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Interview with

LINNIE MCADAMS

December 10, 1987

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Mary Lohr

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Oral History Collection

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Ms. Lohr: This is Mary Lohr interviewing Linnie McAdams for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on December 10, 1987 in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Ms. McAdams in order to obtain her recollections concerning the Denton Christian Women's Interracial Fellowship.

Let's start out with when and where you were born.

Ms. McAdams: Oh, dear (chuckle)! Well, I was born in Dallas, Texas. My birthday is January 28, and I never say what year I was born. I guess if I tell you that I have a child who's thirty, that gives you a range (laughter).

Ms. Lohr: What about your educational background?

Ms. McAdams: Well, actually, when I was born in Dallas back in that "way" year, I was born in the area where right now it's a shopping area--on Northwest Highway--but it was in the country at the time. There was a golf

course across the street, and it was not terribly far from Love Field. We would walk down that far and watch the airplanes come in. We were east of that area. Before you got to Love Field, there was a riding area--kind of a stable--where they had the little horses that pulled the little carts, and they had the little curved tails. Sometimes we'd get to go down and watch the little horses pull the little carriages, too.

But because we were so far out, we were very far from any school. Gosh, I don't really remember how old I was when we moved away from Dallas per se, but there was no opportunity for either I or my two older brothers to go to school there. To the best of my knowledge, there were no provisions for us to ever take a bus into wherever a black school would have been. Of course, discrimination was the situation then, so you couldn't go to a white school.

Then we lived for a little while in Lake Dallas. Again, we were in a rural area. There was no black school anywhere near, so we didn't get to go to school. In later life, I know that blacks who were in Lake Dallas were bused into Denton, for instance, to go to school, but I don't know whether that was going on when we lived there. We didn't know any other black families in Lake Dallas at the time. We didn't live near any of them, so I don't really know what the situation was.

So I didn't actually attend public schools until I

was ten years old, when we moved over into the area near Roanoke, Texas, now near what's called Trophy Club, actually. There was a small black school there because there were a number of black families in the area. It was just a one-room school, and that's when I first went to school. I and my brothers...I can't remember how old my brother is, but there're two of them older than I am; so if I was ten, they must have been, like, twelve and fourteen or something. So that was the first time for any of us to go to school.

Now my mother had taught us to read at least to some degree because when we lived in Lake Dallas, there was a lady who was a schoolteacher who drove by our house, and I guess that she felt badly, realizing that the little black children that she was passing by were obviously not being educated at all. So she talked to my mother about it, and she would bring books from her school and let my mother take those books and read to us. Then she would pick them up and bring more books. So we were at least learning to read. We weren't learning any of the other things one might learn in school, but we were at least learning to read. So that helped a good deal when I did finally go to school, you know, being late and all.

The other thing that was really good for me by virtue of going to school in a one-room school situation was that there were various grades. There were other black kids out there, see, so there were kids in all

different grades--not all of them but in several--so I would hear the people who were in the grades ahead of me do their reciting and whatever. When the teacher worked with them, I heard what they had to say, so I picked up a great deal from that. I can remember that one time when the older kids were spelling, nobody could spell "Santa Claus." I'll always remember that because it was a big thing for me. I spelled "Santa Claus" that day (chuckle) and kind of showed up all the older kids who couldn't spell "Santa Claus." But much of that came from having sat in there and listening to them. So that was good for me, and it helped me to catch up, in a sense, in my grades even though I had not been in school. I advanced and for me it was very fortunate because finally I caught up with where I should have been for my age. My two older brothers never did, and both of them eventually just dropped out of school. I went to school in that little one-room schoolhouse for two years. Then that was done away with because I guess it was not economically feasible.

Then we were transferred to Fort Worth. We lived on the edge of Denton County, but somehow we were given a choice. People there were given a choice on whether we wanted to come to Denton or wanted to go to Fort Worth. People chose to go to Fort Worth, for which I will always be grateful, because the school system was certainly better for black students in Fort Worth than it was here.

For one thing, too, here in Denton there was no bookmobile, and black students didn't go to the library. I did in Fort Worth. We had a bookmobile that came to the school. So while I had learned to like my mother's reading, when I was able to go to school and read for myself, and then when I had all those books in the bookmobile, for me that was just absolutely wonderful, and I loved it all. So that treat of getting the bookmobile and getting to go to the Fort Worth Public Library was really, really marvelous for me. So at the time, I didn't know that it would have been terribly different had the simple choice been to stay in Denton County. I'll always be grateful that we did that.

I finally did, as I said, get caught up with my class and, as a matter of fact, finally graduated as valedictorian of my class when I graduated from high school. So I did rather well, given that I had started out late. But it was partially because I enjoyed school so much because there was so little else for me to do, living in a rural area. I guess I put most of my life into school rather than a social life because there wasn't any of that.

Lohr: You said you went to an all-black school in Fort Worth?

McAdams: Yes, I attended M. L. Kirkpatrick Junior High School because that's what grade I had managed to get to when they transferred us over there. I was in the seventh grade. At that time all the blacks in Fort Worth went to

I. M. Terrell Senior High School. So I went to I. M. Terrell Senior High School, and that's where I graduated from in 1955.

Lohr: Was it a pretty good school?

McAdams: Well, it's kind of hard to know this many years later, but I think so, yes. I felt that I got a relatively good education. It was probably not the best--I would say that--but I think that it was really relatively good. It was certainly far beyond what black students were getting here in Denton County. There was just no question about that, because after I moved here, for instance, I discovered that the students didn't even have access to a library. We in Fort Worth had to learn how to use a card catalogue; we had to be able to go down to the library, look up subject matter, look up authors. We had to write a paper using the library sevices. The students who went to Fred Moore School, the black school here in Denton, did not do that because they simply didn't have access to that sort of thing. So I certainly had an exposure that they didn't have; therefore, we learned some kinds of things that they didn't have. I guess the fact that I was later able to--quite a number of years later--enroll in college and manage to do all right there would say that it certainly wasn't the worst education. So I think it was maybe somewhere in the middle and maybe pretty good for black schools. Milton L. Kirkpatrick Junior High School that I had gone to was an elementary and

junior high, and it was a brand-new school when we went there. In fact, the year that we were transferred over there was the first year that school was in operation. Perhaps that, too, with a new core of teachers and all was good for us.

Lohr: Why couldn't the Fred Moore students go to the library? Did they not have a library in Denton?

McAdams: Well, there was a city library, but it was segregated, and so black students--black people period--just could not go to that library. The library was not desegregated until probably in...well, it was some time in the 1960s when other things were desegregated. At any rate, it was not such a grand thing, I guess, in some ways. I remember my shock when I went to that library for the first time. Once they said the library was going to be open, I just marched myself right down there because I had wanted to go to the library and get books to read. I was so appalled because it was such a dreadful library at the time. It is now, I must say, a beautiful library that I go to all the time, and I thoroughly enjoy our public library right now. But then, there were lots of books in boxes stacked on the floor, books that needed to be rebound. I remember thinking, "Well, no wonder they wouldn't let us in here! I wouldn't let anybody in to see this library, either!" (laughter) The library in Fort Worth had been much better that we had gone to, so that was quite a revelation to me to see a library in

quite that condition.

Lohr: Then the Fort Worth library was not segregated?

McAdams: Well, you see, I can't remember. I just know that we went. I didn't get to go to the library often because I didn't live in Fort Worth. But I know that as students we went, and I don't remember now whether that was through some special thing that the public school students could go or whether just everybody could go to the library. I honestly don't know.

Lohr: When did you move to Denton?

McAdams: In 1957.

Lohr: What was Denton like then?

McAdams: Well, I think Denton in 1957 probably had 20,000 people or something. It was fairly small. But I thought that Denton had wonderful possibilities because it had two universities, and that made it a little bit different. I think there was much more concern about society and what was happening to people exhibited by people here in Denton than you might ordinarily have expected from a city that size, and I think that was because of the universities. So the educational level here was much, much better, which made it nice for black people, because you had, I guess, more of the "liberals" around to try to help make things better. So that made it very pleasant. I came to know a number of people at the university, which made my life a lot more pleasant. It meant that my children, as they grew up, had friends that they could

freely associate with. They grew up in a rather odd kind of situation. In some ways they were segregated in that we lived in a totally segregated area, and it wasn't a lot of mixing between many blacks and whites. But I always had friends who were white, and so they, from the time they were born, associated with other kids who were white. So they kind of went "across the line," and that was still difficult here in Denton because it wasn't that way overall. Some of the blacks kind of thought, "Well, either you're with us, or you're with them," and that made life a little bit difficult for them. I guess someday in the future I'll know--I may never know, really--what impact that actually had on them. I think it was a better experience than living in a totally segregated society by any means.

Lohr: What was southeast Denton like then?

McAdams: Well, southeast Denton was what you traditionally thought it was. Blacks always talk about, "If you go to a town and you want to find where the black part of town is, you cross the railroad tracks, and there you are." In this instance, southeast Denton primarily abutted, and was in the middle of, a triangle of railroad tracks, as a matter of fact. The area was just really surrounded. It was relatively rundown, but at the same time, here and there you'd find a really nice house. Because of segregation, people who had some money and wanted to have something nicer still were restricted to that area to build. So

you would have some nice houses, and in the midst of all that you would have terrible junk, much of which, I must say, was rental property. There were lots of absentee landlords who did not keep up their property. They didn't have to because there was so little housing available to blacks that you had to take whatever there was, so nobody ever had to do anything to it. It just had to be there, and if it had a kind of a roof, somebody would rent it. So it was very, very rundown.

