

Transcript, Interview of Douglas Benold by Carol Parsonage on December 8, 2008.

My name is Carol Parsonage. Today, Monday, December 8, 2008, at 10:30 a.m. I am interviewing Dr. Douglas Benold at his home in Georgetown. This interview will become part of the Georgetown library's oral history collection. This particular project focuses on people's memories of Carver and Marshall Schools and the issues and events of the 1950s and 1960s that led to desegregation.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Dr. Benold, thank you for being an interview subject for this project.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Glad to do it.

CAROL PARSONAGE: I'd like to ask you, when did you come to Georgetown? How long have you lived in Georgetown?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, I've been here a long time. My family moved here in 1934 when I was in the sixth grade, starting the sixth grade.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay. Well, in those early years, those childhood years, tell me what kind of interaction you had with blacks and African Americans in Georgetown.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, in the early years, in the sixth grade, that was the old Annie Purl School, which is no longer here--that was down on Austin Avenue and University Avenue corner--'course we were not integrated at that time, so I saw very little of the African American kids at that time.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Did you see them in the community?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Oh sure, we'd go to town and they'd be on the Square and in the movies and so forth. But of course, at that time, the black children...or the black people...had to sit in the balcony. Then, in high school I had more interaction with them because they used our...there was a football field behind the old high school, which is now the Williams Elementary, there on University Avenue. The football field behind there was where we practiced our football team and the colored school used that for their football games. So, being interested in athletics and all, I was out there for their games and mixed in and knew some of the kids that way.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay! What was an African American school football game like? Was it different from the white school's?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: No, it wasn't except that...I remember that the band leader, or the drum major of the band, was a great big tall male--boy--and usually, you know in those times, our drum majors and twirlers were all girls. But I remember one, he was very flamboyant and the cheering was a little bit more enthusiastic and really...they really got with it, and boosted their team. And a little bit more enthusiasm and spirit than the white kids. We had our cheerleaders and all, but they were a little more traditional and subdued. But, boy, the colored football games were really something! And they had some great athletes, too. And, of course, I got to know them and had some...but otherwise, socially, there was really nothing at that time when I was in school. 'course, that was in the '30s, the late-'30s, I graduated in 1940.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay. And then, did you go to college here at Southwestern?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yes, I did.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And off to medical school?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, I went to college until '43 and then we were in the war and I was called to active duty in '43 to go into the Army, and basic training and so forth. Then, after basic training we were out in the field, we were fixing to ship out. I guess we were heading toward Europe...but anyway, fellows came out in the field and made an announcement--any of you fellows have admittance to medical school, or dental school? And I did, I'd already been accepted to Baylor Medical School and had completed three years of premed. So, I got pulled out and sent to med school and actually was still in med school when the war was over.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And then you came back here to practice?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Came back after internship and residency and so forth. I came back here and Nell and I...Nell and I moved back here in 1950.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And you opened an office here...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: I opened an office in the back of a little drugstore, called City Drug, on the east side of the Square, and that's where Cianfrani's Coffee Shop was for a while. Now they've moved over to the north side of the Square and that building is vacant now. But that had been the doctor's office, the back of that drugstore, for many, many years. In fact, in those times, most of the doctors had offices in the back of the drug store.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Oh, that's an interesting piece of information.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yeah. They'd furnish...the drug store would furnish a little office there and hopefully, get the prescriptions from the patients that came out. But that was my situation there, but, 'course, then in 1952, the Korean War was going on and I was in the Air Force Reserve and I got called to active duty during the Korean War and stationed in San Antonio. I thought well, you know, I'll be here for the duration. I was married and had two children and so forth, but in about September of 1952 I got transferred to a wing that was going to Korea and I had done quite a bit of surgery and I was a surgeon in that wing and sent to Korea in the fall of '52.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And you came back, then...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Came back to Georgetown in '54. And been here ever since.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Your patients, when...as the doctor here in Georgetown...I understand there weren't very many doctors in Georgetown.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, actually, there were. When I came here, believe it or not, there were seven doctors--for just about 4-5,000 people. And, 'course, we drew from Florence and Jarrell, from this end of the county. But one of the doctors was elderly and about to retire and the other one was very ill, with cirrhosis of the liver and died in his 50s...and...then one of the doctors decided to move, he'd divorced and moved to Arizona and another one moved to west Texas. The latter part of the 1950s Dr. Gaddy and I and another doctor, Dr. Cooper, were really the only active doctors in Georgetown. So, we suddenly went from seven down to three and Dr. Cooper really was not very active. Dr. Gaddy and I became partners in '57 when I bought--it was a private hospital at that time--so I bought half-interest in the hospital and we combined and built a new clinic there, just east of the old hospital, where the Community Clinic is. It's the 700 block of East University. But anyway, we became partners and built that clinic at the same time--that was in '58.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Well, I'd like to ask about your patients. Did you treat African American patients?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Sure, I treated everybody.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And, were there any things you had to do differently in treating African American patients?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: I didn't. We didn't have any...I never had a separate waiting room or anything like that and I didn't give...well, I started to say I didn't give preference to anybody, first come first serve, and in those days I didn't really make appointments. You go to the doctor and the first one's there and a lot of times I had the waiting room just full of people and I didn't give any preference to who they were. First in line got in first.

