What's the vision? Then I can make sure that I'm in the classroom, doing things with my kindergarteners for Dr. Seuss Week.

[1:38:00]

Or I can make sure that I’m teaching a small group, which I do with our fourth graders in preparation for ISTEP testing. So do I miss being a teacher? Not necessarily, because I still am. But there are some parts of being a teacher that I don’t miss. The grading of papers I do miss, things like that. But it’s just a tradeoff. Always a teacher at heart.

Sipe: So you said one of your goals as an administrator is to get kids excited about coming to school. How do you do that?

Williams: One, you have to reach out, outside of the school building. We have a lot of very positive things going on at Allen Elementary. We have a partnership with Hanfield United Methodist Church in Marion, Indiana, where there are over fifty students that we feed over the weekends. So we’ve identified a huge population of our ninety-one poverty students, and we actually feed them over the weekends. They get bags of food that last them Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

[1:39:00]

And they get that every Friday. It’s actually called BEST Bags. So the acronym stands for Bless Each Student Today. So things like that, when you can reach out into their home and say “Even when you’re not here, we’re with you.” I mean I think that goes a long way. And there’s something about watching a student run down the hallway on a Friday afternoon to get that food, because they know they need it and they’re excited about it. I had a teacher, because we have very strict policies of no running, and making sure we’re at a level zero walking in the hallway. And she said “What do we do with those students that run down the hallway to go get their food?” And I looked at here and I said “We let them run.” That’s it, I mean, this might be the only opportunity for them to eat over the weekend, so if that kid wants to run and push me out of the way to get that food on a Friday, then we let them run, so.

[1:40:00]

Sipe: All right, well before we close this interview, is there anything that I haven’t asked you about that you would like people to know about your life, or your career, or your experiences at Ball State?

Williams: Um—this could be another fort-five minutes, because I could talk on and on about Ball State—

Sipe: We have about twenty minutes.
Williams: We have about twenty? No, Ball State is—it’s been very, very good to me. Very good to my family. It’s been an honor—you know—to attend Ball State for undergrad, attend Ball State for my graduate level, and now I’m looking at the opportunity of attending Ball State for doctorate level. I just think when you build those relationships, which goes back on the foundation of what my dad did when he was at Ball State, and continuing that. Yeah, it’s invaluable, the things that I could say about Ball State. I appreciate all of those that have given of their time, to not only do this interview, but given of their time to support Ball State.

[1:41:00]

And I think that is something that has been very, very strong, is every time I’ve come to Ball State, there’s a core group of people that are always here. And I think when you see people giving of their time to be here for Black Alumni, to be here for Alumni Council, to be here for Teachers College, to be here for Homecoming football. And you see those same faces as you get older you start to think, You know what? If they keep coming back, six, seven, eight, ten times a year from L.A., from Atlanta, from D.C., then it means something to them. And as I—I’m getting older, I’m starting to realize, I understand why they do that. Because it means the exact same thing to me. I don’t miss a homecoming. Still try to get to as many events as I can. I hope to one day be back on the Teachers College Alumni Board for my second term. Hope to be involved with other associations from an alumni standpoint. But like I said, that’s just—it was everything that I needed when I was coming into becoming a man, and it’s helped me become a man. So all I can say to Ball State University is thank you.

[1:42:00]

Sipe: Any thing else you’d like to say about your life or career?

Williams: No, I think that is it. Definitely want to thank you all for documenting this, because once again I think it goes back to knowing your history and being able to have the accounts of many people from different generations of those that have attended Ball State University, and to have that documented for those that are coming in to see. They’re gonna see success, success stories. They’re gonna see different paths, so I can’t wait to look at the video myself of the different people, because you’re gonna see that there were different paths that everyone took to get to where they are. And I think that’s gonna be fun to watch.

Sipe: All right well then, on behalf of the Ball State University African-American Oral History Project, I’d like to thank you for your participation.

Williams: All right, thank you. It’s been a pleasure.

[1:42:56]
End of interview
Ball State suffered through one of its most disastrous basketball seasons in history this year, but Coach Jim Hinga faced many problems which might help account for the 5-won, 17-lost record.

Only three seniors numbered among the squad members; moreover, many of the men on the varsity were frosh in collegiate play ranks. Lack of height hurt, too, in the rebounding department: even though the Cards fired at a .437 clip for the season, they couldn't get, usually, as many shots as taller opponents.
Coach Jim Hingo (kneeling), Norman Jones, Dave Hart, John Lebo, Bill O'Neal, Ron Jenks, Al Cook, Bob Stewart, Wilbur Davis, Jim Sullivan, Ted Fullhart, Mike Henderson, Dean Campbell, George Taylor, (Assistant Coach Fred Kohane was absent when this picture was taken).

### Schedule

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Roundballers Top .500 Mark With 12-11 Record

Finishing out the regular roundball season with an overall record of 12 wins and 11 losses, Ball State's basketball team stood fifth in Indiana Collegiate Conference (ICC) standings with a five-win, six-loss record in ICC play. In other ICC standings it was sixth in team offense and third in team defense. Its best effort came in shooting from the field as it ended up in second place with a .455 average. It was last in free throw percentages with a .652 mark, fourth in rebounds with an average of 50.8 per conference game and third in the number of personal fouls committed with an average of 17.4 a game.

Opening the season with a hair-raising overtime win over Hanover 82-78, the Cards went on to drop the Baldwin-Wallace Yellow Jackets 71-56 before a capacity crowd of 2,500 spectators at Ball Memorial Gym. In winning that game, the Cards exhibited a sharp passing attack that saw Mike Readnor and Dick Oldham hitting on close shots while Howard Wilkison and John Kunze kept scoring from the outside. The team hit 28 of 50 from the field for a sizzling .560 percentage.

In a late-season game, the Cards humbled Wabash 83-67. Coming into the game, Wabash had a 10-game winning streak and an NCAA bid.

In the final game of the season, Jim Hug's roundballers met arch-rival Butler in a highly anticipated home game. The Bulldogs, however, led all the way and won 73-59.

Twice the Cards broke the century mark by scoring 102 against Eastern Illinois' 83 at home and 100 in a two-point win at Valparaiso. Following that win at Valpo, which came as the next to the last game of the season, the Cards were greeted upon their return by a surprise rally organized by various students and faculty members.

Ball Gym seemed to hold some sort of magic spell for the Cards. They won nine of 12 home games there, thus giving Ball State fans the opportunity to see some of the finest basketball played by BSTC in a number of years.
"Training for Leadership" was the theme for Kappa Alpha Psi this year. In following this idea, members participated in a leadership conference held at the University of Illinois.

Keeping abreast with worldly happenings, the men of our chapter used the title of "Sputnik" for their combined Christmas and winter closed dance.

Kappa Alpha Psi men donated their talents at the various school functions. The men using their fine ability in singing voices provided many moments of enjoyable entertainment — "rock an' roll" as well as the standards.

Delta Iota chapter had other memorable and worthy events. A year of smokers, parties after various campus activities, and closed dances highlighted the year.
“Hello, my name is Charlotte Sipe today’s date is March 26, 2015, and I am interviewing Dr. William O’Neal on the Ball State campus as part of the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project.”

- **Youth**
  - General
    - Birth: where and when
    - Parents: names, occupations, education
    - Siblings: names, ages in relation
    - Distant Family: Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles living nearby?
    - Religion
  - Elementary School
    - Where? If private, why?
    - Was education stressed in your family?
    - School experience: favorite subject, racial discrimination
  - Middle/High School
    - Where? If private, why?
    - Extracurriculars? Why those?
- **College**
  - Why Ball State?
  - Major? Why? Did you ever change?
    - Did you always know you wanted to teach?
  - First thoughts? Nervous, excited?
  - Live freshman year?
  - Did you make friends easily?
    - How? Class, dorms, clubs?
    - Diverse?
  - Did you find Muncie/Ball State more or less progressive than hometown as far as race relations?
  - How paid for school?
  - Did you join any activities? Which ones and why?
    - Basketball
      - Team dynamics
      - Were you good (personally, team)
    - Frat
      - Why join?
      - Why this one?
  - Where did you live later on?
  - Any mentors?
  - Graduation: Excited, nervous, ready or not?
- **After College**
  - First job? How did you get this job?
    - Why stay in Muncie?
    - Did you face discrimination in this job, racial or gender?
o Why did you decide to get your masters/doctorate? Was this always the plan?
  ▪ Did you do these right after grad?
  o Administrative jobs?
    ▪ Where (names of schools)
      • Why this age group?
      • Why in Anderson?
  o Wife (1959)?
    ▪ How did you meet her?
    ▪ What does she do?
  o You have a child, correct?
    ▪ Name, age
  o Involvement with Ball State since graduation
    ▪ How?
    ▪ Why?

“Before we close the interview, is there anything I haven’t asked you about that you would like people to know about your life, career, or experiences at Ball State?”

“On behalf of the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project I’d like to thank you for your participation.”
Sipe: Hello, my name is Charlotte Sipe, today’s date is March 26, 2015, and I am interviewing Dr. William O’Neal on the Ball State Campus as part the Ball State University African-American Alumni Oral History Project. Dr. O’Neal, can you tell me where and when you were born?

O’Neal: I was born in—of all places—Ruleville, Mississippi. And I grew up—but I grew up in Muncie, so I call that home, because we came north when I was two years old.

Sipe: And when were you born?

O’Neal: In 1939. In fact I’ve got a birthday coming up on Easter Day.

Sipe: Happy birthday. What were your parents names?

O’Neal: William and Lueida. My dad didn’t have a middle name, so they attached one to me: Eddie(??). But my mother’s name is Lueida: L-u-e-i-d-a.

Sipe: And what’d your parents do for a living?

O’Neal: My father was a factory worker, and my mother was a domestic worker for a while, but for the most part she was just a housewife, she’s a housewife.

[1:00]

Sipe: Did you have any siblings?

O’Neal: Yes, I had two sisters and I have a younger brother.

Sipe: Were they older?

O’Neal: My sisters were older. I had one sister—the one that taught me how to fight—we
were close in age. Thirteen months apart. And then we had another older sister that was about four years older than me. My brother’s thirteen years younger.

Sipe: What were all your sibling’s names?

O’Neal: My brother’s name’s Calvin. And my sisters’ names are Millie and Gracie(??).

Sipe: Okay and were your parents—did they have college educations?