When I first moved here, the Fred Moore School was still an active school all the way from first grade through high school. That concerned me because, having spent so much time in Fort Worth, I saw things a little bit differently than some people who had lived here. For instance, we were taught certain rules and regulations about where you played. You didn't play in the street because that was dangerous. You stayed on the school grounds and things. By the time I lived here, it was just second nature to me. I just thought everybody did that sort of thing. Well, I discovered that Fred Moore School--the facility--was so large that there really wasn't ample ground space for the number of students that were there, so when all of those children were out for either lunch or recess or whatever--when large numbers were out--there was not enough ground for them to play on. So some of the kids actually played in the street; I mean, they literally took a stone or whatever when they

were playing ball, and they would set up a base. There would be two bases in the middle of what is Cross Timbers Street. I was just really appalled at that. I thought, "How could teachers permit these children to do this!" If a car was coming, you'd just stop; you didn't run to the base or whatever. It was like a little pause. Then the car passed on, and you went back out. But, see, it was a residential area, so there weren't a lot of cars, so it didn't happen all the time. But they just played that way. I was concerned because I thought, "You can't have this." First of all, I thought the grounds should be fenced, since it was so easy for the children to get into the streets, for their safety. But there seemed to be no concern about that whatsoever. The whole time that school was there as a full school, that went on.

There was the Fred Moore Park, which is <u>the</u> park in the area. There were a couple of other parks that have been added since then, but that was the black park. It had virtually no facilities in it. Sometime in probably the 1960s, I guess it was, they put tennis courts in, but very soon there were broken bottles and that sort of thing on the courts. For one thing, there was little opportunity for anybody here to learn to play tennis, so there really wasn't a great deal of use for those courts. You must consider that when black students were first going to North Texas and to Texas Woman's University, most of them lived in southeast Denton proper, so they

commuted here to the schools. Some of those students might have used the tennis courts, but the reality of it was that if they were going to play, they'd play out at the school. There was virtually no one to use those tennis courts as tennis courts at that time, so they were pretty soon covered with trash and things like that. The park also kind of shares space with a cemetery. It's like a large area there, and half of it is a cemetery, and the other half is a park.

There was a building in it, when I first moved here, called the Community Center, which was kind of rundown. At least it was a place that young people could go to on, like, Friday night, Saturday night, that sort of thing, and play records or something and, I guess, kind of hang out. That was later destroyed. It was very old even when I was here. It also served several other purposes as a kind of gathering place in the community. Then the black American Legion group built a building in the corner of the park, not far from where the other building had been, and it sort of then took the place of the old building. It wasn't a gathering place for teenagers at night or anything like that, but at least it was still another building where meetings could be held for the community in that area.

But it wasn't much of a park. Later, oh, I guess in the 1970s or late 1960s, when the city started having parks programs, that is, supervised play activity in the

parks, they did have such a program at Fred Moore, also, as well as the other city parks. But it never had a lot of equipment, and it was always kind of trashy.

But then the neighborhood was pretty much rundown. When I first moved here, there was very little in the way of code enforcement. There was lots of trash. In fact, I lived in a house where I just repeatedly reported the fact that next door to me on a lot owned by some person who didn't live in that area at all, he stored trash lumber. Over and over again, I reported that. You couldn't seem to get anything done about this fact, and it caused rats. One day I went to my back door, and there was this huge animal there. At first I thought it was a rabbit, but then upon closer look, it was a gigantic rat. I persisted and even took off from my job and went to court, only to discover that there was not going to be a case. They wouldn't, of course, let you know that sort of thing. You'd just show up, and they'd say, "Well, it's not going to be heard today. He was sick, or he couldn't make it or something." The court never did anything to my knowledge. Finally, the man just moved the lumber and cleared off the lot, which did a lot for us. Of course, it made it look nicer because there was all kind of trash there. He finally cleared that off, and, of course, it also eliminated the rodents.

There was a time period since then when the city

actually did a lot of code enforcement and improved the area a good deal, but then that dropped off. If you go back now, it is as bad now as it has ever been in terms of trash and the dilapidated structures, burned-out structures standing, partially ramshackle things that are just left, and lots that are used just virtually for dumping trash. Nothing is being done about that. It's just kind of there again.

Lohr: Why is that?

McAdams: Well, I think it's just that if you drive, you will discover that southeast Denton is not on your way to anyplace. It's kind of tucked away. You can live in Denton forever and never have occasion to drive in that area because you just don't go through it to go anyplace you might be going. So I think that it's not in anybody's vision except the people who live there on a regular basis. As to the "powers that be," it has just never been a high priority for them to do anything about that. One might say, also, that when they were working very hard and doing code enforcement, when they changed the structure in the city somehow and took the person who was devoting 100 percent of his time to doing that--put that person someplace else--the people who were making the decisions didn't see the change because they never went over there. You might say, "Well, they surely must have known it would happen." But they didn't have to look at it; they didn't see it; it wasn't like a grim

reminder. So just nothing happened.

We've been complaining lately a lot, and the city manager has promised that that is going to change, that they're going to begin once again to vigorously enforce the code enforcement, so we may see things cleaned up a bit more.

It's a mixed area. In some instances the railroad track is still there. Once upon a time, the city took active steps to get the railroad to mow their right-of-way and keep that looking relatively decent during the summer. They have not done that for a number of years, so that looks horrible because the weeds just grow up so high. There're also commercial endeavors over there, industrial-type things, that add to the lack of neighborliness. By virtue of what they are, they have waste materials and other things that do not contribute to livability. Water runoff stands in some places, and it breeds mosquitoes because there's not adequate drainage to take care of it. That's right there on the edge of the neighborhood. So there are a number of things that make it not your perfect place.

There clearly are people who want to change this. It's home and they want to remain in that community to a degree. They deserve to have proper code enforcement; they deserve to have people be required to keep up their property in that section of town just as anyplace else. And we hope to get that accomplished.

I should like to think that the Martin Luther King Center, which is about to be built now, can serve as a focal point because it'll be shiny and new. If the city will do its part in enforcing codes, we can make the rest of the neighborhood look as if it's a part of that center's operation. Of course, if the city won't do that, then you'll have this spanking-new building that will gradually go down in the midst of all the rest of the trash.

Lohr: Well, have the homeowners ever thought about getting together like in an association and trying to do something?

McAdams: Well, in some places they do. There's one area where homes are primarily owner-occupied now, and I understand that they get together a couple times a year; and they have clean-up day, and they just really do a good job. But in the general section, the older section of that area, there's still a lot of rental property--just a lot of it. It's just all mixed in; it's not like there's a section. It's just all mixed in with the owner-occupied houses. So you will see a very nice house, well-taken-care-of, sitting right next to just garbage, because that person who owns that lot does not live there, and they don't care. You know, they may be holding it for something, or it could be a piece of property where the original owner died, and it belongs to heirs that nobody even knows where they are. So it's been virtually

abandoned, and it just sits there. If it has a structure on it, sometimes these structures are falling down, and nothing has been done about those. Other times, if it's supposed to be vacant, it may have junk cars or anything else just sitting there. It may have nothing to do with whoever actually owns the property, but it has been put there since then, and there's no move to make them get it off.

Lohr: Are most of the absentee landlords black or white?

McAdams: I think they're mixed. I have no way of knowing what the percentage might be, but it's some of both, certainly. One time I remember that somebody checked some of the rolls, and some very respectable people with significant sums of money own slum property in southeast Denton. They are people that would surprise you, who live in very nice neighborhoods, themselves, but they own slum property in southeast Denton.

Lohr: One of the people is Trudy Foster that I interviewed. She said she took pictures of these houses, and people in her church, she found out, owned some of them. She made a big poster and put it out in front of the church and said, "Some of our people own these houses." She sort of made a little statement.

McAdams: Well, I really do think she was trying to have people see--visually see--what it is, and people react a bit when they see things. I really think the major problem is location and the fact that it's out of our view.

People just simply don't see it, and so they don't care. I was struck by a friend of mine who works for a newspaper and who's been looking at it. She drove over there, and she was just kind of appalled. But then she drove across Dallas Drive in sort of the same area--she went across Dallas Drive--to the south in a little area over there, and she said to me, "Have you seen that?" I said, "Yes, I have." See, that's not a predominantly black area, but it is a poor area. Once again, there is no code enforcement. It is just literally a dump ground with just junk everywhere. So she was kind of appalled that it was in that area, too. But, again, it's an area that you don't go through on your way anyplace, so you do not see it, and nothing gets done about it. There's a move afoot by the Beautification Committee that I was talking about to clean up our entryways. We want people who come into the city to have a good impression. Well, believe me, if those people had to drive through southeast Denton, or if they drove through another area or two that are just terrible, they'd have an entirely different picture of what our community is.

Lohr: Dallas Drive used to be the main entranceway, but now, I guess, they go down I-35, and so they sort of by-pass most of this area.

McAdams: Well, Dallas Drive is also cleaned up to some degree. It's not what it should be, but it has been cleaned up some. There's some newer buildings in there, and some of

that is really very attractive. So it looks better than it once did. But you just step over a few hundred yards off of Dallas Drive and see what's behind there on either side, and some of that will surprise you.

Lohr: When you moved into that area, was there plumbing and sewage and water?

McAdams: There was in part of it but not all of it. I always had plumbing, but the entire area didn't have it. Some people still had a faucet in the yard, and they got a sewer after I lived here. Not everybody had that at first. I think that there's probably proper sewage and plumbing in all the area now--I think--but it was slow in coming.

Lohr: How did you become involved with the Women's Christian Interracial Fellowship?

McAdams: Well, you see, some of those "liberals" from the university were a part of organizing that group out of their concern that blacks and whites simply get to know each other better because here in Denton the only place that blacks and whites interacted was in jobs--like, if you were somebody's maid or if they worked at a garage or if you were a janitor in their building because blacks didn't have professional jobs in Denton. There were not organizations where you would have mixed for any reason. Blacks were not a part of any elective bodies. You weren't on the school board or the city council. The schools were segregated. There just were no

opportunites to get to know anybody, except you knew your maid or you knew the person who worked in your yard or you knew your yard person or you knew the person who was the janitor in your building or the cook at the university. Those were the people that you saw.

Some women in particular felt that that needed to be changed, and if our children were going to have a different attitude, we needed to start with them while they were young. So they came up with the idea of putting together a group that would just meet basically and purely as social. But out of that came a time when we talked about: "Well, if there are projects that we can work on together, let us by all means do that."