But then, of course, we had...if the president of Southwestern decided that he needed to have something done, well I'd slip him in the back door or something like that. But, in general, the African Americans were not treated any differently than anybody else. 'course, in those early days when I was...before I bought into the hospital I did quite a bit of home deliveries, simply because they couldn't afford the hospital and certainly couldn't pay me anything and still pay the hospital. So, I did a lot of home deliveries out on what we called The Ridge, which was the west part of town along the South San Gabriel River.

CAROL PARSONAGE: So you were in--that was the African American community?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yes.

CAROL PARSONAGE: You were in that community then, on a fairly regular basis.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Oh, I made house calls out there, besides deliveries I'd occasionally make house calls out there.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Can you describe that area? What that looked...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, in the '50s it was very poor. A lot of outdoor toilets and houses were not nice. We had two or three or four African American families that were a little upper scale homes--some worked for people in town and some worked at Southwestern and were really, I think, above average intellectually and education-wise, to the average black citizens. But we...I spent quite a bit of time out there.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Well, did they have stores and things like that in that area?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Not much. They had a little black cafe out there, but I don't really think...I don't think they had any businesses of their own.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And you said you saw African Americans on the Square regularly.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Oh sure, they shopped in the same stores as everybody else did. The only thing is at the movies they had to sit in the balcony and of course, this ridiculous stuff to make separate water fountains. Oh, land! (laughs).

CAROL PARSONAGE: What about streets and things like that? Were they paved?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Some were, but a lot of the streets, especially in The Ridge area, the African American area, a lot of them were gravel back in the early days. And in San Jose, which is the Latin American area, also was...most of those streets were gravel

instead of paved. But that wasn't necessarily discriminating! A lot of the streets in the white part of town were gravel also. (Both laugh)

CAROL PARSONAGE: That time...I'd like to move forward to the periods of time you spent on the school board. You were on the school board two different times as I...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Two different times, that's right.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And the first one began...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: 1955

CAROL PARSONAGE: And how did that come about? Did you run for school board?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: No, I...J.J. Jones, who had been on the school board for a while, for some reason had to drop out and some of the members of the board just came to me and asked me if I would fill in. I was appointed to take his place, to finish out his term. And then, I forget if there was a year left on it or what, but anyway, I ran for reelection after that and stayed on the board five years.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay, so until 1960.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: 'course, that's when the problem of integration...