O’Neal: No. In fact, neither of my parents went past the eighth grade. They were sharecroppers in Mississippi, and they worked in the fields, rather than go to school.

[2:00]

Sipe: And why did they move from Mississippi to Indiana?

O’Neal: Well for the economic possibilities. And you know, this was right at the beginning of the war, and they were hiring in some of the plants here that were manufacturing rubber goods, et cetera, et cetera. They moved here to have a better life.

Sipe: Did—when they came to Indiana, did any of the rest of your more distant family, like aunts or uncles, come to Indiana?

O’Neal: Yeah, it’s kind of a pattern that was established, because when we came to Indiana, our grandparents, my grandparents, were already here. And we moved in with them for a while until we use that phrase—until we could get on our feet. So my parents and then we had another group that came up afterwards, and that’s kind of the way it was then. Families would move in together. They would blend until they could separate and operate independently.

[3:00]

Sipe: So you would say you were close with your extended family?

O’Neal: Very close. Our family still is very close.

Sipe: Okay, was your family religious at all?

O’Neal: Yes, uh-huh. Well when we say religious, we were church going, and I was made to go to Sunday school. And that tradition has carried on through our family even until today.

Sipe: What church did you go to?
O’Neal: Shaffer Chapel. In fact, Ball State is doing a project with Shaffer Chapel, I don’t know if you’re familiar with that, but that was where I grew up. I grew—my parents are almost charter members of Shaffer Chapel.

Sipe: So when you lived here in Muncie, where did you live in Muncie, as a child?

O’Neal: On Russey Street, which is one block—well Highland Avenue is the main street that runs through Whitely, which is our addition. It runs east and west and so does Russey, but it was one block over. So it’s about six blocks from Shaffer Chapel.

[4:00]

Sipe: Was your neighborhood diverse?

O’Neal: No, the only diversity we had were bad kids and good kids. I’d like to think I was one of the good ones. But no, our neighborhood was all pretty much a black neighborhood. The segregation was pretty strong back then. There were other cultures that were around, but they weren’t close by. And our immediate neighborhood was all black.

Sipe: Did you have friends in your neighborhood?

O’Neal: Oh yeah.

Sipe: What’d you do with your friends in your neighborhood?

O’Neal: We had games, we had outside games. A lot different from now. We didn’t have computers of course. But we had fields where we would have kickball, softball, football, all kinds of games.

[5:00]

And even at night, the girls would gather, we would all gather together and do things like cook things, make fire and do things together.

Sipe: Where’d you go to elementary school?

O’Neal: Longfellow. Longfellow Elementary school. And it’s located in Whitely and still is in existence, but in a different building now, a new building.

Sipe: Since it was in your neighborhood, and your neighborhood was mostly black, was your school also mostly black?

O’Neal: We had—the school was integrated, kids from another end of town—the other end of the neighborhood came into Longfellow. So it was integrated, yes.
Sipe: Did you have any black teachers in school?

O'Neal: No.

Sipe: How do you think that affected you?

[6:00]

O'Neal: I don't think it affected me negatively. I just think that I would have liked to have had that experience, because now, I've never had a black teacher or a black professor, even up until now, with all the years that I've gone to school.

Sipe: Was education stressed in your family?

O'Neal: Yes, from the viewpoint of my parents had the vision to see that education would be a much better option than not going to school. But of course they never had much experience of being in school. I don't ever remember my parents coming to school, all through my school days.

Sipe: But they did encourage you to do well in school?

O'Neal: Yes. Encouraged us all to obey the teacher, and do what you're supposed to do, and make sure we did our homework.

Sipe: What were some of your favorite subjects at that age?

[7:00]

O'Neal: I'd say, in the younger days, I'd say English, because that's my strength. Language Arts, because I like to write, and I like reading and poetry and things of that nature.

Sipe: Did your parents ever read to you at home?

O'Neal: No, no. My parents were just a couple steps from being illiterate. Now they could read, they would read the Bible of course, and the newspaper, but they weren't highly educated at all. They didn't have the opportunities to get any kind of sophistication in reading.

Sipe: So your love of reading came from school?

O'Neal: Yeah, just from the imagination. I remember my elementary teachers would—I can remember them very vividly. The ones that read stories to us, and really—*Tom Sawyer*, that book was one that really got me interested in wanting to go into a lot of reading.
Our teacher would read maybe a couple chapters each day, and I’d always look forward to that, to the next episode.

Sipe: Did you ever face any racial discrimination in school when you were young?

O’Neal: I guess as I look back, I didn’t realize it until after I was older, some of the things that had happened. But not blatantly, because we were pretty much independent in our neighborhood, just among our own black constituency. We had some things that happened at school that had some racial overtones of course, because we had all white teachers. Not necessarily that they’re all gonna always have bias, but there was some.

Sipe: Could you give me an example?

O’Neal: I think that the ones that I can think of for the most part—I was a pretty good student in school, but I a lot of times, I wouldn’t get chosen for things that good students get chosen for. And I think there were several of us in that same category. They would choose the white children first. But again, we didn’t look at that as anything other than natural, because that’s all we’d known in terms of the history that’s shared about American at that time.

Sipe: So, for middle school and high school, did you also go to schools near your neighborhood?

O’Neal: Yes, I went to McKinley Junior High School, which is where the Muncie Fieldhouse is located, that area there. It’s closed now of course. And then I went to Muncie Central High School.

Sipe: Was that before Muncie Southside opened?

O’Neal: Oh, long before Muncie Southside opened. Muncie Southside opened in 1965, I believe that’s sixty-four and sixty-five and I graduated from Muncie Central in 1957, so it was quite a while before.

Sipe: So everyone in Muncie was going to Muncie Central?

O’Neal: Exactly. It was the only school in town, the basketball powerhouse.

Sipe: Did you play basketball in high school?
O’Neal: Yes I did.

Sipe: Were you—Muncie Central’s been a powerhouse for a long time. Were you a part of those teams?

O’Neal: Yes, we were ranked number one most of the year, then we got beat. But that was a good experience.

Sipe: Did you ever win a state championship when you were there, or come close?

O’Neal: No, we won semi-state, but we never won the state championship. The team that preceded us won a state championship, and I don’t know if you’re familiar with the Milan situation. Well, there’s a movie made about it, can’t think of the name of it right now.

Sipe: Is it Hoosiers?

[11:00]

O’Neal: Hoosiers, that’s right. Muncie Central and Milan played and Milan won that game, by a real low score of thirty-one to twenty-eight or something like that. But that was the Muncie Central—it’s still legendary in Muncie. And I started school a year after that, started as a freshman the year after that.

Sipe: Did you ever feel like—well first, was your team—were your teams at Muncie Central mostly black or white, or were they pretty well—

O’Neal: It was mixed, it was mixed. It was very much integrated. I just might say that that was one of the greatest experiences that I had in terms of learning to live with all kinds of people. Anybody who has a chance to do something like that ought to do it, because it really, it does something good.

Sipe: Did you ever feel like there was any racial tension at Muncie Central when you were there?

[12:00]

O’Neal: Oh yeah. There was, very much. There were the haves and the have-nots and I happened to be one of the have-nots. But because I was an athlete, I think that I got a little bit better treatment than some of the other black students. But there were cliques, and there were places where black kids didn’t go, even in the building. There was a gathering place in front of the auditorium, it would be very strange to see a black student walk through that group that gathered there before school and at lunch time and on breaks.
So did you ever feel like sports kind of brought everyone together, or were people still pretty separate?

I thought sports brought a lot of people together, because it provided a chance for people to know each other, and we had to interact in order to play together. And that has always been my premise: if people get to know each other, it makes a world of difference.

Because I think bias and bigotry is based upon ignorance. And once that ignorance barrier is broken, you have a chance to create something good.

Do you think it brought people together just for the players, or do you think it also brought fans together?

Well there was a common cause. Of course, being a real powerhouse in athletics, it brought people together. The fans were all of one accord: they wanted Central to win at all costs. But it didn’t cross the line of causing integration to take place. There was still the white students and the white people sat over here, the black people sat over there. So it was still segregated. Remember, this is back in the late fifties.

Were there any sport teams or clubs or anything that were kind of off-limits for black students?

Yes. There’s a group called the “High Y” that had an affiliation with the local YMCA, and it was white students only.

Was that like by rule or was it just—?

It was just—it was an unwritten rule. It was one that you had to be excepted in, and no black students were excepted.

Were there any other clubs like that?

To my knowledge, I can’t think of any right now.

Were you involved in any other extracurriculars or sports or anything besides basketball?

Well I ran track, yeah I ran track. And I was president of our Spanish club. I loved languages, so I took Spanish and French, and I was involved in our Spanish club which was a lot of fun.
Sipe: What events did you run in track?

[15:00]

O'Neal: I high jumped—

Sipe: I high jumped too.

O'Neal: Ah did you?

Sipe: Yeah.

O'Neal: And hurdled. Was a hurdler. And once in a while, I’d get stuck in as a broad jumper, but hurdling was my main thing.

Sipe: And then what drew you to Spanish? You said you loved languages, but why Spanish?

O'Neal: In the sixth grade, we had a teacher by the name of Mrs. Post(?), I’ll never forget. She and her family would go to Mexico and she’d bring back artifacts, things of that nature, and she would—every year—I had her for two years in a row, the fifth and sixth grade, which was great, she was always one of my favorites. And we made chili, and we made Mexican food, and I got interested in languages and carried that out by taking some Spanish classes in high school. And incidentally, I went on when I got my doctorate, I used Spanish as one of my minors.

Sipe: Did they offer any other languages at Muncie Central besides Spanish?

[16:00]

O'Neal: Yes. I had French also. Spanish, French and I believe German, I didn’t tackle the German.

Sipe: But Spanish just stuck out to you more than French?

O'Neal: Yes, Spanish. Spanish was one I took most of the time. Took a year of French.

Sipe: So you ended up playing basketball at Ball State. Did you get recruited while in high school?

O'Neal: I more—I was talked to, but I was more of a walk-on. During that time, there was the recruitment frenzy that you have now. Because tuition was very very inexpensive, and I lived at home, so I was a good candidate to come play there, because I was cheap. But those were some of the greatest days, when I went to
Ball State and played basketball.

Sipe: Did you get talked to by any other schools besides Ball State?

O’Neal: No.

Sipe: When you were still in high school?

O’Neal: No.

Sipe: Just Ball State?

O’Neal: Just Ball State.

Sipe: Okay, so why’d you choose to attend Ball State for college?