And some very successful things came out of that, one of those being getting the streets in southeast Denton paved. Trudy Foster worked like a little Trojan on getting that task done. In the midst of one of those election fights where you throw out one side and get in another, well, one side got in that decided to pave the streets in southeast Denton. Prior to that time, they'd insisted upon a rather antiquated system whereby you had to have a certain percentage of the people on the street agree to pave it or else you couldn't do it. You could almost never get that number because of that mixture of absentee landlords who would never sign because they didn't care. They didn't have to drive on those streets that were muddy or walk on them like the kids had to walk

to get to school. They didn't care, so you could almost never get that percentage, and you literally couldn't get the streets paved. That was just a major change in the neighborhood, to get the streets paved.

Lohr: Do you remember the first meeting of the women's group?

McAdams: No, I do not. I cannot remember the very first one at all.

Lohr: Do you think you were there?

McAdams: Oh, I'm sure. Yes, I participated in it from its very beginning. I can remember back when there was tutoring of students going on when the schools were first being integrated and before we got to doing much else. But I just don't remember particularly that first meeting. Maybe it's because I was doing some other things and was a bit more involved, so it wasn't quite as startling to me. You know, it wasn't like an earth-shattering moment because many of the people who would have been there would be people I already knew. So that's probably why it doesn't stick with me.

Lohr: But the group started as social?

McAdams: Yes, yes, because they really thought, "If we can get to know each other on some basis other than employer-employee, we can learn to live together, and we can see what the various problems are and work on those without thinking of any particular project at the time." But we wanted to be able to relate in an equal fashion so that we felt comfortable with each other. I think to a large

degree that worked. I think it really was a good thing that we did, and it did a lot to improve relations. It did a lot, I think, to have black people feel that there were people in Denton who cared about them and who were willing to help with whatever the problems were and who clearly did enjoy sitting down talking about things. We talked about our kids in school together and various kinds of problems. We talked about what one did for entertainment. From time to time, then, the children would get together. Parents would invite somebody else's child to accompany them on some trip or something. So there was some just pure socialization there. One didn't have the feeling that anybody was out to get something out of you or that there was no hidden agenda. There was no reason for this except just being friendly and trying to be helpful. I think much of that still carries over.

I think it was that kind of thing that led to the formation of the Denton Christian Preshool, to try to give kids a better chance. It was out of that that people decided to offer tutoring to the black students when the schools abruptly decided that the way to begin desegregation was to simply transfer the high school students out of the high school. Now employers in town had said that the students who graduated from Fred Moore High School had the equivalent of perhaps a seventh grade education, so you can imagine what it did to pick somebody up from there and simply transport them to

Denton High School and expect them to compete on a equal basis. It was horrible! But some of those professors and professors' wives were determined that those students would, in fact, compete, so they tutored and tutored and tutored and tutored. It was all free of charge. Once they started that, then they realized they needed to tutor the kids in the lower grades so that they got a better start, also, to kind of even things out until the point where kids were starting out on an equal basis. So there was a lot of tutoring done for kids from elementary school through junior high and on up to high school during those eary years.

Lohr: Why do you think they decided to desegregate that way?

Adams: Oh, you know, I think probably because it was a fairly small number of blacks here. One of the popular ways of desegregating at the time was called "freedom of choice," which obviously wasn't working and, I think, clearly would not have worked here. The black population was so small that people would have been pretty much, I think, frightened to do much transferring just on your own, and it would have just stayed as it was. Knowing that finally something was going to have to be done, they just decided. Also, clearly the school was ineffective, and everybody knew that. It was not something that was a secret. It was just ignored that it was such a poor school.

One might think that there was some bit of

conscience that said, "It's time to maybe better educate these people," because once things were beginning to be desegregated, there was obviously the talk of employment, that blacks wanted to be employed. It did no good to say that you can go to the movie theater or you can come to a restaurant if you have no money to get there. That was a real problem, was for blacks to be hired in anything other than domestic-type employment for women and janitorial and construction work for men. That's where you worked if you lived here and were not one of the teachers in the school. So an immediate concern was how to do that.

Employers would say, "Well, we have these little tests that we administer to perspective employees and the black students cannot pass the tests." That might've been true because they were being so very poorly educated. I think I'll always...that's hard ever to quite get over and forgive. That was just such a criminal matter to me--what was done to students, in a sense, without their knowledge. They didn't realize that they were being short-changed. They were going through what they thought was high school. They thought they were learning something, and they just didn't know how little they knew and how ill-equipped they were to compete in the real world.

Lohr: Well, they closed Fred Moore School, didn't they?

McAdams: Finally, they did. They transferred out first the high

school, and then later, when they needed to desegregate the rest of the school, they transferred the rest. Again, you see, we're talking about a very small number if you were going to try to desegregate all the schools. There was some talk at the time about making Fred Moore School a middle school and having a kind of middle school system here. But the real bottom line of all that was that no one wanted to ask white parents to send their children into the middle of the black neighborhood. So the school was simply closed, even though at the time that school was structurally newer and better than two or three other schools that were in all-white areas. But that school was shut down, which was kind of a gross waste of taxpayers' money. But, again, it was just a matter of dislocation, and they unwilling to go to that concept and require...you see, the thinking was that if it was a middle school, no one would have to go very long. You'd either go one or two years, and that's all you would go. There was some talk of just having it just a sixth grade, so you would only go one year in the black neighborhood. But finally the decision was not to go at all.

It was a blow to the black community. You couldn't help but know that this is saying, "We will not come to your community--we just simply will not--not even for one year. Unless you decide to go to school by yourself, you can't have a school because we're not going to come over

there."

Lohr: What happened to the building?

McAdams: Well, it's still there. The newest part of it houses a day care center--the Fred Moore Day Care Center. The old part of the building is leased to the Denton State School, I believe. I suppose they still use it for some kind of...they were using it like a workshop for their mentally retarded clients, where they did little kinds of jobs--sheltered workshop-type things. I suppose they're still doing that. Part of it did have storage for the...they had what they called a Fred Moore Clothing Room, where clothing was collected and stored there for distribution to poor people. Then probably some of it is just vacant. But it's all still there.

Lohr: Well, did the women's group eventually take on projects then?

McAdams: Yes, because they worked very hard, as I said, in the street paving project, trying to get all the necessary information and get that done. Then one time we decided that we wanted the neighborhood cleaned up, and so there was a real effort to locate and make a list of really dilapidated places and places that were overly junked, take note of junk cars and that sort of thing and see if we could get the city to haul those away. It wasn't on a continuing basis, so the city did some things, then, for that little while. But it was not continuing at that time. It was at a later time, after we were getting

Community Development Block Grant Funds, I believe, that we really paid a lot more attention--the city did--in terms of doing that for that short period of time. We still get those funds, but the emphasis shifted after that short period when we really went in there and did a lot of work.

But they did do that, and we continued to have the social kinds of things and to talk about at those various meetings what was important and what was bothering you. If there was anything in particular that needed some attention, then there were people who were willing to go forth and do whatever they could about that thing, you know, appear with you or do whatever.

Lohr: Did you mostly meet in people's homes?

McAdams: Either homes or churches. Small groups met in homes. We had a Christmas party that was almost always at a church, where we'd have a dinner and some other kinds of things. Where the crowds were going to be large, we'd meet in some church because some homes just were not quite big enough for us.

Lohr: Did you ever go out as groups to public places during the time when things were desegregating?

McAdams: I think not really real early we didn't--not real early. But you have to realize, too, that when things first desegregated, you still almost never had blacks going to those places when you talk about restaurants. It just kind of didn't happen very much here. Part of that was

probably because of the cost; part of it would have been because there were no great restaurants in Denton, anyway. There was no, I guess, great desire to go to your kind of local diner; it wasn't in the scheme of things. So it didn't happen a lot. But after some time passed, then there was a concentrated effort to say, "Let's meet for lunch. Let's find out who can go for lunch so that we can go out as a mixed group and have the public see us dining together and knowing that it is not rubbing off on anybody and nothing terrible is happening to anybody as a result of it." So some of those kinds of luncheon things did take place.

Lohr: Were there ever any problems?

McAdams: Not that I'm aware of. Anytime you were someplace, there might be somebody who was a bit rude or who didn't give quite the best service, but that might happen to you by yourself, too. But there were no real incidents, that I'm aware of, in doing that.

Lohr: You weren't thrown out or anything?

McAdams: No, never anything like that. The only time...and that wasn't violent or anything. Back before things were desegregated, students from the university tried to go to the movie theater. They used to go and stand in up there for a while, and the newspaper never, ever printed anything about that. You would only have known about it by virtue of hearing it from some of the professors. Also, there were a couple of professors who were told

they would not be welcomed back as a result of their support of those students in their stand-in at the movie theater. They would just stand in line, and when they'd get there, they wouldn't be sold a ticket. Then they would get in line again. That went on for a while, but it was never reported. Finally, it stopped and it didn't desegregate the theater at that time.

Lohr: Where did black people go to the movies?

McAdams: Well, for a while, you could go and sit in the balcony of the theater. Then when you couldn't do that anymore, you could go to the drive-in theater and sit on the back row. I always like to tell people...first of all, you realize that everybody is in a car at the drive-in, and mostly you don't know who's in the car on the sides or front or back of you, and you don't care, either. But in the days of segregation, it was very important that we segregated these things, so the last two rows of the drive-in theater were reserved for blacks. You could go and park your car on the back row.

Lohr: That's a new one. I've never heard that before.

McAdams: Oh, yes, I went to the drive-in theater and parked. I think it was Rows 14 and 15. I know it was the last two rows. But the other really funny thing about that was that, you know, at the drive-in theater, you would get out of your car and go up to the snack bar--there was a snack bar--and you would buy your refreshments. Well, because we were black, we were not permitted to go to the

snack bar. But one, of course, didn't want to pass up the possibilites of those purchases, so they had a little person who would get in the truck or the car and come around on the back rows and take your order, and then they would bring you your food, which was obviously much better than having to get out and go get it (laughter). But we got delivery.

