else does about what caused 9/11. I'm just glad I wasn't there and wasn't--

didn't have family there. That was a horrible incident and obviously I don't know all the reasons. I've read some reports, listen to T.V. and everything. But (that's?) George Bush and I have no (use?) for him. (I get to?) Jeb and have no (use?) for him. But the FCAT to me is-- it's a phony issue. The whole-- both Bush's educational program to me- as far as public education in concerned- is not designed to help public education. It's designed to ultimately help the middle-class-- basically the white middle-class- have the public pay for their private non-public education because this issue of saying oh, you got an 'F' school. What do we call-- (however we determine we've got?) an 'F' school and we're going to give vouchers for some of those kids to get out and go to another school. Well, if a school is not good enough for those ten or twelve that gonna get the voucher, it's not good enough for anybody, then close the school. If everyone in the county heard that Turner Tech (doesn't fit that mold, let say?) that Turner Tech, well let's just say (that I saw the paper that?) Jackson and Edison have had failing grades a couple of years. Now, if you go in there- to me- and tell-- and give some vouchers to some of those kids, whatever the percentage is- ten or fifteen, or twenty-five and thirty kids- and say, "Well, we're going to give you vouchers to go to another school- a private school." To me, you should close the school down. Don't say, "Well, it's alright for the rest of them to be there, but these ten or twelve can go and get another education." If it's not good enough for those ten or twelve or fifteen, it's not good enough for anybody. But they aren't gonna do that, see, because they aren't gonna spend the money because they still need those schools, the schools still need to be there. What they need to be doing is providing the resources that those kids in those schools need and the teachers need so that those schools aren't quote, unquote "'F' schools". Now it takes an awful lot more resources, we know

that. But-- and-- but that's not what they're prepared to do because what that means, that means you gotta raise taxes and they don't want to pay more taxes, they want to cut taxes. And you can't address today's needs with yesterday's dollars, it can't be done. And with the drop-out rate where it is today, the drop-out rate may be as low as it's ever gonna be. That means that you're educating-- you're trying to educate more kids than you ever did before. We said-- I said back in 1940, the drop-out rate was seventy-five percent. In 1960, the drop-out rate was still fifty-nine percent in 1960, which meant over half the kids wouldn't finish-- all of a sudden now you gotta drop out rate- I'm talking about nationwide- now the drop-out rate was seventy-five-- eighty percent is the attendance rate, so the drop-out rate is about twenty, twenty-five percent. That means you're educating about twice as many as you were at one time. They don't know that takes more resources and you can't meet these kinds of needs, you can't get the equipment you need here, you can't furnish your school today like we did when I went to school with a classroom and a wall socket in each wall and that was it. You can't do that today. You got to have-- as you (run into?) all kinds of electronic stuff (?) in the school- the computers and all those things- which means the cost of building a school is a lot more money that it was sixty, seventy years ago, forgetting inflation- obviously, it costs more from inflation. But just the basic structure and all the things that have to go into building costs more, that is a lot more money. Meeting the kinds of needs that kids have today are far greater than they were before. I say this jokingly but it's meant to be-- it's true, it's kind of like maybe Jesus using a parable or something- I don't mean to compare myself to Jesus, you know what I mean? But as a parable, I didn't take (magnet?) training (or physical or any?) technical stuff because I'm not a mechanic, and I don't like it. I



appreciate somebody (who does?). But I used to work on my car a little bit, didn't know much. I had an eight-cylinder motor on my 1936 Ford, but I could open my hood-- (you know?) in those days, one on each side and I could look through there (?) I could look right down through to the ground, I could see anything in a V8 engine. Well, today you raise that hood, you can't even see daylight down there, and you know that, you want-- the whole thing is filled with computer stuff. (?)-- we didn't have air-conditioned cars in those days, see? And so the engine was all you had and you had a little fuel pump, you had your spark plugs, and so forth. But nowadays, my God, you lift that hood, you see all that stuff in there. You can't teach kids to fix a motor of fifty years ago and then them to be able to fix a motor today- that costs more money. But a lot of people don't understand that and the Republicans don't understand it because they are not for public education. And as a quick aside, you might (cut yourself on tape, I don't know?) but to give you an example of (the difference between?) the Republicans and Democrats on public education. For six years- from 1990 to 1996- I was on the board of directors of a national school board association, which is an association of 96,000 school board members across the country and they have a twenty-member board and I was on that board. Each presidential year, our president and our executive director applied to get on the platform committee to (plea?) before the platform committee of both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party to make a thirty-minute presentation on public education (and a lot of people gave before that). Nineteen ninety-two, made our presentation for the Democratic Party platform committee. Republicans wouldn't let us, they said, "Send it to us in writing." In other words, (they weren't interested?) public education, see? So if you think they're gonna do anything with FCAT to help public education, it's a joke. It's a way not