[17:00]

O’Neal: It was really about, probably my only option at the time, because the financial situation was one where I just about had to stay at home, and my brother-in-law, who had married my oldest sister, he had gone to Ball State and that was kind of a role model for me. And so I kind of followed up and went into education just like he did.

Sipe: Did you always know you were gonna go to college? Was it like expected of you?

O’Neal: I think not. No, I don’t think so. I’m the first one in my family that graduated from college, but I don’t think there was a high expectation, because I don’t think that there was the knowledge and sophistication and the emphasis, because there were always jobs around during that time, in factories and different places. So college wasn’t the major emphasis at that time.

[18:00]

Sipe: So when you came to Ball State, what did you choose as your major?

O’Neal: Education. I chose education as my major.

Sipe: Just general education, or was it aimed at a specific—?

O’Neal: I wanted to teach young kids, and that’s—I took elementary, I took elementary curriculum. And that’s where I did my first work: in elementary teaching.

Sipe: Did you always know that you wanted to be a teacher?

O’Neal: No. I went to school to play basketball. And by coincidence I just decided to be an
education major.

Sipe: Why'd you pick elementary education?

O'Neal: I just—mainly because my—it's kind of like—I said, my brother-in-law was kind of my role model, and that's what he did. And he was later on a principal of an elementary school. But that's probably the biggest reason. I can't think of any other rhyme or reason. I don't know if I'd choose that now, but that's what I chose then.

[19:00]

Sipe: So did you ever change your major or did you stick with education the whole time?

O'Neal: I stayed with it the whole time.

Sipe: Did you ever have any thoughts about changing it?

O'Neal: No, elementary is a pretty general curriculum and you can switch over, but I did later on get an endorsement in science and one in physical education so I could coach. But as far as my major's concerned, no I didn't.

Sipe: Okay, so what were your first thoughts when you started college? Were you nervous or excited?

O'Neal: Yeah, I think I was apprehensive, because I was a little fish thrown into a big pond, and I hadn't gotten out in the world very much. Hadn't traveled. My first trip ever on a train was in my sophomore or junior year of college, when I was with the basketball team.

[20:00]

My first flight in an airplane was when I was a freshman in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps], so I hadn't been out much. I hadn't had much experience doing many things, so I was excited, but I was apprehensive. Didn't last long though.

Sipe: So you said you lived at home?

O'Neal: Yes.

Sipe: All four years of college?

O'Neal: Yes I did.
Sipe: Did you ever feel like you were kind of missing the college experience because of that?

O'Neal: You don’t miss what you don’t know about. I hadn’t even considered that. I was on campus with people who were going to school here and living on campus, and I envied that a little bit, but it wasn’t—I didn’t feel like I was missing a whole lot.

Sipe: How’d you get to school? You lived at home. Did you have a car that you drove here?

O'Neal: Here to Ball State?

Sipe: Yes.

[21:00]

O'Neal: Part of the time. Yes, I eventually had a car. I had a fifty-two Dodge convertible. That my brother-in-law still has, he keeps old antique cars. I gave it to him after I got out of school. But yeah, that was my source of transportation.

Sipe: So you said you eventually had a car. Did that mean at one time during college you didn’t have a car?

O'Neal: Yeah.

Sipe: So did you take the bus of—?

O'Neal: Bus. Bus, yeah, rode the bus.

Sipe: Okay, so did you make friends easily during college?

O'Neal: I’m sorry.

Sipe: Did you make friends easily here at Ball State?

O'Neal: I think so, yeah. Yeah, I had a lot of friends here at Ball State, that are still friends now, sure.

Sipe: Did you make them mostly through class or basketball or...?

O'Neal: Well, both. And a third option was the old Pittinger Student Center. That’s where all the students gathered anytime they had a break or they had a floating class or something.

[22:00]
That's where people would come and they would meet. There wasn't much else to do except play ping-pong or sit and play cards or just sit and talk.

Sipe: So was this friend group diverse or were they mostly African-American?

O'Neal: We stayed in our own group, pretty much. There was a certain part of the student center where the black students gathered, and that's where I would spend most of my time with them. But it was a little bit less segregated than high school, because the college kids, they didn't—there was no blatant effort to stay away from each other, the two groups.

Sipe: So you said you walked on to the basketball team.

O'Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: Did you do that your freshman year?

O'Neal: Freshman year, um-hm.

Sipe: And how was that?

[23:00]

O'Neal: I just remember it as being fun. Because I—coming from Muncie Central, people expect a lot from you, and I wasn't a big star or anything like that, but I fit in well with the group. And I had pretty successful experience, even as a freshman.

Sipe: So you got to see a lot of playing time, even as a freshman?

O'Neal: Yes.

Sipe: So I got some of your team pictures from—I don't think I have your freshman one—I have your sophomore, junior and senior ones. And I noticed that they're not very diverse teams. Do you want to see them too?

O'Neal: Yeah, I would like to see them. Because I still stay in touch with a lot of the guys that I played with.

Sipe: So I noticed that they're not very diverse teams. There aren't very many—

O'Neal: Not many black players.

Sipe: --blacks on any of the teams.

O'Neal: That's true.
Sipe: How did—how was that?

O'Neal: I can share with you that there were some issues that came up. I think it was in 1959, we had a game, overnight game, in Evansville.

**[24:00]**

The Evansville Purple Ace. The team stayed at the Vendome Hotel and I think there were either two of us or three of us on the—black players on the team. And they wouldn’t allow the black players to eat in the restaurant. And so—one of the experiences that I’ll never ever ever forget, is that because they wouldn’t let us eat in the restaurant, the other players refused also. So the coach gave us money, we went across the street and all ate at the bus station. But that was an experience that was, I thought, was significant, very significant.

Sipe: So you’d say the white players on the team kind of—were very accepting of the black players?

O'Neal: Yes, yes.

Sipe: And were you close with—?

**[25:00]**

O’Neal: We were close. We were together every day and we travelled together, and you know, all year we ate together. It was a real good experience. That’s why I say everybody ought to get into athletics, because no color line when you want to win.

Sipe: So were those teams successful at all, or—?

O’Neal: Our senior year we were—we had a winning record our senior year. But the other two years, we won some games, but we weren’t—we didn’t have—I don’t remember what the records were but—

Sipe: A couple of them have the records written on there.

O’Neal: Yeah, the—we were over 500 in our senior year. But the years before that, I don’t think we were quite at 500, we weren’t anything great.

Sipe: So did—even though you weren’t doing very well those couple years, did the university community still like support you, come to your games?

O’Neal: Yeah, yeah. In fact, we had more students come to the games then, than now. We played in the old Ball Gym, I don’t know if you’re familiar with that, that’s where we played our games. It was full all the time. It was always full when we played.
Sipe: So even though the basketball team wasn’t very successful, there was a lot of school spirit?

O’Neal: Yeah, very much so.

Sipe: Was that true of other sports too, or just basketball?

O’Neal: I’d say more basketball than anything. Some in football, but not as much. But I think basketball was kind of the kind here in Indiana at that time.

Sipe: Did you become friends with any other athletes from different sports?

O’Neal: Oh yes.

Sipe: Because you were all athletes, you kind of felt united?

O’Neal: Oh yeah, right. And well we all had common goals, so we would have different kinds of activities where we would show up, same place and talk about our sport.

Sipe: Okay, so you were a member of the basketball team, and then you also were a member of a fraternity. Correct?

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: And what fraternity was that?

O’Neal: Kappa Alpha Psi.

Sipe: And that’s a black fraternity?

[27:00]

O’Neal: Black fraternity, uh-huh.

Sipe: Why’d you decide to join a fraternity?

O’Neal: I guess it was peer pressure. They had what—well they had a rush, of course, and they were recruiting members and I along—I think there were like eight or nine of us in our pledge group. And all of them were my good friends and we all joined.

Sipe: So you stayed involved with that all four years?

O’Neal: Yes.
And did you ever feel—for example, I found—I found your fraternity in your freshman yearbook, but you did not have a page in your sophomore, junior or senior yearbooks, that I could find. So did you ever feel kind of like your fraternity, being a black fraternity, was kind of uninc1uded in campus happenings?

No, not really because I remember very well, we teamed up with—I want to say—I’ve forgotten what sorority, it’s a very popular sorority. And worked together in a variety show. We won first place in the variety show. And that may have been my freshman year. That may have been why we were touted in my freshman year. Oh, I can’t think of the name of the group. It’s one of the popular sororities.

Is it a black sorority?

No, it was a white sorority.

A white sorority? There are a lot of them.

Yeah. I’d know it if I heard, but I can’t think of it right now.

So you did feel included by the rest of the Greek organizations on campus?

They were separate, they were separate. Like the old saying “separate but equal.” I mean, there wasn’t much integration. I think they—when they melted the variety show participants, I think that was an attempt to try to get more diversity. But the black students stayed in the black fraternities, white students stayed in the white fraternities.

Were there other black fraternities at that time?

We had one come on campus: Alpha Phi Alpha. But it was not chartered. So it was just kind of like a club. But it is chartered now, of course.

Was that after you’d already joined?

Yeah, after I’d already joined.

So when you joined Kappa Alpha Psi, it was the only black fraternity?

Yes, it was the only one that you could join that had a charter, yes.

Okay, so what did you and your fraternity brothers do together?
O’Neal: Drank (laughs). Not a whole lot. But we had athletic teams, we had study tables, just other—just general fun activities. Dances, we had dances. We had what’s called a “Sweetheart Dance” and that was always our popular dance, where we would sing our Sweetheart song and things of that nature.

[30:00]

Sipe: So I know nowadays, most fraternities and sororities are involved with a philanthropy. So was your fraternity involved in any?

O’Neal: Well, we didn’t have money to give, but we gave time. Our fraternity went out to some of the elementary schools and spent time with the kids. And especially those who were education majors. But, we didn’t—I don’t remember giving money. I don’t remember having any. So, I don’t think that was one of our big things.

Sipe: Okay, so you were involved in a fraternity and basketball. Were there any other organizations you were a member of?

O’Neal: Not really, I can’t think of anything else I was involved with. It was all I could do to keep up with the things—doing that.

[31:00]

I did run track my freshman year. I didn’t—I wasn’t on the track team all year, but Doctor Stealy wanted me to come out and broad jump and I did, during the tournament, and I did. Which was just a very very short tenure.