Lohr: Did they just do that in Denton or other places?

McAdams: I don't really know that. I don't think I ever went to a drive-in outside of Denton during those days, so I don't know. But that's the way it was done here.

Lohr: That would be a good thing to research. Do you know whether or not any of the other black women were suspicious about the motives of the group at first?

McAdams: Oh, I would suspect that they definitely were at first. But I really think it was such a good group of people, and it was so clear after a while that there were not other motives, that even the most suspicious person would finally have realized that it was not organized for ulterior motives. Finally, the whole thing kind of died, I think, for lack of pressing interests. As time went on, you didn't need the group as much as you'd needed it at first. But I certainly think that initially there would have been suspicion; there probably was some uneasiness on both sides. But that clearly went away, and there was, I think, a real realization that it was an effort by well-meaning people to do something

constructive. I just think it's something that we'll always remember as being a wonderful thing that happened out of just the goodness of people's hearts here.

It went a long way toward making things easier and having us understand each other better. No matter what somebody did to you and how ugly somebody might be, you always knew that there was this group of people--a significant group of people, not just one or two, not the lady that I worked for, but some people that I never worked for, just some people that I'd had dinner with, whose back yard we had swimming parties in--there were those people who treated me like anybody else. That does a lot, I think, to say to somebody who is being ugly that "that's your opinion, and you're just wrong because there are these other people that don't treat me this way. They're respectable, working people, professionals, and if they think I'm all right, then I don't have to worry too much about what your opinion is."

Lohr: Were people treated very badly in Denton?

McAdams: Well, I guess it was much like anyplace else, you know, with the separate water fountains and that sort of thing. I remember that in the...I guess it was in the late 1950s that one of the major problems we had was what to do with your laundry if you did not have laundry facilities in your house, which I didn't. So we came up with the nifty idea of "well, there are those laundromats out there, so why don't I just go to one of them? After all, I'll just

walk in there and put my laundry in and put the money in the machine and see what happens." Well, several of us did that for a while. We had small children, and we needed to be able to do our laundry. It was just an impossible situation. But then shortly thereafter, we showed up at the laundry, and around town they had put "Whites Only"--little signs--on the doors of the laundromats so you could no logner do your laundry there. Then our only option, if we couldn't do our own laundry, was to...there was a place on McKinney street or near McKinney street or something, I remember, that you could take your clothes, and this person would do your laundry for you for a price. It was a little bit more than taking it to the laundromat yourself, but it was also less than taking it to the dry cleaners and having them do it for you, which you couldn't afford to do.

But there were difficulties. You went to the stores, and the clerks would wait on all the whites. You'd stand there, and somebody would walk up after you were there, and they still got waited on while you stood. You just simply were not treated very kindly. You were always second, and you felt that very definitely. While there were not any kind of violent things done, you were definitely "kept in your place." There's no question about that.

And you were mostly invisible. You didn't appear in the newspaper. You weren't on anything, you know, boards

and that sort of thing. You were just invisible.

Lohr: What about the teachers when Fred Moore School closed? What happened to them?

McAdams: Well, it varied. Some of them were transfered to the other schools. I guess some people probably retired, and probably some just lost jobs because there wasn't a place for them. The most notable probably was the high school principal. Several things had gone on about him. The community had some question about his morality. He was married, but he was accused of having fathered a child by a teacher. Back in those days, when you got pregnant, you had to stop teaching because we couldn't have the little children know where babies came from, of course. So they sent teachers home immediately. But this teacher, unlike all the other teachers, taught until May and then delivered her baby in, I think, maybe August. At any rate it was that summer, which was just unheard of; you just didn't do that. All the rumors through the community were that that was his child. The female teacher, by the way, was unmarried, you see. Well, she moved away from here then.

Then there was another young woman who had graduated from that high school and had gone off to college, and rumor had it that she had always been told that when she graduated, she had a job if she wanted it. So the person who had had a particular position at that school and who had been there for a number of years was suddenly fired,

and this young woman, who had just graduated from college, took her place. She lasted exactly one year before she, too, was pregnant and unmarried. So once again, the rumors were rampant that the principal had been up to things. Then there was another young woman whose father had said that the principal had made passes at his daughter.

All this finally culminated in a group of people in the community going to the school board and asking them to remove the man, feeling that he was simply unfit to be a principal. This one man said, "I just really don't want his hands on my daughter. I want to protect my child." The school board, of course, gave him a vote of confindence because, after all, they were all blacks that he was doing whatever it was that he was being accused of doing.

But this same man that they had just given a vote of confidence to a short time before, when the schools were closed over there and he was no longer principal of a high school, they put him in some kind of administrative position. The only thing that I really know that the man did--and I do know that he did it; this is not rumor; I know that he did this--is that he was the person who was in charge of searching through the old files for school records for people who didn't have birth certificates and were looking for proof of their age. Now what he did beyond that, I don't know, but it hardly struck me as the

appropriate work for someone who had been given a vote of confidence as the principal of a high school. So I think that said something about what the real confidence was. But he was probably the one teacher that people felt most strongly about or the one person associated with the school.

There were some other people who were very good teachers and who moved on to the other school systems and stayed there until they retired. They did really excellent jobs.

Part of the problem at Fred Moore had been not just that the teachers over there were poor, but the materials they had were insufficient. I mentioned that the kids couldn't go to the library. Now you cannot learn about doing research and going to the library if you can't go there. Well, the same was true for some other things. Dealing both with old books, discarded books, in chemistry and not having sufficient chemical and materials to work with are another example. Those kinds of things hampered teachers who were otherwise capable teachers. They simply did not have the materials with which to work to do the job that they could have done. So when they went to other schools, they had the materials, and then they were able to do really quite a good job.

Lohr: So both kinds of schools were under the same school board?

McAdams: Not only was there not a black school board, there was not a black school board member during those times at all. Blacks were totally out of control of their destiny. We had nothing to say about it. It was all dictated to us.

Lohr: Did your children ever go to Fred Moore School?

McAdams: No. When my son was old enough to go to school, I believe the schools were desegregated the year before. I had been very concerned about what I was going to do about him because at that point I was determined that he was not going to that school. Fortunately, the schools were desegregated, so it didn't come up to be a question. He had not been able to go to preschool, which I had wanted him to do, but there was no facility at the time he could go to for preschool. But when my daughter was old enough for kindergarten, the First Presbyterian Church had opened a kindergarten, and I enrolled her there. So she did get to go to kindergarten and then on to...they both went to Robert E. Lee School at the time. But they never did go to Fred Moore--either of them.

Lohr: What about the churches in Denton? Were they desegregated at all?

McAdams: Well, some churches had a black member or two. But that was not done easily, either. When I was first here, I was Methodist, and my Methodist church had a kind of relationship with some of these youth ministers at First Methodist Church. We were doing something with the kids,

and there was quite a lot of controversy at the First Methodist Church and a lot of criticism of that program. At the time it would really be stepped upon and was not popular with the church at all. There were just some determined members so that it went on for a while. I remember one evening when we were out with the two groups of youths, the black kids from Mount Pilgrim Methodist Church and the kids from First Methodist Church, and we went over to a person's house who was a minister in town over in northeast Denton. Later, we were told that there was lots of criticism in the neighborhood about the fact that those black kids had been allowed to be there in that neighborhood.

So that sort of thing went on, and I know that ushers at First Baptist Church were given specific instructions that they were <u>not</u> to permit blacks in that church. One Sunday in particular...there was always this person around who was going to do whatever he or she could to unravel things, so someone brought a black couple. Somebody had come to the church before, I think, and these instructions were given out that they were not supposed to be there. So this person simply brought them in early to church school, went to a church school class in some other part of the building. Then when it was time for worship, when the ushers were stationed at the back to be sure that they didn't get in, they simply brought that person through the back way and came into

the sanctuary from up by the pulpit and just came in and were seated. So they like to talk about how they integrated the church "by the back door." Gradually, the real prohibitions broke down, but most churches in Denton are still predominantly one race or the other. There's very limited mixing in the churches.

Lohr: Why is that?

McAdams: Well, I think that really in this day and time, there's still sufficient segregated feelings or attitudes that come across very clearly. Whites often don't seem to realize that they communicate more than they just say. People say things, and they just don't understand that they create a very negative image about what they're doing. So I think that in society in general--in the workplace, in the retail market, and wherever we're spending a good deal of our day--there is still so much discrimination--tolerance perhaps, but still discrimination--and clear feelings of rejection and superiority on the parts of people that many blacks just feel like "in my off time, on my Sunday or whatever, I want to be someplace that I can be completely comfortable and feel at ease, and I just don't have to worry about dealing with whites who don't like me. I don't want to have to deal with that." You chose to go someplace that you know you can be comfortable, so the pressures are off at least temporarily, and you can escape that.

Very recently...if you know southeast Denton at all,

the American Legion hall is down there at the edge of the park, and that's an area that varies a good deal. There's some good places and bad places and all that down there. The park tends often to be kind of junked up with broken glass and trash and that sort of things. But not long ago, city staff people informed the council that they were going to begin posting vacancy announcements at the American Legion hall. Now the council had said to the hired staff before, "We want an aggressive affirmative action program. We want the city to hire blacks in professional positions." You know, I think to this day it is absolutely appalling that Dallas and Fort Worth both have professional people--any number of them--working for the city and working in any number of other places, and the city of Denton just simply cannot seem to find anybody. There is not a single department head or director in this city that is black--not one. They pretend that they cannot find anybody. I think that is just nonsense. But not very long ago, as a kind of response to this, saying to them, "When they're hired, we want affirmative action, and we want you to seek people and hire," they sent out this announcement that they're going to start posting vacancies down at the American Legion hall. Now they didn't seem to understand why that was terribly insulting. I said, "I don't go by the American Legion hall looking for a job, and nobody that I know is going to go by there to read a job announcement,

for God's sake!" They don't understand, you see, and so when that's the kind of thing you have to deal with five days a week, you really don't want to go to church with those people. You just like to leave them behind for a couple of days and go and deal with somebody who is a little bit more rational and understanding. So I think that really is a big part of why things remain separate.

