Kaitlin M. Aardahl: This is an Oral History interview on November Eleventh, 2003. I am interviewing Hortense Bouldin. Okay, my first question is um where did you grow up? Like which area did you grow up here in Mecklenburg County?

Hortense W. Bouldin: I grew up in Mecklenburg County in Chase City.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: In Chase City

Hortense W. Bouldin: Chase City, Virginia

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ummhmm, Umm, What type of school did you go to when you were growing up and then when you went to college to become a teacher?

Hortense W. Bouldin: At first I went to a two room elementary school, and when I was in the sixth grade I went Thine Institute for the seventh grade and I skipped the eight grade, and completed my work there and then I attended Virginia State College where I got my B.S. degree in science. I mean B.S. Degree.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, at that time were all the schools still integrated or was your college, or was your school still segregated not integrated.

Hortense W. Bouldin: All schools were segregated at that time.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ahaa. Umm, when did you decide you wanted to be a teacher, did you have a special experience that made you want to become a teacher, just decided it was a field you liked?

Hortense W. Bouldin: I first decided I wanted to be a teacher when I was in the second grade, but when I got to high school Ms. Rosa Lee Wilson, that was Dr’s. Frank Wilson’s daughter, was my English teacher and she said you would certainly make a good high school teacher and I believed her. So then I pursued it.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: I had a very similar experience that’s why I want to be a teacher now. Umm, do you have any relatives that were teachers in the past or now?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Umm yes, ah, at the time there were none, but then my sister’s, there were sister’s that grew up into teaching. Now Grace taught umm, Kindergarten, and Esther taught in Elementary school, Laurice umm, worked with at a daycare school, conducted a daycare school, umm and my brother was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army, and he’s buried at Arlington, he died two, three years ago.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Wow, a whole teacher, a whole family of public servants.

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, Public Servants that’s right.
Kaitlin M. Aardahl: I understand that. That’s how my family is. Umm, when did you start teaching? What year, do you remember?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, 1947

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: 1947. Umm what type, what was the first school you taught in, like what was it like, what was your average day like, was it, I assume it was in an all black school at the time since schools were still segregated?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes. The first school I, I, wanted to work at home, I didn’t want to work away, so I turned down jobs and was late getting a job. So when I first began I was substituted for an elementary teacher, so the first year I taught the first, second, third and fourth grade. I think fourth, in a two room school, and but I was unhappy because umm I was a secondary education major with science and math, teaching like this. So I went to the umm, director of Instruction, Mr. Sull at that time. You might know of him because he was up at University of Virginia for a long time.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ummhmm

Hortense W. Bouldin: And, and then I took the place in the middle of the year I went to West End. Umm, I replaced the Math teacher there who had died with ah, gas. Somewhere [Sentence inaudible] and they took me, asked me to come and see if I could work with and settle down 23, what they thought were incorrigible young men.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That must have been a challenge.

Hortense W. Bouldin: It was interesting. Then no girls in the class.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Hmm, I’ve never been in a class like that

Hortense W. Bouldin: They had isolated these, and you see at the time it was at old West End, and they had one, I had a basement room so they put me there in the basement room and I had them for homeroom and then of course then I taught them math also.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Okay

Hortense W. Bouldin: And that’s when umm, I improvised a lot of techniques that worked.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That’s good. At least you were successful. Umm, did you continue teaching at West End in

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: in math
Hortense W. Bouldin: Continued to teach umm, I had I have four children, two were born in August, one in May, and one in ah, December. And for the two that were born in August I stayed out six weeks and then I went back to work, so ah, I didn’t ever stayed out but a half year.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That’s interesting. Umm, Umm, when the Brown decision came down in ’54 did you have any particular feelings about it? Did you feel like it was a good decision that the government had made to integrate schools, would you have preferred them to stay separated, did you, how did the community feel about that? If you remember

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, I do remember. You, I wondered just how it would work. What would happen? I knew the feeling of some people. I knew some people could accept it. See most of my teachers in high school were white. So, you know I understood.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: uhhha

Hortense W. Bouldin: And they were fair and we enjoyed them. We worked hard, we did what we were supposed to do, but they treated us all fairly.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That’s good