Sipe: Okay, so let’s move back to classes. So you were studying elementary education. Were you—were there a lot of African-Americans in that course of study?

O’Neal: Yes, most of the African-Americans there were in education because, you’re probably too young to realize it, but there weren’t very many occupations that were flashed in front of African-Americans at that time. Education was the main one. And this was, at the time I was there, it was a teachers college, and that’s what we did, we majored in teaching.

[32:00]

Sipe: So also, I have your senior yearbook, the whole page. And I notice you are the only African-American on it, but you’re also one of two men on it. Were your classes overwhelmingly women?

O’Neal: Yes.

Sipe: And do you think that affected you in any way?
O'Neal: It was a good thing.

Sipe: It was a good thing?

O'Neal: I don't think it affected anything. I — it really hadn’t hit me that much, other than I knew most of them were girls. They were — you had to work to keep up with the curve on the grades, because the women seemed to aspire to — they hung out at the library a little bit more than we did.

Sipe: Were most of your professors women?

O'Neal: No, I think it’s pretty well split down the middle. I don’t remember, I don’t remember them being mostly — I’d say it’s pretty much split down the middle.

Sipe: Did you ever feel like your professors favored the women over the men in your classes?

O'Neal: No, I never — that never occurred to me.

Sipe: Did you face any racial discrimination from professors?

O'Neal: I don’t think so. I think that there was a undertone that the expectations weren’t as high as they probably were for the Caucasian students. But as far as having any kind of blatant discrimination, I don’t remember any of that. I don’t remember having any problem with that.

Sipe: Okay, so you said you made friends easily. Are you still close with any of your friends from basketball or your fraternity or —?

O'Neal: Yes, um-hm.

Sipe: Close friends?

O'Neal: Yeah, yeah. I still — well, I say close friends. They live in Philadelphia and have some live in Greensberg(??), some live in Louisiana, and I still talk to them on the phone and when they come up this way, we usually try to get together.

[33:00]

And we had a fifty year reunion of our basketball team, where we had over forty of our players and their wives came back here on campus at Ball State, and we went on a tour of the campus. Some hadn’t been here for fifty years. And that was a good time. But we still — when we got together, it was just like we were playing
ball. That's how close we were.

Sipe: So were you on scholarship, is that how you paid for school?

O'Neal: Yes and no. The scholarship, when you say scholarship, the most financial burden on Ball State was for the students who were living on campus, because tuition was only like fifty dollars a quarter, something like that, so. And that was paid: tuition and books. It wasn't nearly as expensive as it is now, but if you say scholarship, well yeah I guess, if you want to call it that. I had tuition and books.

Sipe: Was your freshman year, because you walked on—did your scholarship also cover that?

[35:00]

O'Neal: No, I had to work my way through that.

Sipe: Okay, so you worked?

O'Neal: Yeah, I worked. I worked as a—I had a job in the music building here on the campus, and my job was to sweep down the stairs, sweep the restrooms. And I also had another job off campus where I cleaned the office of—cleaned a barbershop down on Jackson Street. So that was my source of income.

Sipe: Did you work all four years that you were in school, or just your freshman year?

O'Neal: I worked all the time I was there. I was—I got married between my junior—sophomore—after my sophomore year, right at the beginning of my junior year. So yeah, I was working.

Sipe: And how many hours a week would you say you were working during school?

O'Neal: Probably twenty five. I'd say twenty five. That includes both the job here on campus and also at the barbershop.

[36:00]

Sipe: Did you work during the summers too?

O'Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: Full time?

O'Neal: Well I was a lifeguard. I was a lifeguard during the summer, and managed the pool during the summer, all summer.
Sipe: So, hold on one second. So, you—your scholarship paid for your last three years: books and tuition, correct?

O’Neal: Yeah.

Sipe: But you still had to pay for like transportation fees?

O’Neal: Oh yeah. I didn’t have any other—no other perks.

Sipe: Yeah.

O’Neal: No meals, nothing like that.

Sipe: When you would travel with your basketball team, were your meals covered?

O’Neal: Oh yes.

Sipe: Okay, so some meals?

O’Neal: Yeah, some meals.

Sipe: Okay. So you mentioned that you got married, after your sophomore year, I believe.

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: And that was in 1959?

O’Neal: Fifty-nine, exactly.

Sipe: And can you tell me your wife’s name?

O’Neal: Carolyn.

Sipe: And how’d you meet Carolyn?

[37:00]

O’Neal: She lived next door.

Sipe: When you were growing up?

O’Neal: We grew up—we never dated, but she lived next door, all the time we were growing up. And we both came to Ball State, and then we start studying together from time to time. And that blossomed into what is now a fifty-five year marriage.
Sipe: Was she like the same age as you? Was she in your grade?
O'Neal: She’s a year younger than me.
Sipe: Okay.
O'Neal: But no, I was a year ahead of her in school.
Sipe: Okay, so what was she going to school for?
O'Neal: She’s an elementary teacher as well.
Sipe: Okay.
O'Neal: She had to drop out a year to have our son.
Sipe: So, did you think that once you got married, did that kind of separate you from your friends or teammates, because they were all still college students and you were moving on in life?

[38:00]
O’Neal: Not really, we still—the partying and stuff was over, but we still were friends, you know. It’s just—it was still a very close knit group, because when we were on campus, just to let you know how many—how lacking we’re in black students here on campus, everybody knew everybody. Everybody—I mean, there wasn’t anyone on campus that you didn’t know that was black, so. Our friendships remained same. We still ran the same circles and—but I, of course, didn’t get to go party like I did earlier.
Sipe: So you were living with your parents your freshman and sophomore year, right?
O’Neal: Um-hm.
Sipe: And then you married your wife—
O’Neal: Um-hm.
Sipe: And then, did you move in together?
O’Neal: No—Yes, we had an apartment. We had an apartment.
Sipe: For your junior and senior years?
O’Neal: Um-hm.
Sipe: Was that close to campus?

[39:00]

O'Neal: It was close to where we lived before, yeah. It wasn’t close to campus. I had a car then, but it wasn’t walking distance. It was in Whitely. It was in Whitely, which is close to where we grew up.

Sipe: Did she have to work too?

O'Neal: Yeah she worked at the library. Yeah, she worked at the Muncie library all the time we were in school

Sipe: Okay, so you listed a couple jobs that you had during school. How did you get those jobs?

O'Neal: I got the job here on campus through the athletics. Mr. Primmer, Bob Primmer, who’s the athletic director at that time, he worked that, to get most of the athletes jobs. And the other, I just don’t remember how I got that. But I was a hustler. I mean, I always had a job. I started working when I was eleven years old. And had a job ever since. So, I just don’t remember how I got the job at the barbershop.

[40:00]

Sipe: So you just said that you’ve been working since you were eleven. So let’s go back a little bit. What jobs were you doing at that age?

O'Neal: Pin setter at a bowling alley. A pin setter at a bowling alley, and that was probably the hardest job I ever had, as I look back. It probably was the hardest job. Because at that time, they didn’t have the automatic pin setters. Course there are ten pins, and when the pins were knocked down, there’s a place called the pit, that’s where the pins were, and we had a big bench above it where we would have to get down. When the ball’s thrown, we had to get down and pick up the pins, put them in a rack, and then get back up until the second ball was thrown, and then fill up the rack, push it down, and then get back up on the bench. That was work, because those pins weigh about two and a half pounds apiece, and I wasn’t a great big big guy at that time. But I made $2.40 a day.

[41:00]

Sipe: That was exactly what I was gonna ask. How many—you said a day—so how many hours would that consist of?

O'Neal: Two and a half, two and a half, yeah. Worked two and a half. Well put it this way, it was eight cents a game, and when I’d work in a league, the league bowlers
would bowl—there would be thirty games, and I’d get eight cents a game. $2.40. It doubles, you get $4.80 a game, but I didn’t get to do that until later on.

Sipe: And then, how long did you work at that job?

O’Neal: Oh, I’d say probably three, four years.

Sipe: And then you kept working?

O’Neal: When I turned sixteen I’d gotten my lifesaver—lifesaving certificate and I worked at a swimming pool. I was a lifeguard for several years, and then I became assistant manager when I worked in college, when I got in college, during the summer.

Sipe: Was that a public pool?

O’Neal: Yes, um-hm.

Sipe: What pool was that?

O’Neal: It’s called Phillips Pool. Now they have Tuhey here now, that’s another story I could tell you a little bit about. I work—there were two city pools: Tuhey and Phillips. I was a lifeguard at Phillips, but I couldn’t swim in Tuhey. So my senior year, we talked about racial stuff, there was a big confrontation. We were gonna integrate Tuhey Pool, there were several of us. And so several athletes got—black athletes got together, I think there were four or five of us, that—of course people knew us, we played sports at Central. And we went down to Tuhey and we went swimming. Now, see that’s kind of dangerous. Well, we had all the other students around just in case, so there weren’t any real big troubles other than just name calling, stuff like that. But that was the integration of Tuhey Pool.

Sipe: So I know the public pools were segregated, and then I also know that some of the parks were kind of segregated in that same way. Did you experience that?

O’Neal: No, our operation were in two parks. That’s Heekin Park and McCulloch Park. Now McCulloch Park, instead of McCulloch, they called in “Colored Park”. It was out there close to Whitely and that’s where most of the black people went for picnics and for reunions and all that kind of thing, and that’s where we played a lot of basketball. In that same park, was this professional baseball team. This is way before your time, is Muncie Reds. But they were the farm team for the Cincinnati Reds. It was there at the McCulloch Park as well. Believe it or not, it burned down, the stadium burned down.
And that was the end of that. But the Heekin Park is still very operational, and there are a lot of different people who—all races go over there. Played softball there, they had a great softball league over there. And then basketball. A lot of different kinds of activities over there.

Sipe: So going back just a second to the Tuhey Pool, can you—do you remember what year that was that Tuhey Pool was integrated?

O’Neal: It was fifty-six and fifty-seven. I think—it was during my senior year. I think it was after, at the end of my senior year, fifty-seven. I think it was fifty-seven.

Sipe: And did that event have like a lasting effect?

O’Neal: It had some residual effects because after all I’ve said about how the athletes blended, one of the main components—main opponents, of our getting into that pool was the quarterback on our football team. And it had some effects there, so those feelings were never repaired. But other than that, you know, people go and come now, and I think that if people don’t want to be bothered with integration now, they have their own private pools, like over in Halteman Village, they have got their own pool. Incidentally, we lived over there and for a long time, we didn’t belong there, but we—our son grew up swimming there.