CAROL PARSONAGE: In that period of time integration must have been a major topic.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, it was...not so major until about the early '60s. But in '54 as you'll recall, the Supreme Court ruled that this doctrine of separate but equal was a lot of baloney. And it was. There was no such thing as separate but equal. Our black school was a disgrace. And, in fact, we were about to lose our accreditation for our whole school district because of the deplorable condition of the black school. And so, as soon after I got on the board, we started talking about the fact that, you know, legally, according to the Supreme Court, we ought to be integrated. But there were a lot of so-called "states righters" that didn't believe...you know...that this ought to be a decision for the state to make rather than national...the Supreme Court. So there was a lot of resistance to that and nobody really thought...well, you know--they say that, but we don't have to do it. We started talking about it and the problems involved if we did start talking about integration, about who would we hire, and you know, would the black teachers be hired, and all the things like that...and the property, would we build a new black school or would we—'cause theirs was in more need--we needed more room for the white students and the fact that we needed more room, period, was the thing that really...it made sense for the people that wanted to integrate because we figured that to build a separate black school and just flaunt the Supreme Court didn't really make

sense. And, besides that, if we needed to increase our own school capability, like a new junior high or a new high school, and build a black school, it just wasn't economically feasible. The cheapest way to go and obey the law at the same time was to add a junior high or a high school and integrate at the same time. Then we didn't have to build a black school. But there was ...ah, the school board at the time was pretty segregationist and they were willing to give up the financial advantage just to stay segregated.

CAROL PARSONAGE: So, did any building occur in that time of your first term, from...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: No.

CAROL PARSONAGE: No. A lot of discussion but...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: A lot of discussion. And we had...we had...actually, to go back to that time...the problem was that we couldn't afford to build anything because there was a law that says you cannot borrow money more than 10% of your evaluation. Well, our whole evaluation for the whole school district wasn't but \$6 million. And we were already in debt \$480,000, so even if we passed a bond issue and decided to build a school, all we had was \$120,000 and you couldn't...you really couldn't build anything for that. So, our problem, when I was on the board the first time, we had to re-evaluate our school district property and that's when it really hit the fan because a lot of people were...when the re-evaluation took place, their taxes were double. Some of them hadn't had their property re-evaluated since the Depression days. And here they were paying very little tax and if you say their property is worth twice as much now--which it was--and that's when really the argument came in, because a lot of landowners...

CAROL PARSONAGE: Did that happen during this time when you were one the school board?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: That happened...right! We hired a land, or property evaluation company, and went in it with the City. The City needed to update their tax rolls, too. So we hired them to re-evaluate all the property. Well, now this was done about 1959-60 and that's...we had hired this and they were in the process of doing this when I went off the board. The reason I went off the board is that my father had died and my mother was ill and my sister, who was single, was teaching down in the Houston area, and she wanted to come up and live in Georgetown and help take care of my mother. But she wanted to teach--she was a teacher. So I had to resign from the school board before we could hire her as a teacher.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Oh, I see, okay.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: So that's why I went off the board.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Let me ask you a couple of things about the board. How big was it? How many people were on the board?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Oh, gosh...seven or eight.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Seven or eight people. And were they elected, like, at-large, or...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yeah, they were at large. At that time, yes.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay, so you went off the board in 1960 and then you went...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, I was not on the board again until '67.

CAROL PARSONAGE: '67. How active or involved were you in school issues in that interim period?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: I was...well, I would say I was semi-active. I, early on, after I went off the board, I went...when this integration crisis started...I went to the board once and asked them to have a referendum on integration. Let the people vote on it. And at that time there was a state law saying that you had to have a list of people...we called it...in order to bring up a vote for integration...you had to have 20% of the electorate, or the people who were eligible to vote...had to sign a petition. Well, a lot of the preachers in town had been working for integration and our preacher at First Methodist Church appeared to the school board right after I had asked them to bring this up and they said, yeah, it's OK with us if you want to vote on it. Well, we came up with this petition, and then the school board was different. We had some of the people who were really pinched on this land evaluation...were on the board.