Hortense W. Bouldin: So ah, at that time I was, we knew something had to change, but I didn’t know wasn’t sure how?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Well that makes sense, I can see how it umm did umm Virginia had their massive resistance where they refused to integrate schools did Mecklenburg have that problem where they didn’t go immediately into integrating? Do you remember when exactly they opened or schools became integrated? And if it was like a slow process, a fast process, how exactly they did it?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Well, in our cases, I think, we just started in September, and said this year, and that was the year I went to Trinity in Hartford that summer and then that fall we had the integration. Umm, the only interesting thing was I thought when I started teaching that it was gonna be easier because I thought all the white children were all perfectly trained and that I was wondering how I would work with them with the black students. And Black students has always been very umm courteous, if they didn’t get their work they were still courteous to me and umm how do you describe, I mean you could manage them.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ummhmm

Hortense W. Bouldin: Manageable. And of course I, they knew a weakening was to me was that children are children and it doesn’t make any difference what race they are, they are children.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That’s good
Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, How did other teachers feel about ah the schools becoming from one year ending in June or May and being in a single race school and the next September being expected to know how to teach both white and black children in an integrated, Did you guys go through special training or did they expect you to just do it on your own?

Hortense W. Bouldin: No we had training cause I told you that I got that scholarship this summer and went, and of course I worked with that and let me see I am trying to think of the name of it, I took a course in ah, who was building all the scientific ah inventions and that type thing to make life easier like the Cotton Gin and so forth and I was surprised and in this workshop I learned that many of these were invented by blacks and then but they didn’t have the money to

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Advertise them

Hortense W. Bouldin: Advertise them, and so that was a phenomenal thing because they were the ones having to do the work. Which made perfect sense.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes

Hortense W. Bouldin: And umm, It was taught by a very understanding, kind, white professor I enjoyed him very much.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Okay, let me see. Ah, were you aware of the events in Prince Edward County surrounding education and if so what did you think about what was happening during that time to those children and to those schools and how they closed them? Did you have any feelings, were you aware of it.

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, very much aware and very concerned and wondered what would happen and I was just . yes we were very, very concerned about it.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Did any children from Prince Edward come to Mecklenburg to have an opportunity to go to school during those five years. . that you are aware of?

Hortense W. Bouldin: I am not aware of it, now ah, you see that at the time would have been between a forty and fifty mile drive one way, so we didn’t have many, and they didn’t come, there might have been a few that stayed with other people. At the time I was in school they would come to the boarding school, but then when it happened they didn’t have much opportunity

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: to get here

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, at that time.
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Hortense W. Bouldin: They worked on it during the winter. They decided what grade you would take, what you would do and they ah, they gave us a choice about some of the classes because I know umm I was not qualified to teach below the seventh grade.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Okay

Hortense W. Bouldin: So, that meant I was transferred to the, at first I taught at the junior high but I taught the math in eight grade, pre-algebra and, umm general math cause that was one of the reasons we started with the Mathematics council. I was just thoroughly disgusted with us teaching too many students general math and I made it known to the state department and ah cause I am on a number of assignments with the state department, in fact I was on one committee that selected textbooks and that type thing and I did some experiments in teaching math. So I was very ah concerned about that type thing.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Did umm, did you feel like the state listened to you, the county listened to you and your concerns about that and like getting a better curriculum for the students.

Hortense W. Bouldin: Well, at first no because I was one of those who was interested in each student working to his maximum, I believed in individualized work. But you gave tests for all of the students.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes

Hortense W. Bouldin: But each student should work as far, do all that he could do.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Okay

Hortense W. Bouldin: Umm, and once I was challenged in the county and then ah, the director of instruction sat in on my class and then ah at the end of it he came up to question my techniques and said why are you doing this? Then I told him I had ordered a book How To Teach Mathematics from the University of Virginia they had got it for me and then I showed it to him and he borrowed it and ah looked it over and I didn't hear anymore about that incident.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That must have been nice. Umm, what type of resources did your school have prior to integration compared to after integration, did, did you see a change in things like did bringing in white students to your school give you more resources, more manipulatives for math, more technology

Hortense W. Bouldin: In evaluating the school, naturally our library was outdated so you got more up to date books and they ah things were improved, certain things were improved.
Hortense W. Bouldin: Then we got more equipment, see once upon a time we didn’t have much equipment and you would have hand-me-downs and ah, so we got better equipment, then I got to use an overhead projector and ah show films in the classroom.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Did you find that stuff useful for teaching more effective?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes we did. Yes we did. Very much so.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: I would think so. I don’t know how I would teach without technology nowadays.