to give enough resources to the kids that need it and it's a way to get those kids out to have the public pay for private education- or non-public education because it could be a parochial school, I guess, for the middle class. And so consequently, the public school system is left with kids who have all the problems, not that they're not as smart as everybody else they've just got all the problems. I was a single-parent child. I mean, there are just tons of single-parent child's out-- children out there and they have more problems as a (rule?), not each individual case. So, I'm not for the FCAT, I don't know if FCAT ever did anything good for us. So, that's my answer on that.

[pause]

U2: What else could be done to improve the equity in the school system?

B: I think you really have to define equity and that's always a big thing because if you (go with?) equity-- if you go by equity meaning each person has the same amount of resources, that won't cut it. And to a lot of people, that's what equity is: make sure every school has the same resources, see? And that's-- and that'll never (cut on?) equity. To me, you have to use unequal resources to meet equal needs. In other words, the schools that need more resources, they have to get more. And I'll give you an example: my kids all had been going to Palmetto, we moved down that area when that was way out in the county, that was not-- it was not the City of Pinecrest then, it was just-- we lived way out in the county- that was 1958. And the kids in those days went on over to Southwest High School- that about fifteen miles away, the closest high school. Palmetto was subsequently built. So my kids, when they got to high school, went to Palmetto. And I'd go to Palmetto High School (and they got?) me to PTA meetings (and they'd always be chewing on me?) because they kept saying, "We pay all these taxes and we don't get-- some of these

things we don't have." And they wanted air-conditioning. Now this was before schools were air-conditioned; Palmetto wasn't air-conditioned. In fact, it was one of the last schools in the county air-conditioned. And I'll never forget one day I (vote?) on a meeting and they said, "Well, how come were paying all these taxes?" And they got some stuff out of the paper, showed us some of the schools over in the-- had to be in the north-side of town was getting air-conditioning, here's Palmetto with no air-conditioning. I said, "First of all, on the priority list you are not very high on the priority list." I said, "There's nothing around here that creates noise." Now you probably all heard Palmetto (sits?) in a very residential area- no business, no airports, no nothing around, no expressways, nothing to create distraction or noise. But I said, "You can go on 95, and you got Edison-- this Edison High School right on 95." But it wasn't there then but you had Biscayne Gardens and right on 95 all the traffic going up and down 95, all those trucks making noise all day. You go to Miami High, Jackson, particularly those two schools, you're right under the airport and the airport has three flight patterns, basically. As soon as the winds come out east which it is most of the time, they got three flight patterns. (Looks like a?) fish hook on a plug where it has-- you have three pronged fish hook on a plug. They take off and go due east. They take off and do a circle around to the north and a circle around to the south. Well, those schools- Miami High, Jackson, all the schools in that part of town- tremendous noise. You can't hear yourself think. And (without?) air-conditioning, every two or three minutes during the day, there's a plane taking off. And so if (Ms. ?) was teaching (there?) about every two or three minutes, she has to stop until the noise that plane goes over because no one can hear. (Time?) she starts (back?) teaching again, three minutes later, another plane goes over. And so you--

first of all, you can't-- it's hard to teach like that. Second of all, hard to get the kids settled down, they keep getting disrupted. So I told the Palmetto parents there's no way that I can vote to have money put to-- you know, to air-condition Palmetto when we got those other kinds of schools that are far higher on the priority list. So to them, that wasn't equity, see? To them, equity would have been if Palmetto should have the same money that the other schools had to do it. So that's why it's (hard?) to define equity. But equity to me is you gotta find out what the needs are in a given school or whatever and then try to balance out the needs with what you have. So, some-- which means some schools won't get more money per child than other schools get because their needs are greater. But to some legislators, equity means you got a thousand (students?) at Turner Tech or a thousand at Palmetto, those two schools get the same amount of money dollar for dollar. Well, that to some people is equity. To me, it's not equity, see? So it's how you define that term.

U1: Do you have any memories of the black motel on Twenty-Seventh Avenue known as 'The Hampton House'?

B: All I knew it was there. I've been by it many times, I have no memories of-- I never was in it or anything so I don't know a thing about it except it was there.

U2: Well, we thank you for your time, Mr. Braddock and-- [chuckles] -- come again.

B: I enjoyed it.

[audience claps]

**END OF INTERVIEW**