CAROL PARSONAGE: So there'd been an election.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: There'd been an election and they voted the petition down because it was some technicality that the people...some of the names were on the back side of the paper or...it was in the school board minutes about how they turned it down. But anyway, when it was obvious that the school board was dead-set against integration, that's when this Committee for Better Schools was organized. Started by Southwestern professors, mostly, and preachers, and a couple of other people in town went together and brought suit to prevent them from building a black school, since the Supreme Court had already ruled it illegal and so forth. I was semi-active in that, but right at that time I was awfully busy with just two doctors covering the emergency room and a lot of factors, but I did...I was not on the Committee for Better Schools, but I did donate money so that they could hire a lawyer to state their case.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Well, I understand that you also canvassed the African-American community to see...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yes, ah...our newspaper...our newspaper was definitely segregationist, as were a lot of other people in town. A lot of good people, they just had that problem. Anyway, one of the editorials...one of the editorials...about 1961, I believe, came out and said that he did not believe that most of the African-Americans wanted to integrate. They wanted to keep their own school. And I didn't believe this and I had black people working at the hospital for me, and the clinic, and I was on that side of town all the time, making house calls and delivering babies, and I knew the people pretty well, and I didn't think...I thought most of them wanted to integrate because they wanted their kids to have a decent education. So I worked together with Birdie Shanklin and a couple of other black nurses and employees of the hospital and did a thorough canvass of every black family on the Ridge. And came up 85% of the people said they wanted to integrate. We had asked them the question, "Would you be willing to put your child back a grade if the schooling they had received was not quite up to snuff," and they said okay...but some of them wanted to keep their own school because they knew that if we integrated that they were not going to have black coaches and black teachers and we weren't that far along. And I think legitimately, they would prefer to have their own school. On the other hand, 85% wanted to integrate just so their kids could get a better education and have better facilities and so forth. I took this to the editor of the local paper and he wouldn't publish it. And I was disappointed but I could see his viewpoint because...and I think that it was...I know that he was...he was against integration, but I think what really drove it was economics. Because his...two of his biggest advertisers in the local paper were strong segregationists. And I think that he didn't want to offend those...I mean, it was his...it was an economic thing...I feel like. That's just my opinion.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Did you think other people in Georgetown had other...of the white community...had similar problems...they were concerned about their customer base or things like that if in fact the...I mean, was that an issue that kept...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: I don't know about that, but I do know that one of the members of the Committee for Better Schools, who ran the laundry here, lost an awful lot of business because of the fact that he stood with the integration people.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay. You made a comment earlier about there had been a school board election and the school board had changed to a group of people who actually were more concerned about the increase in property values as opposed to being segregationists, or were they...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: I think it was a mixture. I think it was a mixture. There was...when the new property evaluation came through, some of the biggest property

owners were really hit pretty hard and they came to the school board and protested. And this, I think, was... in hindsight was a mistake...because the superintendent and the chairman of the school board at that time said, we cannot reverse the findings of this evaluation board that we hired. They've given us the information. We don't think that the school board can change that...and made a lot of people very angry because they would, not only...they raised their taxes, but they wouldn't listen to their appeal to talk it over and do something a little more of a compromise. The school board just said...and the superintendent said...that's it! And hard feelings that started at that time ended up firing the superintendent of schools here, so later when these people got on the board...

CAROL PARSONAGE: So, they maybe did actually run for school board because of the property issues.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: I think that was part of it but it just so happened that these same people were against integration. Now, one of the people who came onto the board said that he was not against integration but he just wanted it to be one year at a time. And I think that was...some other people probably thought that that might be the easiest way to do it...but...it was a combination of...

CAROL PARSONAGE: Did Georgetown actually attempt to do one year at a time for a while?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: It wasn't...in '64 we started, I mean the courts ruled that we did need to integrate...but they did accept a gradual type integration...now the exact...how many grades here and how many grades there, I'm not real sure I don't remember that real well, but for a short time, see the school board went ahead and built the Westside School, which they intended it to be a black school...

CAROL PARSONAGE: And it's now...?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, it's the Westside Elementary...Carver Elementary. Yeah. But actually the integration had progressed so that it was not a black school. It was officially...it was integrated, but certain grades. So we had, we had some black teachers there and they were given the choice of going there to the black school or to come to the white school, but most of the blacks went to that school. I forget what we were...