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, cause students, when you think about it young students don’t concern themselves with lecturing. They don’t want to, after you have listened for a few minutes

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: You start to tune it out

Hortense W. Bouldin: You tune it out.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, how did integration of the school affect you personally? Or

Hortense W. Bouldin: [long pause] I am not sure I was just very careful in documenting what I did and keeping more records a lot of records and ah, that kind, I was I knew I would need to defend whatever I did, so I ah, tried to be in a position to defend whatever I was doing

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, did you have children at that point that were in the school system?

Hortense W. Bouldin: My own children?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes sure

Hortense W. Bouldin: Oh, yes. I even taught my own children

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Really

Hortense W. Bouldin: Oh yes

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, did you see integration having an effect on their lives in the classroom. Did they same to easily do that, had they had contact with lots of white people prior to integration or was it kind of a culture shock type thing?

Hortense W. Bouldin: It wasn’t a culture shock to them because ah, my youngest daughter even went to VPI in Blacksburg. And ah, we grew up with ah we didn’t have a lot of prejudice. Because we knew the rules of the community certain things would happen, we didn’t go to each
okay

Hortense W. Bouldin: I would go there sit early and take a seat early and let you make the choice to come and sit beside me if you want to or not.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That sounds like a very smart move on your part. Umm, was the decision, after Brown came down, was the decision to integrate did you talk about it with your family, was it talked about in the community, about what was gonna happen, and when they made the decision like this September we're going to change and you're all gonna go to school together. Did you guys talk about that?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes and we even ah I volunteered to ah have tutoring sessions and the reason for that was Black parents were uneducated so they couldn't help their children with their homework.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Okay

Hortense W. Bouldin: Whereas, the white parents, many of them, would help their children, so that meant in order for them to work together in class, both of them needed

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: the same education

Hortense W. Bouldin: more help

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: help

Hortense W. Bouldin: yes help

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That's a very good move. I am sure that made things easier in your classroom, to have them on the same level.

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Did you, when you were teaching did you feel any pressure or intimidation because of teaching in an integrated school from like the white community, did you have any problems with white parents accusing you of falsely of things, or giving you problems with grades or the way you were teaching their children?

Hortense W. Bouldin: I am not a good person for you to ask that question because I've always had answers. You know how some people always have answers?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes
Hortense W. Bouldin: so they don't bother them too much. Now I was known to ah have, they put troublemakers in my class students that you had trouble with because ah, everybody who went to Thine Institute were good disciplinarians. So you were strong in that area so that was the reason but that wasn't um I don't think it had much to do with black or white it was just managing students.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Okay

Hortense W. Bouldin: That's my idea of it.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Did you see any from like fellow colleagues or fellow teachers that experienced that type of situation or did most overall was it a smooth transition?

Hortense W. Bouldin: We really had a relatively smooth transition, in general. There might have been a few little problems around, and I don't even recall a lot of black and white fights. Ah, now let me think I was working with Student Council and once upon a time when I first started teaching this was before integration, the big thing was if you got pregnant at school, then of course the girl would wear a coat until you know. Later on it was drinking, a drinking problem, before you come to school the boys would meet and they would take a bottle of liquor in the bathroom and someone would pass it around and we worked through that with the student council. I had a group of boys, like pals, to help each other out, and then one time I had them turn in the names of everybody, I had them all telling on themselves, that was great, after they did that they said ah, let's stop because they found out either I am gonna tell on you or you are gonna tell on me, it doesn't pay.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That works. Umm, did you see a change in like the classroom curriculum? What you were suppose to teach once the schools integrated?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes. Before they integrated you could do more, you could help them with their character and developing habits for living. Once they integrated schools I was told to teach just what was in the book.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: So it became a more teach by the book thing

Hortense W. Bouldin: Teach by the book

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: versus creativity and helping students in other areas.

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes. When that happened that's when, that's when discipline began to go down hill. You see.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Cause it was harder to keep them

Hortense W. Bouldin: Well you weren't suppose to tell them anything about behaving, all you were doing was to tell him do the problem.
Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ah I see. Umm did you find yourself having to revise the way, so you had to completely change the way you umm taught in the classroom? Was that a difficult transition?