Sipe: So how long do you think it took for like black people to really feel welcome at Tuhey Pool?

O’Neal: I’d say not very long. After the numbers started coming in. I’d say in the next year or so. Because there were numbers and then people stopped paying much attention to it. Just like I said, just a matter of getting used to a different paradigm.

Sipe: All right so, let’s go back to college. Did you find your classes difficult?

O’Neal: Only when I didn’t study (laughs). No, they were—I don’t remember any classes that were really really that tough. Except, I guess I can think of Dr. Jimmy List, he had a class in biology, and we were studying genetics, and I remember that as being kind of tough. But no, not really. If we’d study it wasn’t that hard.

Sipe: Okay, so you just mentioned a biology professor. Do you remember any other professors who had a big impact or stuck with you?
O’Neal: Yeah, I remember some. I’m just trying to think of their names, I can see their faces, but I can’t think of their names. I can’t think of their names. It just—

Sipe: Can you remember what classes they taught?

O’Neal: Well one was—I remember, a music teacher. We called it “Brownies and Fairies Class” because all the elementary majors had to take it, and you had to learn to play a piano bit, and learn to dance a little bit, and the lady teacher, I just liked her real well. And she and her husband both were music—in music. I don’t know if you remember Dr. Legmont(??) was here. I knew most of the professors in music over there, and I got to know them pretty well. But she was the one that I had in class, that I can remember. And there was an English professor, I can’t think of his name, but he had a real heavy English accent. That—he should have been at an Ivy League school, he was—but I remember him.

Sipe: Okay.

O’Neal: I just don’t remember names.

Sipe: So, you graduated from Ball State in 1961?

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: And were you excited to graduate, or were you nervous?

O’Neal: Yeah, I was glad. I told myself the biggest lie that could be told. I said after I graduate and get a job, I’ll never be broke again. That wasn’t true (laughs).

Sipe: And then—

O’Neal: That was just kind of a joke I kid around with my wife about all the time. But yes, I was glad. I was glad to graduate, I was proud. My parents had a lot of pride in that, because I was the first, the first in our family that graduated from university.

Sipe: So you graduated before your two sisters. Did they end up graduating?

O’Neal: No. They—one of my sisters did, but she did it later on, and she was in her forties when she got her degree. Never did use it, but she—her husband was superintendent of schools and she just never went back to work.
Sipe: Did you brother graduate?

O'Neal: Yes, my brother did. He graduated from IU [Indiana University] and he was a newscaster for a long time, for Channel 4 and Channel 8. And now he has his own business down in Indianapolis.

Sipe: So you weren’t the only one in your family to graduate, you were just the first one?

O'Neal: I was just the first one.

Sipe: Okay.

O'Neal: And both of grandkids—my son and my grandkids are both graduates. My granddaughter’s a graduate of Ball State.

Sipe: All right, so you got your first teaching job right out of college?

O'Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: And where was that a?

O'Neal: Muncie. I was ready to sign a contract for Cincinnati, but then Muncie presented a contract and I took it.

Sipe: Why’d you pass up the Cincinnati one?

[50:00]

O'Neal: Well because I wanted to teach in Muncie, and I ended up going back to the school where I graduated—where I went to school and I taught at Longfellow for one year. And then—I told you earlier I went back and got a special license in science and phys ed—and then the next year they opened up a new school, Kuhner Middle School, so I went there. It is now the vocational school, out on Elgin Street, off McGalliard. But that—I went to that school, I taught there for seven years, taught science there for seven years. And coached.

Sipe: So your year at Longfellow, what grade were you teaching?

O'Neal: Fifth grade.

Sipe: Fifth grade. And did you feel like your studies at Ball State prepared you to be a teacher, or did you feel—

O'Neal: I’d say yeah. I think the best experience that helped me was both—number one, in my participation where I’d go out, my first contact with kids, and then my student
teaching. I had a wonderful student teaching experience. With Mr. Purtlebaugh, I'll never forget him.

[51:00]

Sipe: And what school was that at?

O'Neal: This was at Blaine Elementary School, but he later on was the principal at Mitchell Elementary School, where my son and my grandkids all went to school. So I'll never forget Mr. Purtlebaugh.

Sipe: And what grade did you do your student teaching with?

O'Neal: Fourth grade.

Sipe: Fourth grade.

O'Neal: Some of those students I had fourth grade are still around. Still communicate with them on Facebook and so forth.

Sipe: So you did you student teaching with fourth graders, and your first year of teaching was with fifth graders. Why did you decide to teach the upper elementary school, rather than the younger?

O'Neal: I took what was available at the time, but I'm glad because I don't know if I'd have the patience to deal with "Time my shoe" and all that (laughs). I don't have—there's no particular reason, I just took the job that was open. And I guess the one they felt I was most suited for.

[52:00]

Sipe: And your first year at Longfellow, were you one of—well how many other black teachers were there at Longfellow at that time?

O'Neal: One. One other one. Two, two other ones. Mrs. Findley and my brother-in-law, Dr. Abram, Sam Abram.

Sipe: And how many other male teachers were there?

O'Neal: Bushey(??), Carringer(??), I'd say four maybe, four.

Sipe: So not a lot?

O'Neal: No, uhn-uh, not a lot of male teachers. There weren't a lot of male teachers around. A male teacher with an elementary license could get a job about any place, at that time.
So you’d say being a man in the elementary education field helped you get jobs?

I think so. I think so. I think that that put my application above a lot of the others.

Do you think being an African-American—?

Yes, I think that helped too. I think that helped too, because I was teaching primarily—well, predominately black kids. I had white kids too, but mostly black children. I think that helped. They were looking for black teachers, because they were very scarce during that time.

So you said at Longfellow you were teaching mostly black children. Was that true at the middle school that you went to?

No. The middle school was—again, that’s another experience (laughs). Kuhner Middle School, just opening. But it was a place where kids from all over that area—it was a poverty area—came into school and some of the white children had never gone to school with black kids.

And they’d never been close to a black person. And they certainly never had had a black teacher. So there’s—during that summer prior to the time that they were scheduled to go there, there’s a lot of tension among the white community, because they were afraid. And again, it was ignorance. They just didn’t—they’d not had any experience and they had—were perhaps going on what they had heard. And they were afraid for their kids. But it worked out beautifully and—I’m not bragging, I was probably their favorite teacher (laughs).

So there were more black teachers at this middle school than there were at Longfellow?

No.

No?

There were only two of us: a Spanish teacher and me. At the middle school. The Spanish teacher and I were the only two black teachers there.

So did you ever—you said you knew that some parents were like scared to have
their children in school—or some white parents were scared to have their children in school with other black children or with black teachers. But did you ever get anyone say anything to you about it, any parents?

O’Neal: Not directly. Not directly, but I knew that there were fears there. I could tell. Kids don’t hide their feelings, and they tell things. They say things that would indicate that their mom and dad are scared or something like that. But it wasn’t as big of problem as it may seem. But it was there. There was just always—always there, that underlying issue, but it never was blatant.

Sipe: So you said you were at that middle school for six years?

O’Neal: Seven years.

Sipe: Seven years.

O’Neal: Yeah, taught there seven years. So you said the first couple years there was this fear.

Sipe: Do you think it kind of went away?

[56:00]

O’Neal: I’d say the first year. Once the school got started, it just disappeared. You heard nothing, because the athletic teams were all good, everything—it was just a great school. It turned out to be a real real good move for everybody involved. And I don’t think any kind of attention lasted for long. I think it was just that summer prior to. Just not knowing. Because I remember the-Mr. Clark, Burl Clark was the principal, and he established a committee of twelve, and it was people from all over neighborhoods, and they would meet together and talk about things, and that was a thing that helped diffuse all the fear and angst that people had.

Sipe: So did you coach at, is it Kuhner?

O’Neal: Kuhner, um-hm.

Sipe: Did you coach there?

O’Neal: Yes.

Sipe: What were you coaching?

O’Neal: Football, basketball, and wrestling. And I’d never seen a whole wrestling match in my life (laughs). But it was fun, it was fun. I learned with the kids. It was a good experience.
Sipe: Were your teams successful?

O’Neal: Oh yeah. We had some good teams, especially in basketball. Basketball and football, very good teams.

Sipe: And was it a middle school, was it like sixth, seventh and eighth grade?

O’Neal: It was seventh, eighth and ninth at that time. It was a junior high. Seventh, eighth and ninth.

Sipe: Ok so you taught there for seven years and then what did you do?

O’Neal: Well once I got my Masters, I was asked to be a—well during that time, there were a lot of—there was a lot of tension in the schools. Southside had opened up, Muncie Southside, and the Muncie Southside, they were called Muncie Southside Rebels. No black kids had been going there. So when Northside was integrated, then there was the problem of the racial issue there. The fights over the flag, the kids would—there were—that was during a time there were lots of fights in schools.

And they were racial fights. This was during the Civil Rights Movement, and the tension was high, so I was asked to be a supervisor, a Supervisor and Coordinator of Interracial Relations. I had an office at each one of the schools, and I would meet with student groups and with teachers, and work with them on integration issues. And frankly we had—Muncie Southside was very tough at that time, in fact, they made headlines way out in California about fights that were going on in school. And my job, along with another white counselor named Roger Casterline, never forget him. He is—he’s later in the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations].

But he and I had the job of everyday, we would meet with the rowdiest black kids and the rowdiest white kids, and we’d have lunch together. They had to bring their tray down to this one room. And that helped diffuse a lot of the stuff. Pretty soon, instead of wanting to fight each other, they teamed up and wanted to do other kind of dirt (laughs). But it was a real good integration technique.

Sipe: So it was like a counseling job, kind of?

O’Neal: Yes, um-hm.

Sipe: So you got your master’s in counseling, correct?
O'Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: Why'd you decide to go and get your master’s?

O'Neal: At that time, it was—in order to keep your teaching license you had to get a Masters. And that was just one of the areas that I thought I’d enjoy.

Sipe: Did you start the master’s right after you finished your undergrad?

O'Neal: I don’t remember when I started. I know I finished it in sixty-five. I finished my master’s in sixty-five, because I was working all the time during the time I was taking classes. So I finished in sixty-five.

[1:00:00]

Sipe: Ok, and then you got your doctorate too.

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: Did you do that—

O’Neal: In seventy-six or seventy-eight, I’ve forgotten when.