CAROL PARSONAGE: Oh, I did, too...laughs. I think we'll just go on to another question is what we'll do here. Okay. During this period that you were off the school board, were any...you mentioned the Westside School...that was built during that period?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yes, it was...

CAROL PARSONAGE: Were there other schools built during that period.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: No, not at that time. A junior...we built a junior high school soon after that. And that was the school that sat on Williams Drive...

CAROL PARSONAGE: McCoy?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: McCoy. Right. That came in just after the Westside School was built.

CAROL PARSONAGE: So that in that period, after the taxes had been raised, they were able to build some schools.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Oh, yes. We...in fact evaluation went from \$6 million up to about \$14 million when that reappraisal came through, so we did have the money available to build. And they...the school board at that time decided to build the Westside School and then the junior high. I know what I was forgetting a while ago...the thing that we started out integrating gradually, one or two grades here and one or two grades here, but then Lyndon Johnson passed his Civil Rights Act in 1965, I believe, and he

CAROL PARSONAGE: Actually '64--July '64.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: '64. Well, we had already started integration a little bit at a time, but Lyndon Johnson passed...got that through...and he made the ruling that you will be totally integrated by '67, or else you won't get any more federal aid. So that settled that. I mean, the school board had sense enough to know, well, now is the time to fully integrate. (Both laugh) So that's when it really totally happened.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Well now, when did you go back on the school board?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: I went back in '67.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And did you run for that?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yes.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay, and stayed on...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Stayed on until '76.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay! Almost ten years!

DOUGLAS BENOLD: I was on the board about 14 years total.

CAROL PARSONAGE: So, '67 the schools would have been newly integrated the first year you were back on the school board. How did that go?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Very well, I think! We had...you know...Georgetown...we had people that were not for integration but they were not bad people, they were good people, and they were law-abiding people, and they just didn't want the segregationists...except for the fact that they had this hang-up about going to school with the blacks...were good people. And we had a smooth...once it was the law...and once the board voted to integrate, we didn't have a lot of trouble. Now some of the black families thought that there was some...the coaches may not have treated the black players quite as nice as some of the white and you heard little stories of that, but nothing....It was, all in all, I think, very smooth. We had...there was one incident that came up when...let's go back. Because of the re-evaluation problems, our superintendent was not given...was not rehired. So he left and we hired, the school board hired another superintendent. This was before I came on. And he stayed two or three years and then another one came on, and when I got back on the board in 1967, we had just hired our third superintendent. And at that time our school finances were in terrible, terrible shape. We had this...I think our superintendent at the time had some real great ideas, but we were spending a lot more money than we were getting in and we had a real financial crisis there for a while. We needed to build a new high school badly, but for two or three years we just couldn't do it. And then when we hired the new superintendent, who was Jack Frost, and Jack stayed with us for a long time. When we hired Jack, the thing we started out from the very beginning...we got to get us a new high school built. Well, we were in such financial straits that that took two or three years to get that through, but then we did, we finally did that. But what I was going to bring up about the smooth integration...ah, soon after Jack got here as superintendent, we had an incident where a couple of the black boys skipped out of school for some minor incident. And anyway, I don't know, they might have talked back to a teacher or something and then decided they better leave. I don't know what it was exactly, but it was not a major crime. But anyway, they were...superintendent kicked them out of school. And so we had a big school board meeting and the NAACP heard about it and they were there and we had half the community there in the old high school auditorium, listening in on the school board meeting. We were discussing the expelling of these boys. But we had a nice session at that meeting and the boys were questioned and asked if they really wanted an education...were they willing to abide by the rules and so on and so forth. And they said, yes, they wanted to come to school and they wanted to get educated. The school board reversed that expulsion and reinstated them and I think this was a real good move that we did at that time. And kind of set the stage that, you know, we're going to be fair and treat everybody somewhat alike, as much as we can.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Well, now in the period from '67 to '76 that you were on the school board, did you see, or do you have any thoughts about how integration