Lohr: Does the city really make searches for people? Can you verify that they do that and they can't find them? How do they back that up?

McAdams: Well, obviously, they could find them because every other city has them. So if Dallas can find them, if Fort Worth finds them, if Houston finds them, if Austin finds them, there's no reason why we cannot find them.

Lohr: Well, can someone not call them on that?

McAdams: Well, as I said when the most recent city manager was hired, one of the things that was emphasized to him was the need for affirmative action because they just haven't done anything. We've never had a council that was committed enough to it to say, "You will hire one." In the last couple years, they've replaced the fire chief, the police chief, the personnel director, and the director of planning; and they hired a finance director. That's five directors, and not a single one of those people were black. But you can find people in comparable positions in Dallas and Fort Worth. We're talking forty miles away--they're that close--working and graduating

from North Texas and other places every day. But we don't have them.

Lohr: But there's no one to call the city or whoever is responsible for this?

McAdams: Well, the city council are the people who are responsible. So the city says, "Well, we didn't get an applicant, or we didn't get enough, or they weren't the best applicants, and so we don't have one." But, you see, what you have to do is to decide that "I am going to hire somebody black," and you go out and look for them. They don't do that. That's all there is to that.

Lohr: You think they ever will?

McAdams: I'm not sure they will in my lifetime (chuckle), but one hopes that someday maybe. I don't see it happening with the current staff that we have. I do not believe it. Unfortunately, I don't see that kind of commitment down there at this time.

Lohr: Do you think they just don't care or is it more sinister than that?

McAdams: Well, I think anybody who could tell you that if they're posting vacancies in the American Legion, given that situation, they don't understand. Clearly, you wouldn't say that. I'm asking you to hire professional people, and I'm supposed to be impressed by the fact that you're going to post a vacancy announcement down at the American Legion hall. This means that you and I are not communicating very well, and you don't understand what I

mean about hiring blacks. A great deal of it clearly must be ignorance, but I'm at a loss to know how to get beyond it.

Lohr: Didn't you have a job program, speaking of this, in your group?

McAdams: There was a time when we were actively trying to locate people that might have some particular kinds of skills and then try to get them hired someplace. As I said, that kept being the real problem with it. You couldn't get people hired. It was the area where there was the most resistance. Employers really didn't want to hire blacks, I guess, for maybe several reasons. They didn't want to have to deal with their other employees who wouldn't want them. It was just another problem they would have to deal with, so it was better to just ignore the whole thing. So there wasn't a lot of success in that. Even though we tried, it was not one of our more successful things.

Lohr: You were telling me in the last interview about your experiences at Moore Business Forms and the position at the Federal Center. Do you remember that?

McAdams: I had talked to the person who was in charge, who was the regional manager for Moore Business Forms, at the time. I had talked to him when he was one of those people talking about why they couldn't hire blacks, because they couldn't manage their little test. I had said that whatever it was they were doing, I could certainly pass

it if the rest of those people could--just unthinking--because I just found that so unacceptable. Of course, it was a "Mickey Mouse" kind of a little thing that they had to do. So they were kind of stuck: "What do we do with her now? After we said they couldn't pass it, now here she is." I also think that, to his credit, Irv Bailey, who was the person in charge at the time, really did want to go ahead and do something. Sometimes I think it's more trouble than it's worth, and so you just kind of don't get around to doing anything about it. Maybe they were in that posture until they were pressed. So here they were--it was time to put up or shut up. He had talked, and I think he was willing to try it. But at the time, I had a civil service rating of 98.6, which turned out to be good, although I didn't know what it was at the time. That didn't mean anything because I didn't know if it was 98.6 out of 150 or out of 100 or whatever, and I didn't know what other people had. It was only after that I discovered that. But I was a stenographer. I was trained to be a stenographer. I had learned that at Texas Woman's University.

So I applied for a stenographic position down there, not really expecting to get one, but at least you applied for that. I went down there for an interview on three separate occasions, to be made, finally, a file clerk--just a monumentally simple little job. But I finally got it. Everytime they'd call me and tell me I had to talk

to somebody, I would get all dressed and go right down there. I thought, "They are not going to be able to not give me this job based on 'well, we tried to get her in, and she wouldn't come in.'" I don't care what time of the day it was. If they called and said, "Can you come in in the next hour," I was there. So I did, in fact, get hired as a file clerk.

After about six months, though, they decided that they could better use my talents. I was in the Order Department as the file clerk in there, and then they created what they called a junior order checker position. So in a way I was a boon to them. What that did, of course...the Order Department is one of the better paid jobs down there, and so you couldn't very well just put me in there as a black making more money than some of those people in the other departments. So they created the junior order checker position, which then they carried on, I know, for at least a while after I left. I don't know whether they continued it forever or not, because that meant they could bring in other people who were not even black. They could bring in other people and pay them a little less money than they had been paying, and you were doing basically the same work. Just the most complicated cases, perhaps, you didn't get, but you did basically the same work. I worked there for a year.

I think that Irv Bailey and management, once they

decided to hire a black, very definitely said, "We're going to make this work. We're not going to be ugly. It's the law of the land, and we're supposed to hire people equally. She is coming to work here, and you're going to treat her nicely." On the one occasion when I had somebody who kept repeatedly being a bit ugly, and it got worse and worse in what she was doing, I finally thought, "I really need to say something about this so that the manager, the department head, is aware of what's going on." I mentioned it to her, and they took care of that immediately. That just didn't happen.

Lohr: What was it, actually?

McAdams: Well, if she had to come to my desk, she tended to throw things on it and was short and snappy--just really rude. You could see it building. It was obvious. You can think that anybody might have a bad day, but when it happened everytime they came to your desk, you realized it wasn't a bad day. It was because they were coming to your desk. But they told her she couldn't do that, and she didn't do that after that. Mostly, she didn't come to my desk. Somebody else did. But on the occasion when she did, she was nicer. Interestingly enough, you see, that was private enterprise, but I think that that was just simply Mr. Bailey's having decided, "We're going to do it, and we're going to do it right."

When I went to work at the Federal Center, which was a federal installation and should have been in the

forefront of it, they didn't make any such decisions. They had not wanted to hire a black, and they felt pressured into doing it. I had been on the list for a year, but they hired a couple people on the list under me. They had not ever bothered even to interview me. But when they did, they did not try to make things go particularly well. I had a friend who was working there, and we were both members of the same church. Her husband had worked at Moore Business Forms, and I had worked across the hall from him down there, so then it was kind of neat to get transferred out there. Gail was there. So it should have worked out all right.

But after I had been there awhile, one time the boss called me in--and, if you can imagine, this is a federal agency--and he says that somebody had complained that I had sat at their table in the break room without their permission, and that I was not to do that. To this day it's just appalling that somebody in authority would do that to you in that day and time, but that happened to me. I had gone to work out there in 1965, so, see, you're talking about probably 1966 when that happened.

There was absolutely no commitment on their part to actual desegregation. They were doing what they felt like they had to. They had simply broken civil service rules in their hiring practice, and they didn't want to have to account for that. They had had an inquiry on my behalf because a friend who had lived in the same

precinct as I did, Alex Dickie, Jr., worked for Senator Ralph Yarborough at the time, and I had mentioned to Alex that I had been on that list and with that rating. Again, as I said, at the time I was ignorant of what it meant. Alex, I'm sure, drew up the letter under the senator's signature to the Civil Service Commission asking for a report. I was hired immediately after that. I got a carbon of the letter. They just suddenly had a vacancy and immediately hired me.

When they first called me about that job, I said, "No," that I had a full-time job. They offered me a temporary job--ninety-day position--saying that that's the way they hired everybody and if it worked out that then the person could get a permanent position. I said, "No, I have a permanent job, and I will not quit for a ninety-day position--under no circumstances." So then they called back and gave me a permanent position to start with. Everybody is in a sense on trial, that is, if you don't do well, but somebody has to document it that you couldn't do the work or there was some reason to terminate you at that point. On the ninety-day thing, your appointment is up at the end of ninety days, and there has to be another active appointment for you to go on, and there doesn't have to be any reason at all to let you go. So it's very clear that they felt they were very definitely forced into that. So there was just no commitment to it.

There were some nice people out there, no question about that. One of the nicest women I ever worked for was Dorothy Thompson, who worked there and had a military background. I must admit I'm biased against the military, but Dorothy was a wonderful person, and I worked for her for a while. So there were people who were nice, but I think the same kind of mentality was in that man who called me in to tell me I must be careful about sitting down at these tables. I was a citizen of the United States, and I had a right to sit at any one of those tables I wanted to, and it didn't matter whether anybody liked it or not! They could get up and leave. And that's really what the law said. But he had the timidity to call me in and tell me I needed to be careful about that. I think he had the same kind of mentality and lack of understanding as the people who hanged the job descriptions--the job announcements--in the American Legion hall and think you're going to get a professional who goes by the American Legion hall to look at the wall or something to look for a job.

Lohr: What did you say to the man after he did that?

McAdams: Well, I was crushed. I really was just very crushed. As I remember, I simply said to him that I usually went to coffee with this friend of mine and one other person that I worked with, and we just sat at the table. I didn't know who was complaining or what it was about. That was just about all that I knew.

Lohr: You think it was just him, that no one had complained?

McAdams: Oh, I think very definitely that somebody complained. Oh, I think without a doubt they did. But I think that the most appropriate thing would have been for him to tell the complainer what to do. I should never ever have heard it; I should never had known that that happened. But unfortunately I did. So, you see, would I want to go to church with that person on Sunday if I have to live with those kind of people during the week (chuckle)? On Sunday I want to go with some people that I can feel really comfortable with.

Lohr: Well, the Denton black churches are very strong, are they not?