Sipe: So not right after—

O’Neal: (unintelligible)

Sipe: So it wasn’t right after the master’s?

O’Neal: No.

Sipe: You took some time off there?

O’Neal: Yeah, I took some time off from school. I took some classes but I had to do—at that time, we had to do a residency, and so I took a year off, from seventy-four to seventy-five, I took a year off. My wife was teaching at that time, so we could afford it. And I finished my doctorate during that time. And that’s when I moved from Muncie to Anderson.

Sipe: So why’d you decide to go and get your doctorate?

[1:01:00]

O’Neal: Oh I don’t know. I guess it’s kind of just a hunger for more. I did have a brother-in-law—well, both my brothers-in-law, we were all in education. And both of
them, they got their doctorate about the same—well, about the same time. And we were kind of feeding on each other and encouraging each other. So we all got our degrees.

Sipe: So after your first administrative job, you did some other administrative jobs, right?

O’Neal: I was an assistant principal at Muncie Southside. I was assistant principal at Muncie Southside. Other than the supervisor—the supervisor’s job was technically administrative. And then I went on to become assistant principal there at Southside. During that time, that’s when I took a year’s leave and got my doctorate.

Sipe: So you only were a classroom teacher for like eight years I believe?

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: Did you miss being a classroom teacher—

[1:02:00]

O’Neal: Yes.

Sipe: When you were doing these administrative jobs?

O’Neal: Yes, yes, all the time I was—all the time I was working, I did, yeah. I missed the kids. But I did a lot of volunteer stuff and—but again, the reason I got in to teaching is because I enjoyed it and then working with grown folks isn’t as much fun as working with the kids.

Sipe: Was there anything about classroom teaching that you didn’t miss?

O’Neal: Not really. I loved it. I actually—just, I wasn’t making enough money. So that was—that’s the bottom line, and that’s why I think it’s a shame that teachers don’t make more. But, that was a big reason.

Sipe: So after you were an assistant principal at Southside, then you moved to Anderson?

O’Neal: Yeah, after I finished my degree, yeah. Um-hm.

Sipe: So what did you do in Anderson?

[1:03:00]

O’Neal: I was administrative assistant for two years. Administrative assistant to the
superintendent. Then I became superintendent of curriculum and staff development there at Anderson. And I stayed in that capacity for a long long time.

Sipe: So in Anderson you didn’t really work with students anymore?

O’Neal: No.

Sipe: Not directly.

O’Neal: No, not directly, no. Unh-uh.

Sipe: And you missed that?

O’Neal: Yeah, I missed it, but, you know, after a while, you’re so busy, you don’t think that much about it. But I did establish some programs over there while I was doing it that had to with—I’ve always had a passion for working with black boys, because of the statistics, and I started a program at one of the elementary schools called the Westside Leadership Academy. And that and along with a tutoring program—a mentoring program.

[1:04:00]

The Westside Leadership Academy was one where I would go down—and I taught Spanish to third grade kids and once a week, only once a week, that’s the time frame I had. But I’ve always had a passion for working with black boys, so I was—I headed a group, a state group, called the Commission on Black Males or something like that. It’s still in existence, there’s one here. But I headed the chapter over there—over in Anderson. And we would develop strategies to work with black males. Mostly authority issues, because that’s one of the things that they weren’t respond—they don’t respond to authority, many of the young black kids. Most of them are one parent families, and they don’t have a dad at home, and they didn’t know how to deal with authority.

[1:05:00]

Sipe: So before you went to Anderson, for Muncie Community Schools, you worked for an elementary school, a junior high and a high school.

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: Which one of those age groups was your favorite to work with?

O’Neal: Middle school.

Sipe: Why?
O'Neal: Because they’re different every day (laughs). They’re grown one day and they’re little babies the next day and they’re very pliable. You could do things with them. And I think that was an area where they were experiencing a lot of changes in their bodies, and getting their interests all diverse. They were just in the process of growing up, and they grew up at different speeds, and it was just fun, watching them do that. Trying to help them along that process.

Sipe: All right, so when you got the job in Anderson, you moved to Anderson.

O'Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: Did you ever think about staying—like living in Muncie and commuting to Anderson?

[1:06:00]

O'Neal: Well when I took the job in Anderson, we did stay in Muncie for a while. And my wife got a job in Anderson also and she commuted back and forth for a long time to Muncie. But eventually, we moved here. And that was an interesting thing too. One evening after work, we were coming over to Anderson to look at homes, we were riding through the neighborhood. It was dark. And looking to see what neighborhood we thought we’d like to move to. And we got stopped by the police (laughs). And it was one of those things where we weren’t breaking any laws or anything, but it was just—you don’t think of it. But when I read about it in the news, it’s for real. It’s for real, that that stalking goes on.

[1:07:00]

Profiling. But it didn’t help I was—I graduated, had got my doctorate, and one of the things I did, I bought a nice big new car, big shiny gold Cadillac, and they were following me.

Sipe: You said your wife was commuting from Anderson to Muncie for a while?

O'Neal: From Mu—

Sipe: From Muncie to Anderson?

O'Neal: She was teaching in Muncie and driving back and—let’s see, was it the other way around? Because I remember the little Volkswagen she was driving. She drove back and forth every day. I think she was teaching at Garfield School at that time.

Sipe: So she was teaching for Muncie Community also?

O'Neal: Yeah.
Sipe: What grade levels was she teaching?

O'Neal: Third, third mainly third grade.

Sipe: Was she always a classroom teacher? She never went to administration?

O'Neal: Yeah, she eventually—she was—she retired as a principal.

Sipe: Okay, so you and your wife had one child, correct?

O'Neal: Um-hm.

[1:08:00]

Sipe: And what is his name?

O'Neal: His name's Keith O'Neal. Bishop Keith O'Neal. You may have heard of his church. He has Destiny Christian Center, have you heard of that? The reason I think you might know is because he has a lot of affiliation with Ball State. Every—the second and fourth Sunday he has a program where any college student can come over and they have some delicious meals for them, no cost at all. And they have a bus, they pick them up, come out on campus, pick them up. And he's got over 400 members there in his church, so he's constantly growing, and doing real well.

Sipe: When was he born?


Sipe: So that's before you graduated from Ball State.

O'Neal: Yeah, um-hm.

[1:09:00]

Sipe: So was it hard having a wife and a child and then finishing school, and then even after you finished school, working?

O'Neal: Oh yeah.

Sipe: Was it hard to balance all that?

O'Neal: Yeah, it was tough. That's why I said that I was so broke all the time, I said when I got my first job I said "I'll never be broke again." Big lie (laughs). I didn't realize some of the—a teacher's salary's not gonna get you that much extra money. Because my first contract was like a little over $4000 (laughs).
Sipe: For a year?

O'Neal: Yeah, yeah.

Sipe: Did you ever feel like you weren’t fully able to commit to teaching or your family at the same time?

O'Neal: I’ve said it many times, and I don’t say it with a whole lot of pride, but I probably would—if I knew what I know now, I’d have been a better dad. You know, my kids—my son came out fine, I mean, and I talked to him about it.

[1:10:00]

He says he doesn’t realize any kind of issues, but I think that—I don’t think I spent as much—I was so busy trying to get a degree, so busy trying to finish all these degrees and stuff, but I would have spent much more time with him. But he turned out okay.

Sipe: So you said you would have spent more time with him. Doing anything particular, or just being there?

O'Neal: No, I went to the basketball games and to his—he was a real good tennis player in high school. Went to those things, but still. Didn’t go to Disneyland, didn’t go—you know, just things like that. And that wasn’t high on my priority list at the time.

Sipe: Did he go to Muncie Community Schools too?

O'Neal: He went up to—I think he went to the ninth grade. When we moved to Anderson, he went to Highland, went to Highland High School.

[1:11:00]

But up until that time, he had gone to Mitchell, and then he’d gone to Northside, and then we moved.

Sipe: So since you’ve graduated from Ball State, you’ve stayed involved in several alumni organizations. Why’d you choose to stay involved with Ball State?

O'Neal: I don’t know, I’ve just always had a passion for Ball State. I’d go to some of there athletic contests, and pretty soon they asked me if I would be interested in being on the Cardinal Varsity Club Board, which the arm that raises scholarship athletes for scholarship monies for athletes. And I did, and was president of that for a year, and still support it. But I get involved with a lot of boards. I (laughs)—hospital board, that’s over in Anderson. Some of those kinds of things. I believe in civic
duty. I believe in giving back.

[1:12:00]

Sipe: So you’re now retired, correct?

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: When did you retire?

O’Neal: I’m a veteran now, I’ve been retired almost sixteen years.

Sipe: Okay, so of the several different jobs you worked in your career as an educator, which one would you say was most rewarding?

O’Neal: The middle school job. I loved teaching middle school. I love teaching science. I enjoyed that. That was probably the best days. Because during the days, I was young enough where I was still playing independent ball, and a lot of the guys that were the coaches there, we played in leagues together. Played softball, did a lot of things together. It was—those were good years.

Sipe: So in your retirement—is your wife retired too?

O’Neal: Um-hm. She beat me to it (laughs).

[1:13:00]

Sipe: So you two living together through retirement, what kind of things are you doing with your retirement?

O’Neal: I’ve been on about every board in Anderson. And—which is okay, I enjoy that, and I’m still on the hospital board. Got a real nice news article last week where we’d given all the schools—I was president of the—what do you call it?—the foundation over there, the hospital foundation, where we would give things away. We’d raise money; people die and leave the hospital money. So we spend it. And we gave all the policemen, all the schools, and all the big churches a defibrillator, and there’s a real nice article about a defibrillator was used to save a man’s life last week. And that was kind of rewarding, to see that that was something that we did. But now I’m on the regular board again, for the second time, so.

[1:14:00]

Sipe: So are you doing any travelling or anything during your retirement?

O’Neal: Not as much as we used to. We have a place in Florida that I just gave to my son,
and he and his wife—well it’s a timeshare down in Orlando, and we—this is the first year, this past winter that we didn’t go down. We usually go down there. And we do little local trips to Ohio and around.

Sipe: So you mentioned some grandchildren earlier.

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: How many?

O’Neal: Got two.

Sipe: Two?

O’Neal: Two. A granddaughter and a grandson. My granddaughter is thirty-four or thirty-five and you guys probably run into her. She’s the executive director of the Buley Center. Are you familiar with the Buley Center?

Sipe: I’ve heard of it.