proceeded? I mean, by that time, by the time you left the school board, some of the students had pretty much not seen anything but integration, at that time.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: That's right. Well...I don't think it was much of a problem. Our kids were in school at that time and they just seemed to get along fine. I didn't hear of any incidents, you know, there may be a fight at school or something, but it wasn't between a white and a black. It may be two black boys or two white boys, or something like that. It was...I think we really...I think the school board and the town just decided we're integrated and we're going to do it right. And I just didn't...maybe some other people saw some problems, but I feel like it was very smooth.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Were there other changes that happened about the same time. I mean you talked about the white water fountains and things like that. Did they begin to go away?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, of course, with the Civil Rights Act blacks could go to restaurants in the front door, instead of at the back, and the fountain thing was off and you can sit anywhere you want to in the theater. Yeah, the Civil Rights Act was great...it just changed things.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Well, in the period of time that you were on the school board the second time, what were the issues that the school board then began to deal with?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Mainly we were beginning to grow...and mainly was to get a new high school built. And that we accomplished and there was a little bit of a...well, I'm not sure I even ought to bring it up. That was the number one thing, was to increase our capability building-wise and teacher-wise and improve our school system. And also, I'd mention one thing that helped to smooth this integration was the fact that having the black boys on our athletic teams really made a difference. In fact, we had a young...right after we integrated...we had a young man named Michael Daniel who was fast as lightning. He played halfback on our football team and I've often said that Michael Daniel smoothed integration in Georgetown more than anybody else because we started winning ball games and he wasn't the only one--we had a lot of good black athletes that really came through--and the fact that they did, I mean, that was kind of an example for the whole student body. These kids are heroes, so let's treat them like heroes. Let's be nice.

CAROL PARSONAGE: I'd like to talk a little bit about the hospital and nurse's training program that you were involved in. So, I'd like to go back a little bit. You talked about...you said you bought the hospital with a colleague.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yeah. Dr. Gaddy, Dr. Gaddy had previously had two partners in the hospital with him but they moved away. So Dr. Gaddy and I were basically working

together after I came back from Korea, we worked together. I'd give his anesthetic and he'd give mine and then we'd give a spinal anesthesia for say a hysterectomy or an appendectomy. We had a nurse anesthetist who would sit with the patient but we used spinal anesthesia a lot. We'd give a spinal and then the nurse anesthetist would check her blood pressure and keep the IVs going and Dr. Gaddy and I would assist each other in our surgery. And then we would alternate--once I bought into the hospital--we would alternate being on call for the emergency room and at that time I quit doing home deliveries except in emergency cases, you know, sometimes--"Doctor, the baby's about here...I don't have time to come to the hospital!" But I quit home deliveries purposely because, since I was going to take a lick financially by putting them in the hospital, just the same as my partner, I was willing to do that. But when *he* owned the hospital...I didn't want to saddle it with my patients...to run up a debt to the hospital...so that was another reason to quit home deliveries. So, since I was an owner of the hospital then...

CAROL PARSONAGE: And your employees in that hospital, they were both white and black?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yes, at that time all the nurses were white. We had wonderful black ladies in the kitchen, wonderful cooks, who...yes...and they...we had a janitor who was black, but none of the nurses were black until we got our nursing school started. See, we had a lot of Swedish nurses at that time who were getting older and...

CAROL PARSONAGE: Now what time was this?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: This was in the '60s...early '60s...they were getting older and we were really wondering what are we going to do for nurses. So, it just happened that the band director's wife at the high school was an RN who had taught in an LVN school and had some knowledge about how to do it. So, Hal and I got together with our chief nurse, who was Miss Kalmbach, Mimi Kalmbach, who still lives around here—she's on the board of the Lone Star Circle of Care now—but anyway, along with her we got the wife of the band director, she was named Joyce Jackson, to organize an LVN school. In LVN school you had to take classes and you had to work in the hospital and attend lectures and all of that for a full year before you could take the exam to be an LVN. So we started that school. Can we take a...I want to show you... (brings out a photo)

CAROL PARSONAGE: This is the first class, of 1961...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: This is the first class of the nursing school, the LVN School, in 1961. And as you can see we had two black girls, one Latin American girl, and this is Dr. Gaddy and this is me. As you can see we were a lot younger....