McAdams: Well, you know, as churches, yes, they are. They are not strong in terms of the social organizations that you sometimes hear about in the Deep South where the churches were the focal point of getting things done in the community and demanding rights and all that. The churches in this community have not been there. They are primarily religious bodies, you know, dealing with their parishioners on Sunday and not really being a big force in the community.

Lohr: Why?

McAdams: I don't know, I wish I did, because I think that's a real loss. I think the church has access better than anybody to the public, and if we had appropriate leadership in the form of ministers, a lot more could be done here.

People sometimes don't do and don't ask for things simply because they don't realize that they can. But I think that certainly ministers could mobilize the community. They could have, for instance demanded that that clean-up, the code enforcement, continued. I had been out of the community for some time because I moved away from there and was not aware that the clean-up had gone down so much. I have an aunt who lives over there, but she's on this edge of it; so I go one block in, and I would go up to her house and make a little "U" and come back out. So I saw hardly any of it. Then for some reason I was over there on one occasion, and I had to drive way through the middle, and I was just absolutely appalled because it was like night-and-day from what it had been when the code enforcement was being actively pursued and junk cars hauled off and all that sort of thing. Well, in a really active community with churches there, the churches could have mobilized these people to say long before that got that bad, "City, you've got to come back over here. You're not doing your job anymore." And they didn't.

Just as I think that the churches could have mobilized and pressed for better education, but they didn't do that. The churches could have been a force in removing that principal at that time when so much of the community felt that it was inappropriate. They didn't take part in that at all. I can't say that they failed

their members, say, spiritually because I don't know about that. I presume they do what the community wants there. But they certainly have in general failed the community in terms of providing the leadership that's often provided by black churches in other places. And I really don't know why.

Lohr: What about the NAACP in Denton?

McAdams: It has not been a great force. I think a lot of that had had to do with a kind of in-fighting and jealousy there. It hasn't had the best leadership. That's not to say that it may not still grow into something much better. I know that Euline Brock, who was a part of the Interracial Fellowship, is a part of that and just has worked very hard to ensure that they have a scholarship program that goes over very well. But I think it could do more, and I suspect that maybe other people didn't have any particular stake in getting it done, and so if you rattled their cage and disturbed their fear about federal things then, why vote for it?" It's not going to help me personally in any way, and I think it's going to mean the federal government is going to be in telling us what to do. There's no telling what they'll have those blacks doing over there, and so, 'No.'" So it went down.

Lohr: What about the group in the 1970s? It began to sort of decline, did it not?

McAdams: Well, I think there was maybe two reasons for that. One of those could be very good in that we didn't feel as

much as a need of it. For one thing, we knew each other individually better, and I think blacks would have felt that if there was a real problem, you could get in touch with one of those people. Also, the schools were more integrated by this time, so you were likely to come in contact with somebody, say, at PTA or at something else. So there was a way to connect without necessarily having that artificial setting that we had had before. As I said, by that time we had done some projects like the streets and the clean-up and those things. We had done what we saw that we could do as a group at that particular point, so we didn't have any other pressing business to be tending to. It just kind of faded, based on that. But I think in some ways that was good because people felt comfortable enough to let it go. We didn't feel like we necessarily needed to hang on to it to keep that connection going.

Lohr: Did feminism ever come into the group during that time?

McAdams: I think very little. About that time I started serving on a committee for the Presbyterian church. There was a council on women in the church, and it was a feminist-oriented thing. And I still was feeling at that time that my first priority was improvements for blacks rather than working for the betterment of women. So for the most part, that wasn't a part of our agenda here. It might get mentioned a little bit, but for the most part these women were concerned about the whole of the black

family and trying to elevate it rather than being concerned about in particular what was happening to women as a group.

Lohr: What are your feelings and perceptions of the group in looking back?

McAdams: Well, it was a marvelous idea. It served a wonderful purpose to get us acquainted at a time when it was very good to do so. It meant that black women had a kind of a resource. We had a buddy; we had a friend. We had somebody that our children knew, and it was somebody that we never worked for. It was not the lady that we had worked for at all; it was just somebody that we knew strictly as a friend and socially. They were people who had proven--by the time they spent tutoring our kids, the time they spent helping us work on the street paving project, by the time they spent helping get junk cars removed, by their attitude about going to lunch so people can see that we are one--that they really were concerned about us, and they weren't asking anything of us in exchange. We didn't have to pledge to support something or anything else. We were welcome in their homes; we swam in their swimming pools with everybody else; we all ate at the same table. We really were like friends, and our kids played together, and I guess that's one of the things that tells you something about it. If all of us can be there together, then it must be all right. You know, they aren't protecting their kids from

me and mine. So I think it was a really, really good thing that happened, and I think that always the people who participated in that will have some good memories. As I said, as we faced other tough times and other people who were rude and ugly, you always could draw upon those people and comfort yourself to some degree with the knowledge that "no, they are not all like that. There's twenty-five women over here I know, all with other friends and all, who are not at all like that." So from that point of view, I think it was a really good thing that we had.

Lohr: Were lasting friendships made?

McAdams: Oh, without a doubt, yes. There certainly were--people who still are friends today as a result of having gotten to know each other in that group. And now we're all old (chuckle).

Lohr: Do you think the group was more for white women or for black women?

McAdams: Oh, I think it did a lot for both of us because it certainly gave the white women an opportunity to get comfortable with being with us in a different kind of setting than they had been exposed to before. As I said, about the only time they dealt with us was if we were working for them or they came in some other place where we were working. So this gave them a different opportunity to sit down and to hear us, see what our concerns were, and just to be comfortable with us. It

certainly gave blacks an opportunity to see people in a situation in which we could learn to trust them and learn not to think in terms of a whole, big "they" when you think of whites and just be anti-"they." So I think it was very good for both groups to get a different perspective than that that we were seeing on television, that we saw in the newspaper, because we weren't there. We were left out of the newspapers. So I think it was good, positive.

Lohr: Do you think the white women had an accurate idea going in of what the problems of the black women were going to be?

McAdams: Oh, I don't know. I don't know that they even thought that they did. I think that, for the most part, the white women came with the notion that "we want to know." Obviously, we all have some ideas about some things, but I think they were very, very open to hearing from blacks: "What do <u>you</u> want to do? What is it that concerns you?" Making suggestions, yes, but definitely being willing to hear and be concerned about what we were concerned about. So it wasn't one of those things where they came in to manage us at all. That was not apart of it.

Lohr: What do you think are some of the things that they found out that surprised them the most?

McAdams: Oh, I don't know. If I were guessing, I would say perhaps that there was less hostility than they might've imagined. They might have been surprised to find that

different economic levels could sit down together as easily as we could. I don't know beyond that. Maybe they were just surprised that they, themselves, could do it and feel comfortable doing it.

Lohr: Did they feel at all surprised at some of the problems that you said you had?

McAdams: I don't think so. I think these were people who were at least peripherally aware of the kinds of things that obviously we were suffering as a result of discrimination. Because they had been involved by coming over and tutoring the kids, you know, they could certainly see the slums. They realized that you couldn't buy housing anyplace else. It was just absolutely impossible to get loans to build houses, for the most part, in the area where we were; it was what they called kind of a "red line" area. If you look at it, it's not the area where a banker would say would be the best area. But if you considered that we were restricted to that area, then it made sense to let us have the loans. But they still didn't do it.

People were always complaining because they said that blacks always drove big cars, and why couldn't they do something else. It was because we got advertising in the paper encouraging us. The banks sent us notices telling us that they would loan us money to buy a car of any kind, including a Cadillac (you could get that). But they wouldn't let you have the same amount of money for a

house. Now maybe that was because they could easily repossess the car--I don't know--but that attitude that white had about blacks driving big cars was fostered as much by the white community. Their attitude was that "we will lend you money; we will encourage you to buy a car; but we will not loan you money to do other things with." So it was the only thing we could buy of any substance, was a car. You had money, but you couldn't buy a house. You couldn't even rent a decent house because there were so few of those available, so you were living in a lean-to with what money you had. One needed to do something to make yourself feel better sometimes, and what you could buy was a car. I mean, they would encourage you to buy those cars. I got many mailings wanting me to buy a car. And so you could do that, certainly.

Lohr: I would think they would be surprised at things like sitting at the back of the drive-in and things like that--things that are so ridiculous that you would never think of unless you were in that situation.

McAdams: Well, I don't know. I suppose that people here knew that; they knew that we sat back there. So it wouldn't have been a surprise. They certainly knew that blacks could only go to the balcony when you were allowed to go to the theater. You were up in the balcony; you couldn't sit down there with them. They were aware of that. So I suspect they knew about the drive-in, also. It is funny when you think about it now and look back on it.

Lohr: Well, it's horrifying but it's funny now that you look back on the thing.

McAdams: Because you're in a car. You weren't going to touch anybody. You weren't even going close to them, and you weren't going to breathe on them or anything. It was a car, for God's sake!

Lohr: And it was at night, so how are you going to know who's in the car?

McAdams: Yes, you didn't know! But that was it--row 14 and 15.

Lohr: Well, how did Denton's housing become integrated? Was that a problem?

McAdams: Oh, that was a long, long, hard, hard haul. Professionals would come to town, and houses would suddenly not be for sale. Prices were higher; apartments were not for rent. That stuff went on for a long time and probably still does to some degree. But, you know, you got one person here finally and one person there until finally it got better. But that was probably the hardest thing of all, was to integrate the housing. For people who had children, there was a bit of fear that you didn't know that you wanted to live out there by yourself with just all those whites, since they really didn't like you, because there might be danger to your children.

I know that when I finally decided to build a house--see, that was in the 1970s--and was looking around for a place to buy, I deliberately looked at an area where I knew about half the people on the street. Most

of them were associated with the university because I knew that that would be a safe place to live, and you could just feel comfortable there. But some friends of mine who lived in another part of town said, "You know, there's a lot available right next to us. Why don't you come and look at this lot?" I said, well, that was not where I really wanted to go, and I didn't know anybody over there, as a matter of fact, except, I think, maybe two families, so I wasn't interested too much in that. Finally, they kept saying, you know, why didn't I at least look at this lot. So I said, "Well, find out how much the lot costs."