O’Neal: Yeah, she’s executive director of the Buley Center. And my grandson, you may have seen his picture either on his car or on a sign going to Yorktown. He has a State Farm franchise, there in Yorktown.

[1:15:00]

Sipe: And what are your grandchildren’s names?

O’Neal: Brian(??) and Qiana.

Sipe: And do you have—do either of them have children? Do you have any great-grandchildren?

O’Neal: Yes, I have four—five wonderful great-grands. My granddaughter has a son that’s thirteen, and he’ll be fourteen in April. And my grandson has four boys, including a set of twins. And I’ve got pictures. They’re special.

Sipe: Can you share their names?


[1:16:00]
Sipe: So they’re all boys?

O’Neal: All boys.

Sipe: All boys.

O’Neal: All boys. And my granddaughter, she just says, “We don’t want any girls.” She’s spoiled. So she liked the fact that she’s the only girl.

Sipe: Are all your grandchildren and great-grandchildren still here in Muncie, or in the area?

O’Neal: Yes, um-hm.

Sipe: So do you get to see them often?

O’Neal: Yeah, yeah. That’s one of the things that we talked about when we retired. We didn’t wanna get too far away from—we enjoy our family. Close-knit.

Sipe: So why have you chosen to stay in Anderson during your retirement?

O’Neal: Well like I said to be close to the grandkids, and we love our home. And we’ve been threatened if we move (laughs).

Sipe: Did you ever consider coming back to Muncie though?

O’Neal: I’ve thought about it, but then we’re so close, you know? We’re close, but we’re far enough away where we don’t get into their business.

[1:17:00]

So we don’t—even though my son’s church is a wonderful place to go, we don’t go to their church. We have our own church that we go to in Anderson, because my wife and I both are bossy, and we don’t need to be interfering with what he’s doing over there at his church. We go a lot though, we go to special things. Wonderful congregation. He has a—his congregation is made up of about—we talk about integrating—fifty-fifty, in terms of black and white. So he’s really done a good job. That was one of his goals. Now he’s trying to get involved with some Hispanic ministry. And they have a growing nursery. If—you ought to Google him, it’s something that—that you’d be interested in looking at. It’s really a change from looking back fifty years.

[1:18:00]

He’s on the radio every week. Their program—their church program is—their church services are streamed live, and so get to see him anyway.
So—

You might get a guess that I’m kind of proud of my kids.

I can tell, yeah. Okay so you were talking—or we talked about your passion for sports. Do any of your great-grandchildren, are they involved in any sports?

Oh, just my—the only one is Princeton was in a little basketball league. He’s only four. He’s only four, but he was in a basketball league and got pictures of that too. We went over and watched him play, over at the Y [YMCA]. And my grandson, he went to school on a basketball scholarship, up at Madison, Wisconsin, Cardinal Stritch University. He went to Cardinal Stritch University on a basketball scholarship. So we were all a lot of athletic folks around.

And you’ve like supported their athletic endeavors—

Um-hm.

And gone to games?

Yeah.

All right, well let’s go back. This is just touching on something you talked about a long time ago. But you mentioned something about some ROTC involvement.

Um-hm.

Can you tell me about that?

I was in ROTC for a year and I just didn’t like it.

Okay.

I just didn’t like it. I enjoyed the fact that we took a trip down to West Palm Beach, Florida. That’s my first flight I’d ever been on. Scared to death. And we were riding in a great big old C-119 cargo plane, which on paper’s not supposed to be able to get off the ground. But we got there and back, and that was a good experience. Again, that was another blending experience, because I think there were only two black men that were on that whole plane that took that trip down there.

But you didn’t like ROTC?
I didn't enjoy it.

Why not?

Had to dress up on Wednesday, had to have your shoes shined and all that stuff. It was a very highly disciplinary—it was good for you, I'm sure—but I just didn't think I'd want to spend my career in the armed services.

So were you ever—growing up in like the sixties and seventies—well not really seventies anymore, but were you ever afraid to get drafted or did any of your friends get drafted?

No. I never got drafted. I wasn't afraid of getting drafted. I thought I probably would. But I could have gotten a deferment, they were giving deferments at that time, but I—and I don't know if I would have done that or not. But I never—I just never got drafted. It may have been because, at that time, I was the only son that was—my brother's thirteen years younger than me, but for some reason I never got drafted.

I had some kids—some guys I grew up with went to the Army and Air Force, voluntarily, those that didn't go to college. But my best friend, who I went all the way through elementary and high school with, he was a—he never got drafted either, and he lives in Philly, Philadelphia.

All right, so during the Civil Rights Era, you were talking about you were working for Muncie Community Schools in that administrative role. Did you have any personal involvement in any civil rights protests or demonstrations or anything?

Yeah, I was around the age. I wasn't on the front line, I was just around the edge. And I was just supportive. We marched on several occasions, on different things.

But it wasn't anything like you see on TV [television] or anything like that. We had a lot of causes during that time. There were a lot of things that were going on. For instance, as much as I love Pizza King now, we couldn't go in the side of Pizza King to eat. There wasn't a restaurant in Muncie that we could go into and sit down and eat. We could order from the back door, and—that's so ironic about it, my older sister worked at a place called Payne's Café(??) downtown, and she washed dishes and stuff like that, but we couldn't go in there to eat. And that was just very common during that period of time. But place like—we'd go and sit in
on Pizza King, we did that. Just things of that nature. But this was just around the edge, we didn’t go out and riot and throw rocks or anything like that.

[1:23:00]

Sipe: So in 1968, I believe you would have been at Kuhner still?

O’Neal: I was just leaving Kuhner, right around then. Yeah, um-hm.

Sipe: Do you remember what you were doing when you learned that Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated?

O’Neal: No, remember right afterwards. But I. I don’t remember what I was doing. No, I don’t. I just—I don’t.

Sipe: What do you remember about right afterwards?

O’Neal: Anger. Lots of anger, lots of anger. Phone ringing, talking back and forth to people, and anticipating a lot of trouble. And sure enough, that was some real tough times. Some real tough times.

[1:24:00]

I remember when John F. Kennedy was assassinated. I remember what I was doing then. I was in a classroom when it was announced. And I’ll never forget, there’s one of the kids in my classroom, after it was announced, he’d had his on the desk. And it was announced and all of the other kids were just so excited and unhappy about it, and then he said “Bang bang!” I mean, he made a joke out of it. It wasn’t a good situation. But when Martin Luther King was killed, that was a real real excitable time. Real sad time. I never was a civil rights activist per-se, but I had a lot of appreciation for what a lot of people went through.

[1:25:00]

This is one of the things I talk to many of our black boys about. Especially my grandkids when they were little and my great-grandson now. I try to impress upon them all the sacrifices that were made. And I use—I’m not a real Jesse Jackson fan, but he said something I thought was very inspirational, and that is that “Of what value is having the door open, if you refuse to walk through it.” The door of opportunity. And I believe in that. I think that these kids just don’t have any idea of what people have gone through to get them what they have, the opportunities they have. Even my own great-grandson, the one fourteen, he just can’t conceive of the idea that you can’t go anywhere you want to go.

[1:26:00]
I said “You don’t have that freedom without a lot of sacrifices that have taken place.” But it’s been a good life, and—the one thing I regret, and that is that my parents didn’t get to see a black president. Never had a dream that would happen, so.

Sipe: So did you vote for Barack Obama?

O’Neal: Yes.

Sipe: And when it was announced that he won, how—how’d you react to that?

O’Neal: I was elated. I was elated. And you know, the strange thing is, I wasn’t so much attached to his policies per-se, but I just thought that is a historic moment, because my parents were sharecroppers.

And we have such a history that the election was—it was just unbelievable to me. But, I think again, it opened some doors. I hate to see some of the things that are happening now with his presidency. I’m not that much into politics, but some of the things that are happening here in this country now, are—they don’t shine very well—they don’t reflect on us very well.

Sipe: So you said your parents could have been alive to see the first black president.

O’Neal: Um-hm.

Sipe: How do you think they would have reacted?

O’Neal: I don’t think they—if I could talk to them now, I could see myself telling them now, and they’d say, You’re kidding. They wouldn’t believe it. I mean, the ways things have happened, they wouldn’t be able to believe it. Because I wouldn’t have believed it twenty years ago. Wouldn’t have believed it. But people who say we haven’t come a long way, they are very wrong. Things have happened. In my almost seventy-six years, I’ve seen a lot of them. There are a lot of things that have happened that have been good. They’re not all finished. I think they’ll continue to get better, but I think the part of it now (coughs) that’s got to get better is attitudinal things. And you can’t legislate attitude. You can legislate actions, but you can’t legislate attitude. And I think this recent thing with this kid in Oklahoma, was shouting on the bus. I don’t know if you’re familiar that?
Sipe: I don’t think I heard about that.

O’Neal: You guys gotta read that paper (laughs). Read the news. No, there’s a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon—it was Sigma Alpha Sigma? One of the fraternities—one of the white fraternities.

Sipe: Oh it was I think Sigma Alpha Epsilon. Yeah.

O’Neal: Yeah.

Sipe: I know what you’re talking about now.

O’Neal: Yeah.

Sipe: I got it.

O’Neal: I felt so sorry for him. I guess a lot of people wouldn’t have felt sorry for him. When he was trying to explain himself, he had a press conference, and he was just overly apologetic. But I don’t think—he said he understood now. After he sat down and talked with a lot of the pastors and some of the people who were trying to get the thing resolved. He said he understands the historic meaning of some of the things that he said. And he said he’d never—he wouldn’t have said it if he’d know.

[1:30:00]

It’s just ignorance. Just people don’t know. But I felt sorry for him. I wouldn’t a want my son to be in a position like that. So I know how his parents must have felt.

Sipe: So a little bit earlier you were talking about some—that there have been some things recently in the news that reflected poorly on America. Besides that incident, were there any others that you were—?

O’Neal: I think the way that some of the—I don’t want to get political, but some of the Republicans are—well, when McConnell said that his whole objective in life is to make sure that Barack Obama didn’t have a second term, that had to do with—I don’t think it had to do with his policies or anything. It was just—a lot of white people have a whole lot of trouble coming under the direction of a black man. I’ve experienced that in my jobs. A lot of people have a whole lot of trouble dealing with a black boss.