CAROL PARSONAGE: Were any of these regular nurses, I mean...who is in this photograph?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: This is Joyce Jackson, this is...she ran the school. This is Miss Golden Munson, who was...had been in the hospital way back when the Dr. Martins owned the hospital. She was getting close to retirement. All of these nurses...of course we graduated a class for ten or twelve years until Austin Community College took it over.

CAROL PARSONAGE: So your first class...

DOUGLAS BENOLD: This was our first one, in '61.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And then in the early '70s Austin Community College began a program.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: They took over our program, after we got into the new hospital. That was in '78.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Well, now, how did you manage to recruit African Americans and Latinos?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, the problem wasn't recruiting them, the problem was us deciding whether or not we were going to let the Latin Americans and the black people participate. You know we had a lot of discussion between our head nurse and Hal and I about whether or not our patients would accept black nurses. And there was some real...I was pretty determined that we ought to do it...and we let...just sent the word out. They had to have a high school education and they were interviewed pretty strictly. Boy, Miss Kalmbach, who was our head nurse after Miss Golden, boy she was a stickler for not only do things right, but she was...if she found out any little moral discrepancy, even on the outside, that had nothing to do with the hospital, well, boy, they were in trouble (both laugh). She was really...she was tough...but good! Real good.

CAROL PARSONAGE: The two African Americans in this picture, was their high school education at the black school here in Georgetown?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Started that way. Let's see, '61...yes it was, had to be. These were not Georgetown High School graduates. They were Carver...

CAROL PARSONAGE: Right, right, the black school. Okay. And they went through the interview process.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Our students just sailed through like crazy. I think we had good teachers and they were smart girls, too. Nearly every graduate of this school worked either in nursing homes or in the hospital and this is where we got our nurses.

CAROL PARSONAGE: And, any problems with having African American LVNs?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Not the slightest bit. Not the slightest bit. We never had a complaint that I knew of, from anybody.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Did you ever hear anything from the black community about the value of this school to them?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Oh...well, I heard from them. I think they expressed appreciation for the fact that they were able to go to this school. And then they made a good living afterward, and, yeah...but nothing else really.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Okay, that's very interesting. I've kind of reached the end of my questions and we've talked about 45 minutes here. Judy told me last time, now you can talk longer if you want...but is there anything else that maybe I've missed in this period that you thought you would say something about.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Related to...

CAROL PARSONAGE: Really, largely related to...integration...or the African American community as you knew it, or anything like that?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: No, I don't really think of anything...I think all in all it was something that had to be done and it was a time when you just had to step up and state how you feel and back it up with action and that's what I feel so proud of the people who started that Committee for Better Schools because they really stuck their neck out, coming out, even being willing to hire a lawyer to push the integration even though in that last election for school board about 65% of the people voted for the segregationists and they made no bones about the fact that they were running on the segregation ticket. So, I think it took some courage on the part of the Committee for Better Schools to come out against that kind of majority because they thought they were right.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Are any of those people still in Georgetown now?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Yes.

CAROL PARSONAGE: Who?

DOUGLAS BENOLD: Well, Norman Spellman, who is a retired professor from Southwestern. Now, Ed Harris is the one who ran the laundry...he was on that committee, but he's moved away. I think George Nelson lives out at Sun City. He was the band director at Southwestern and at our high school, for years! He's still here. And

of course, I'm here. I wasn't on the committee but I was supporting them. A Mr. Osborn was real active...he was the voice teacher at Southwestern. His wife, Alice, is still here, but he's dead. I forget, but I believe those are the only ones that are still around.

CAROL PARSONAGE: I want to make sure that they're on our list to interview because that sounds like a group we really would like to know a good deal about. Well, I thank you for participating in this interview with me.

DOUGLAS BENOLD: It's been a pleasure.