They called the person who owned the lot at the time and asked how much the lot cost. As a matter of fact, George Hopkins, an attorney, owned that lot at the time. It was on Hopkins Hill, and he had owned much of Hopkins Hill. At the time when they called up George and told him what they wanted to do, he told them he'd have to get back to them first. They were just appalled because they sensed immediateldy what had happened. The lot was on the market and had been. They sensed immediately that it was because they told him my name. They knew that he knew who I was, and they thought it was all right to mention me. They thought by that time there would be no objections to selling me this lot. Well, there was.

But my friends were so upset that they decided they were going to call him back. They were not going to let

him get away with just not answering. They were going to call him back, and they did call him back. He said he didn't feel like he could do that, and he declined to sell that lot. Now they were incensed and wanted to file a lawsuit and all that. Well, I didn't want to go through that. It was not where I wanted particularly to live, and I want to live some place where it wasn't going to be a hassle, and so I said, "No. It just doesn't matter that much. I can get the other lot in a neighborhood where there are so many people I already know and enjoy." People who were members of the Interracial Fellowship, as a matter of fact, lived over there. I said, "I know I can live there and be happy there, and I just don't want to do this." So I bought the other lot and built a house there, and I suspect there were probably other people who just made a conscious decision that "I can't bear a hassle seven days a week, 365 days out of the year. I have to make some choices."

Lohr: Well, what about today? Is the situation better?

McAdams: I think that with enough money now, you can buy houses in most places. There's no doubt that in some places you'll be disciminated against, or some particular realtor might discriminate, depending on who the neighbors are or whatever. It will happen. There are places where people would be snobbish right now, no question about that. But overall, one can probably buy a house in any neighborhood

in the city of Denton as long as you have enough money to do so. You might not like living there after you buy it, but you can at least buy the house.

Lohr: Well, you said awhile ago that there was still tolerance, but not really have things changed much.

McAdams: Well, I think that in large measure that's true. It's kind of an underlying feeling that you get. I think that there are several things that suggest it, too. I think that we've gone this long...and I think you have to bear in mind that we are a city of 60,000, but you also have bear in mind that we are a city with two universities. So we're not just your normal city of 60,000 people. We are a much higher educated community and a community with a higher median income than the average. Yet this is 1988, and our city does not have a single executive that's black. That's tolerated; I mean, nothing is done about that, and we go along with that. I think the fact that the black community is still so ignored and treated the way it is in terms of services, code enforcements, and that sort of thing--that that's just allowed--suggests what one might call latent discrimination. That attitude is there. I think that the fact that people just simply do not feel comfortable, maybe, in sharing churches and some other things...that there's not the same kind of mixing, I think, suggests that underneath it all there's still a lot of discrimination. You still see very little about blacks in the newspaper. They just are

not there. It is still a difficult thing to get in a position of leadership here if you're black. I think it's there, that underlying kind of thing.

The first time I ran for office, having lived here for more than twenty years and paid my dues in every society there was, a person ran against me who had not participated in civic activities at all, and that person won. If we had both been white, I would have won that election. The citizens would have not chosen that man over a white woman with the credentials that I had. But I think, again, that was a part of that "we don't quite know; we're not really ready to step out there." So you have to still do more, and you have to prove yourself over and over and over and over and over and over and over again. So it's there. I think you see it in high school; you see it in who's cheerleaders and who're not. It is there. It's there in many places.

Lohr: Well, then do you think that that indicates that there's a need for the group to revive?

McAdams: I don't think that group can do it anymore. First of all, I think part of what we're seeing here is just a part of the mood of the country. I think in large measure that that has to do with the leadership at the White House level. When the present administration went in, there was a lot of emphasis on "it's okay to be wealthy and to spend money and to have a good time and be a part of this kind of a group." And there was a lot of

talk about a safety net and all that, but the truth of the matter is that if you look at administration programs, where they put emphasis and all that, it has been on things that have improved the lot of the upper income classes. Even middle income whites have suffered tremendously under this administration. Naturally, then, poor people, both black and white, have suffered. And because you have a disproportionate number of blacks in the lower income, then we've suffered disproportionately.

But I think there was just a kind of a attitude. It was that attitude that gutted the Civil Rights Commission, for instance, that opposed extension of the Votings Rights Act. Those things kind of said to the nation, I think, either "this isn't so important," or "we've done about as much as we need to do. It's not on the same level anymore, so just kind of let it go." So the people who tended to discriminate felt a little bit more comfortable coming out of the closet. You hear national leaders say kinds of things that once they wouldn't have said. Things that just simply got out of vogue suddenly were being said again. I think all of that attitude kind of shifted down. You hear people talking now about "being rich is no longer in." It remains to be seen, I think, whether it is or not.

But we became, as a nation, terribly, terribly selfish. We talk about the "yuppies" and all that, but

once upon a time we had students in college who were concerned about "what can we do to make this a better world, and how can I do something to improve things when I get out?" Now their question is, "How can I make money so I can buy a Mercedes or BMW and those kinds of things?" That got to be the focus of our concern, and it seemed to have the blessings of the national staff.

I think all that just kind of shifted down, and we see some of the results of that here. So that there was no longer an emphasis on not just not doing anything, but actively trying to make race relations better. Before we had said, "Let's do something to improve our lives. Let's improve the relations between the races." We stopped talking about that, and so it just kind of stopped happening. I think we need national leadership that once again says that it's important, that cares about...you see, I think that women...you mentioned earlier whether women were a part of our agenda. I think that women certainly have seen a loss in the last few years along with minorities because we went back to kind of that old attitude of the good ol' boys and those that have the most get the most and male executives and climb-overs. We went back to that, I think, just from the direction of leadership. We have fewer women in positions in Washington--that are visible--than we had in the past. And we never got our share of those, if you realize it. Just as we have fewer women, we seem to have

fewer blacks, also, both male and female. We don't have those. It got to be a low priority.

Concentration went to making money and having a good time and less time on trying to improve the social fabric of our society. So I think that until that comes back, we probably will not see a great deal of improvement.

Lohr: Do you perceive that changing?

McAdams: God, I hope so. I don't know. I just think it depends in large measure on who gets elected the next time and what they perceive as important. I'm always concerned because when I was very young, as a young adult here, one of the things I was very aware of in Denton was the uneven law enforcement. If blacks harmed other blacks, even if they murdered them, nothing was done about it. I lived here and experienced a number of murders taking place, and nobody ever left the city limits. You know, they talk about going to prison and getting out. Now, let me tell you, these people never went anywhere! They shot blacks, and they never left the city limits. Occasionally, they'd spend a night in jail, but they never went anywhere. Nothing was done about it! It was horrible! I remember that as a young adult I used to think, "Do the whites who are in charge of this not realize that when a person grows accustomed to getting away with violence by shooting someone, that that grows; that there is no mentality that simply says, for as long as I live, 'we are only going to shoot blacks?'" If

that's the way you learned to operate, then you get to the place that you will shoot, stab, beat up whomever it is that stands between you and what you want without regard to what color they are. It seemed to me they ought to be able to realize that we need to nip this in the bud, so to speak, before it spreads. White society never understood that. To this day I don't think they understand that. You know, like, whenever there's a new problem with drugs or anything else, if you can first say that it belongs to some group that we can turn our nose up--like, we can say AIDS belongs to the homosexuals--we can ignore it, and we don't have to do anything about it. It's just "them," anyway, and it's their deserts. It spreads! If they're in this world with the rest of us, sooner or later it spreads to us.

I think that kind of thing happened about criminal behavior. There was never any understanding of why we need to do things. We need to enforce the laws against blacks for blacks. Those of us who were being harmed by black criminals were not appreciative of it just because it happened to be a black. I mean, you don't care who robs you. You don't wish to be robbed not matter what color he is. It doesn't make it better because it happens to be the same race as you are. Somehow we have to realize, I think, that we have to police everybody without regard to whether they're poor, without regard to whether they are black, without regard to whether they

are homosexual, whatever. We just have to enforce rules everywhere for the good of society, and then things will be somewhat different. But I don't think we know that even today.

Lohr: Well, when did that change--them not arresting the black criminals?

McAdams: Oh, I don't think it's totally changed yet. The people who live in that area still tell me that they don't feel good about law enforcement at all. But I can vividly remember the first time somebody got sent away to prison. I mean, this woman had walked out, and she shot somebody down. It was a man on crutches, and she shot him across the street. Just cold-blooded, she shot him. They did at least sentence her to prison, and she went away for a while. That was the first time that anybody had gone. But there had been lots of murders.

Lohr: What year was that? Was that recent?

McAdams: No, that's been quite a long time ago. But that still is there--certainly the clear perception. One of the things that people have complained about in the last two years to the city council has been uneven law enforcement. One woman said to me recently, "When I called the police and told them about something going on, instead of them going where I told them to go, they came to my house like they needed to verify it or something. So then everybody could see the police car at my house and then figure out when they go on where they were going, 'Well, now we know

who it was who called the police.'" She didn't feel real comfortable about that. So they don't feel that they get the same kind of police enforcement that the white parts of town get.

Lohr: Do the police have a reason for doing that?

McAdams: I don't know. She didn't think so, clearly, because she was complaining about it (chuckle). She clearly did not think it was clear. She said, "I gave them the address. Why were they at my house?" This kind of makes you feel like the next time you won't give them your address. You'll do it anonymously so they don't get your address.

Lohr: Then they wouldn't come, probably.

McAdams: That's exactly what she thought, too. That's what she thought. That's exactly what she thought, too. That's what she thought. That's why she gave them her name, because she wanted to be sure they did come.

Lohr: Well, I noticed in the paper the other day that you had filed to run again. Are there going to be any other black people running?