[1:31:00]

And I think that that’s—that mentality, it runs through a lot of the Congress. And
they’ve done everything that—everything that Obama has done, if he does it, they
don’t wanna do it. If he says yes, they say no. So I just think that that’s
unfortunate. And taking color out of it, it’s just not good for the country,
regardless of what color, when there’s that much dissention. In my lifetime,
(clears throat) in my lifetime, I don’t think I have ever seen as much dissention as
there is among the two parties. And I can’t help but think a lot of it has to do
with—because calling a guy a non-American and saying he’s un-American, a
communist and all that stuff, that’s not—and showing respect for the position of
president.

[1:32:00]

When someone can stand—one of the legislators can stand up and call him a liar,
right there in front of the whole delegation. I think that’s way over the top. Just
my opinion.

Sipe: So can we talk—you were talking about how you like working with black males,
because they’re considered like an at-risk population.

O’Neal: There’s no doubt. There’s no doubt.

Sipe: Can we talk about some of the issues that face—that black males face, especially
recently like the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri or the
incarceration rates of black males?

O’Neal: The high incarceration rate is one I’m very concerned about. Now the shooting of
Michael Brown—I mean those are isolated incidents. And there may or may not
be issues that make a difference.

[1:33:00]

But I do know the statistic that says if I had five boys—well this was probably ten
years ago—if I had five boys that were born to me. I can count on three of the five
either being in jail or killed by the time they’re twenty-five years old. That’s a
scary statistic. And the incarceration rate is (sighs), I don’t know, it’s probably
four or five times that for African-Americans than it is for other races. But the
thing that’s most disturbing is some of the things like—just down in Indianapolis
the other day, they found four people murdered. Blacks killing blacks. What’s
causing that? I don’t know—I don’t know the whole answer. I’ve got my own
ideas, but I just think that that’s one of the scariest things you can think of. More
black people kill each other than are killed in automobile accidents over a period
of a year.

[1:34:00]

That’s scary. Any day that you look in the newspaper, the Indianapolis paper,
you’re gonna find that probably two or three people have been shot or killed in some way, in some homicide. And most of the time it’s black. That bothers me.

Sipe: So you said you had—you said you don’t know the whole answer to why this is all happening, but you said had some ideas. Would be okay sharing some of those?

O’Neal: I think a lot of it’s economic. And I think a lot of it is the mindset that we put on some of our young people that they’re owed something. And if they don’t get it, they’re gonna react and get mad at people. I just don’t—I just think we’ve got to get off of that “Cause I’m black” stuff.

[1:35:00]

And a lot of kids were brought up with that. They’re not gonna give—you’re not gonna get that because you’re black. Well, if they’re growing up feeling that they’re owed something, they’re not gonna aspire to do something on their own as much—aren’t as likely to aspire to do something on their own. So I think that it’s a lot of our own fault, the way our kids are growing up. We’ve lost a couple of generations of parenting. And this is not just blacks, I think the whites as well. Some of the things that kids are doing now, they wouldn’t have done that during the time I was growing up. Of course they’ve got a menu of items that we didn’t have back then. Different kinds of things to get in trouble with: drugs and so forth. But I just think that we’ve lost a couple of generations of kids by lack of parenting.

[1:36:00]

Look at our divorce rate. And you know, if someone gets married and expects to get out of it as soon as they get angry with somebody, it’s—it has an effect on the kids too.

Sipe: So when you work with young black males, what do you try to instill in them, or what do you try to teach them?

O’Neal: How to deal with authority. Everybody’s got to have a boss, whether it be at work or the wife eventually, or the husband. Not to be angry. Be able to—see that’s one of the things that I appreciate so much about my parents. Poor, poor, poor. Didn’t get an education. Sharecroppers. But they weren’t—they didn’t—they taught us not to be angry. Don’t be angry. Be ambitious. And I think that a lot of our kids aren’t taught that. They get angry. And they react.

[1:37:00]
O'Neal: So you talked just a second ago about the high divorce rate and how people get divorced just after like an argument. You and your wife have been married for over fifty years.

O'Neal: Um-hm. We should be fifty-six June thirteenth.

Sipe: So what do you think is like the key to having such a long and happy marriage?

O'Neal: Tolerance. Tolerance. I tell her all the time I tolerate her. No, no, it's just a give and take. I don't know what the answer is, except you just gotta be careful in picking them in the first place. We were just fortunate in that I think we picked the right people. Yeah, we're compatible. We don't like the same things. She doesn't like sports, I love sports. She doesn't like sports. She is very religious, and don't misunderstand me, I'm a believer, I go to church, but I don't get carried away with it, you know.

But we've got—we're very different. But we've learned to tolerate each other. And both of our parents—my parents were married sixty-eight years, so. Divorce is just not a word that comes to mind in our family.

Sipe: So if you could give like one piece of advice to a couple that's about to get married, what would you tell them?

O'Neal: Don't do it unless you can get mad—don't do it unless you can get angry, and make up. Because—I don't know. I think they need—people just gotta be sure. They gotta at least feel sure. Nobody's guaranteed that it's gonna work, but some of them get married because of just lust and passion, and because they see an idea.

But there—after marriage things change. A lot. You don't see all the problems and so forth the person has until after you get married, and if you can't handle that, it's tough. But tolerance. I guess just tolerance. And I mean I'm not a marriage counselor, I don't have—I don't have an answer per-se, but that's just my opinion. You just gotta stick it out and believe in what your vows said. For better or for worse.

Sipe: All right, so before we started the interview, you were talking about how you like coming back to campus because it's changed so much and you like seeing all that growth. Can you just tell me a little bit about that?

O'Neal: Okay. Ball State—like I said, when I was in school here, we had probably five or
six academic buildings and—for instance, the old gym over there we played in, the old Ball Gym, they’ve had two new gyms since then. The university gym and then—I call it the “Ray McCallum Gym,” the new one. Everybody knew everybody. The campus wasn’t hard to navigate. But now, it’s just spread out so much. It’s really grown, and I think there’s been a lot of pride taken in the kinds of buildings and the kinds of décor that’s been put on campus. It’s a beautiful campus. It’s a beautiful campus. And that’s what I hear from a lot of people that come back and have a lot of pride in that. The old student center, I haven’t been in there for years and years. It’s still in the same place, isn’t it?

Sipe: I think so.

[1:41:00]

O’Neal: But it’s gotta be a lot different from we were there. It’s just—they used to sell burgers and that was about it. It’s a lot different. But this campus has really grown. There’s been a lot of pride taken in beautifying it and the foliage is really—you know, the trees. Some of the things that they’ve put in are well thought out and beautiful.

Sipe: So what’s—like if you had say your one favorite addition to campus since you were here?

O’Neal: Oh that’s hard. I don’t know. I guess I’d probably say the Bracken Library. I might use it a little bit more than I did the old one (laughs). The old library was a dump. But I don’t know, I really don’t know. Because I’m very impressed with the Emens Auditorium.

[1:42:00]

That’s something that was—Dr. Emens you had—not knowing him, you missed a treat. He was a great guy. The dorms are a lot nicer. They used to have, one of the women’s dorms was a barracks. If you’re familiar with those.

Sipe: Lucina, I believe?

O’Neal: Yeah, Lucina Hall. It looked like something on that movie—it just looked like an army barracks. And I don’t think they have any of those here now, do they?

Sipe: Like Lucina’s still here, but they’ve redone it.

O’Neal: Oh yeah, they’re redone all that. It’s improved. The conditions here for students here are much much better, but they’re paying a lot more money.

[1:43:00]
So you’re very proud to say that you graduated from Ball State University?

Yes, yes. Um-hm. Very. Ball State has a sterling reputation. At one time it was one of the top three teachers colleges in the country. I don’t know where it ranks now, but it’s gotta good reputation. Ball State has a good reputation. And had Dave Letterman. I don’t know if you saw it the other night, Dave Letterman was holding up Ball State shirts (laughs). Jim Davis.

Um-hm.

Have you—did you ever got to know him? Jim Davis?

He wrote Garfield, didn’t he?

Yeah, yeah. He’s a good friend. I remember when he was poor. We used to play tennis.

Did you go to school with him?

Yeah—well he was a few years behind me, but I got to know him because we played tennis together. And while he’s waiting on his turn to play tennis—see we were teachers. There were several of us teachers over there. His wife was a teacher, his first wife. But he would sit and doodle. He worked for an advertising company at the time. And we would tease him about getting a real job. “Why don’t you get a real job?” (laughs) We lived to talk about that again.

Do you still stay in contact with him at all?

I haven’t talked to him in—I ran into him at, I think it was Ruby Tuesdays, maybe a couple years ago. And introduced him to my son, my grandson. My grandson was with me, great-grandson was with me. And of course it had no impact on him, he (unintelligible). “He did Garfield!” “So?” He was into “Spongebob Squarepants” at the time.

So you mentioned something about Dr. Emens earlier. Was he the president when you were here?

Yes, um-hm.

Did you personally know him, or just know of him?

Well he’d come to the athletic events, and he’d come and talk to us once in a
while, you know. It wasn’t anything that we were friends by any means. But I think he knew who we were, because he followed the athletics.

Sipe: And you said that we missed out not knowing him?

O’Neal: He was just a nice guy. Supportive. And he was all for the progress of Ball State. He was really a real good—what do you call it—he represented Ball State well, I’ll put it that way. There’s a word that’s not coming out.

Sipe: All right, well before we close this interview, is there anything else that I haven’t asked you about that you would like to share with people about your life, or your career or your experiences at Ball State?

[1:46:00]

O’Neal: No, I guess I can’t speak with any more pride than I already have, because I think it’s been—that’s one of the reasons—Ball State is one of the several reasons that I feel very strongly about giving back to the community, because Ball State was pretty good to me. I mean, I didn’t get any perks that anybody else didn’t get, but I had an opportunity. And it provided me some opportunities. And fortunately I was able to take—I’ve had a lot of good support with some of the professors, some of the—I can’t think of his name, that one that was over there in—that was in the administration building. Whenever we needed some money, he was in the loans, the loan area.

[1:47:00]

He would always, you know, if we need twelve or thirteen dollars, something like that, he would always find a way to get it for us. And we’d go pay it back. But those are the kinds of things. It was much more—it was small enough where we had some intimate kinds of contacts with people. I can’t think of his name, he taught psychology. Funny. Anyway.

Sipe: All right, well then on behalf of the Ball State University African-American Alumni Oral History Project, I would like to thank you for your participation.

O’Neal: Okay.

[1:47:46]

End of interview