McAdams: Probably not because there are only three positions up this year--the three at-large positions. I would be surprised if anybody black filed in either one of those. I certainly hope nobody of any color files against me (laughter)! I expect somebody will, but I would be surprised if a black would do that. I'd like to think that a black would have a very hard time defeating me. I can't think of anybody who might necessarily have such a

great constituency that they could do that. But I think the three at-large positions are pretty tough positions to get because everybody votes on these positions, and those are just kind of hard to get. So I would be surprised to see a black filing for one of those, frankly.

Lohr: What about one of the others when it comes time?

McAdams: In one of those positions?

Lohr: Yes.

McAdams: I don't know whether...the one position is District One, which is sort of thought of as the "black district," since it's where the largest concentration of blacks live. Randall Boyd is presently representing that district. I think that if they feel Randall is doing a good job--and I thihnk they do right now--it's not a given that somebody will run against him. Now somebody might, because they've had opposition in the neighborhood before when there'd be another black candidate. But I don't think that necessarily there will be. It probably just depends upon if somebody is disgruntled or if they don't feel like he's doing a good job. Then there might be another candidate. But I don't see blacks running from any one of the other districts because there probably wouldn't be enough of a constituency.

Lohr: What about finally getting a black on the school board? Was that a big fight?

McAdams: It was a hard job, yes. It took a long time to do that.

See, again, that's an at-large position where the whole city votes. I think, there again, you had that kind of uneasiness on the part of white voters, that "we don't know here; we've got to be real careful because we're not just real sure." Of course, you always think, "For God's sake, we're talking about one vote! If you elected Attila the Hun or some just absolute idiot, what could they do as one vote? So why be so frightened? But I think that people tend to vote very "safe" when you're talking about a black candidate. So that was hard. Once you get a person on, sometimes you can get another on when that one goes off. It's not always as hard to get another person there. Willie Hudspeth is on there now, and I don't know whether he'll run for reeclection or whether there'll be a problem there. I don't know. It's hard to know. Willie had got into hot water about a few things, but Ithink that's calmed down in the last year or so. He may outlast all that and run for reelection.

Lohr: Was he the first black?

McAdams: No, Fred Hill was on there before he was.

Lohr: When was Mr. Hill elected?

McAdams: Oh, gosh.

Lohr: Back in the sixties?

McAdams: Oh, no, no. Actually, Fred would have been on in the late 1970s. The school board just was not integrated that far back. It is still a fairly recent phenomenon. Fred was on, I guess, for maybe two or three terms. I

think Willie ran shortly thereafter and maybe lost the first time. Maybe he ran while Fred was on there. I'm not sure. But there's not a great deal of overlap. There has not been a long time that there was a black on the school. That's fairly new.

Lohr: What about integration of North Texas and TWU?

McAdams: Well, I don't know a great deal about that. I think that probably they were integrated fairly early. At that time there was such a separation between the college and the city per se that you didn't necessarily know what went on at the colleges. All we knew was that the black kids came up, and initially they suffered a lot of discrimination at college. As I said, they lived in the black community and just drove back and forth out here. But they were not a part of most of the school activities. The blacks had separate activities on campus. It took a long while--their just being there--before they would be kind of just assimilated. Now they still have an all-black organization of some kind--I can't remember what the name of that is--that some of the students belong to. I think, once again, to have some place that they can go where they feel entirely comfortable and where they can say whatever it is they think and feel and not feel threatened by whites who might bigoted is a good thing. But it took a long while before, for instance, they even had housing on campus so that was a long time coming.

Lohr: So they had to room with people in the community?

McAdams: Yes, they did. A couple of places in the community actually built kind of little apartments--little rooms--specifically to rent to the students because that was a new market that was there. So they provided that kind of housing.

Lohr: How did they find the houses? Did families just sign up and say...

McAdams: I would assume that probably the university helped with that. Since they had the students, they needed to have them live someplace, and they weren't having them live on campus. So my guess would be that they probably worked somehow to facilitate that.

Lohr: And rather than pay the dorm tuition, they paid the people?

McAdams: They paid rent where they lived.

Lohr: What about Dreamland? How did it come about?

McAdams: Well, Dreamland was a private project that was funded by federal funds. I told you that housing had been so limited over there that people lived in just anything that they could live in. Even though it wasn't adequate housing, they lived in it because they didn't have any choice. So when Dreamland was first proposed, while some people were opposed to it again because it was federal funding and they didn't want any of that federal housing, I supported that just out of a desperate need for housing. Unfortunately, that development, when it was

done, first of all, was too big. It was too many units in too small an area. But that's typical of a lot of those things that were done a long time ago. Then it was not properly cared for. It seemed clear that the developer of that made his money. He got his money out of it, and that was his chief concern. So then the place was allowed to deteriorate. It was managed very, very poorly.

Then the Housing Authority decided that since they had not been able to build any low cost housing, they could just buy that. In fact, it was just practically given to them by HUD because HUD had it back at that point, I believe. The Housing Authority thought that they could buy it and rehabilitate it and make it available to low income citizens. I think it still has its problems in terms of management. Only when we are adult enough that we do not hesitate to arrest a black who commits a crime, no matter who he commits it against, so, too, should we not hesitate to evict a black who damages property just as we would anybody else, whether he's in an apartment complex that's predominantly white or whether he's in one that's predominantly black. It's only when we get adult enough to do that, when we've come of age enough, will we be able to really do what we need to do. I think we haven't done that yet. There's a tendency to think, "Well, you make special allowances." What that does, of course, is to make it very difficult

for the black people who really try. The black people who are in that complex really need that because that's the one place they've got to live that they can afford. They try to keep up their part, but there's a criminal element that frightens some of those people to death. Some people swear they wouldn't live there because of that. Those people need to be gotten rid of. There just is absolutely no reason to decide that a black who behaves badly--criminal behavior--ought to be allowed to continue to inflict that on other blacks somehow just because he is black. We want protection just like everybody else. But almost always the people making the decisions are white. And there's a great tendency to kind of leave it alone far too long, when the people who are on the receiving of it--the victims--are black as well as the perpetrators.

So I think that it's now the Phoenix--risen from the ashes of Dreamland--but I think it still has its problems because of perhaps not good management. When you'll know about that is when there's other adequate housing and people have a choice. Then they'll have to run it well, or they'll not have anybody in it. But until that time comes, you see, they have a captive audience, so to speak, of people who don't have other suitable housing that's affordable. So they're driven to it and have to take what they can get.

Lohr: What about this program of turning things like this over

to the people who live there?

McAdams: Well, as a matter of fact, one of the things I have proposed to the city manager and to the city council is a housing task force--a kind of blue ribbon panel, if you will, that would look at housing in total, low income housing, that is, in the city; look at all the various federal programs that are available, look at our housing authority and how it's set up; and look at all the possibilities of what we might do to have people become not just managers but also owners of units. We have not added to our stock of housing. Rehabilitation, I think, is the only thing that's been done since the housing for the elderly was developed. For the housing of poor people in general, we have the vouchers in Section Eight that allow people to live in apartments, but we have not actually developed low cost housing other than that thing.

So I think what we need to do are maybe some townhouse-type things, some free-standing houses--some things that people can own and care for themselves. People who have never had the opportunity to live in an owner-occupied structure will probably have to learn how to take care of it. If you grew up living in subsidized-type housing--like the Phoenix now--you don't know what it is to have to manage your own house. Part of what people don't understand is that you're not born with that knowledge. We think nothing of the fact that if a middle

class white woman wouldn't know how to take care of her house, she'll have to hire somebody, she'll have to find a handyman, and all that. That's because she didn't have to do it before. She either had a husband to do it, or she hired somebody before. Somebody did that. She didn't have to do it. It just wasn't a part of her thing.

But the same is true of poor families that have never lived in one. They never had exposure to it. They didn't learn how to do it. You're not born with knowing how to maintain a house. You don't know about keeping up plumbing and lots of other things. You just don't know about it because you've never been exposed to it. But there are ways to all those things--training kinds of things.

I am very, very hopeful at this point that we're going to appoint such a task force with just concerned citizens--people from the poor neighborhoods in the central city, people with development expertise, architects, realtors. It should include people who will know of which they speak and will be able to look at federal programs. We'll need an attorney on there who can look at the legal aspects of it and determine what we can do. One of the things that we want to look at is if we can take tax-delinquent property and turn it back into low cost housing, that is, put a house on it and then sell it to someone to live in--owner-occupied rather than

rental property. We don't want somebody else just to take advantage of low cost housing and rent it to the citizens. We want to be able to turn that back over to people. There are lease-purchase programs in some other cities. I'm not sure whether that can work in Texas with Texas laws. But that's what I think this committee can do, is to look at the whole picture because we've gotten into housing just a little bit and without a great deal of expertise. Nobody knows very much about it at all. So one of my really big projects, if I'm reelected, will be to shepherd that through the next two years and to get that project off the ground so that we can at least know what we can do and start doing something to add to our stock of low cost housing.

Because that's going to grow less. The new tax laws don't make it as advantageous, say, to build apartments and some things that people built in great numbers before, so this means that apartment rents will go up because of the tax situation. The allowable money for Section Eight-type rent supplements is not going to go up commensurate with that. That's going to make it harder and harder for people to find a place to live that's within their means. We used to talk about people spending 25 percent of their income for their housing, and then I think we kind of moved it up to 30 percent. But frequently poor people spend as much as 50 percent of their income for their housing, and that is more than

they can afford. So they often have to do without other things that they really do need because they just can't manage everything. So if we can add to the stock of available low cost housing, we can help that out. Certainly, I think, if you can get people into something that they own and that they understand about how to take care of it, you get more productive people. You can break some of that cycle of a supplemental family begetting another supplemental family and then another supplemental family and so on. You can instill some hope. If people can grow up in an atmosphere where they see an opportunity to move up, then that can keep building; but if everybody just kind of rolls over, then there's not much incentive there because they don't see it. You need to be able to visualize what can be in order to reach for it. Too often we don't provide enough opportunity for poor people to be able to visualize what could be. I want us to do more of that, and I think the housing area is one of the ways we can do it.

Lohr: Well, thank you.