Hortense W. Bouldin: No, I made some adjustments. Ah Of course, I didn’t believe in, you had to have discipline

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ahhuh

Hortense W. Bouldin: In order for a children to learn, so that made it more difficult and then I had large classes I recall once sending for the ah state supervisor to come observe my class to see what else I could do and I had about 35 in the class. So he came in and said you are doing everything that you can do, you think you an angel? He said with a class this size you are doing well to get around and into. We had some large classes.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: I see. Umm, were new textbooks selected or did they bring textbooks from the white school did you use the textbooks from prior integration, or did they just start all afresh.

Hortense W. Bouldin: They purchased books. See at that time everybody was buying their own books. So, ah, the difficult thing was there were students late in the year had not gotten books and of course then they would sell books to each other second hand books to each other. But that was a difficult thing until the latter years when finally you got to the place where you rented books.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: I didn’t know that they still bought textbooks back then. Umm, how were teacher-parent relations affected by integration? Did you see a change in how parents interacted with you?

Hortense W. Bouldin: You mean the relationship with me or?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes with you, between the parent and the teacher

Hortense W. Bouldin: Well I have an advantage because I taught the mother, I taught the daughter and then I taught the granddaughter. So usually when the child would complain about my discipline at school and go home didn’t even need to tell because I taught the parents and they knew me. So they would say I know what she’ll do and she hasn’t done this so that was the end of that. That helped me a lot.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes

Hortense W. Bouldin: And they would come to school and tell me that if my child not making the grades you can whip them. Do anything to make him get his lesson. I never did that but that’s what they told me.
Interviewee: Hortense W. Bouldin (A retired school teacher from Mecklenburg County VA)
Interviewer: Kaitlin M. Aardahl, 11/11/03
Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That’s what they told you. Umm, When the schools first integrated did umm any white parents have a problem with their teacher being an African-American versus having a white teacher. Were parents upset by this?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yeah, there were a few, but that I didn’t have to worry about that because ah that was handle through the guidance department and I had troublemakers to start with so, you were sort of happy they had the problem.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: So you had no personal like encounters of angry parents coming to school

Hortense W. Bouldin: No, No, No. I don’t recall any, really I don’t. Um, but now I’ve known cases where a child wanted to get out of my class, they had me to help them get out.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That makes sense. Umm, How did other teachers and administrators deal and feel with interac.. integration, I can’t speak today, Did administrators um, were your administrators mainly white where they a mixture of white and black, were they, how did they deal with the whole transition?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Well, it was both. First integration my principal was black, a black women but she was very capable and able and very studious. So, she continued to work until she retired. Then I worked with a white principal and she had worked under this black principal, so she continued many of the same tactics, in fact she model herself after her. So that didn’t appear to be no serious problem.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, was, how were integration and the issues surrounding it discussed at faculty meetings? Did you guys have faculty meetings? Were any of those issues discussed in the beginning?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, we had them. We had faculty meetings weekly. And I guess like in any group we discussed how to handle various groups now we didn’t always name them, black and white. We got to a place where we tried to consider them children, people, students and then we dealt with them in that matter. And there were those, well, I guess if the parents didn’t want a student in your class they went to school before school opened, to find out who there teacher was and switched from class to class so that was no big thing.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Were you aware of any like parents that removed their children from the public school rather than send them to an integrated school, was that a problem here in Mecklenburg?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, well they sent them to ah Prince Edward

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Prince Edward Academy

Hortense W. Bouldin: Ahhmm, well there was in Mecklenburg too. And then you had to students come back from the academy back to school. Ah, that all depended on the attitude of the parents.
Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Attitude of the parents, but did exist there. There were some who were opposed enough to remove their students, remove their children

Hortense W. Bouldin: And usually, you didn’t fight it a lot because along with that you were removing many problems.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That makes sense because that would probably create better race relations in the school if you had the people who didn’t want to be there gone.

Hortense W. Bouldin: I wanted to say this, this is not answering your question but I wanted to explain, my husband drove a bus, and he had not had any psychology or into dealing with children but he never had any problem at all and when Christmas came ah, parents both black and white would bring him all sorts of cookies and goodies and he would get gifts for a week. I never understood it, they didn’t run over him, they behaved, I think it was the kind of look he had, but they certainly, he drove that bus, I couldn’t believe it.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yeah that’s pretty impressive. You are hard pressed to get teachers presents.

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yeah

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, On the first, so on the first day when the schools opened integrated in September, was it just like normal, a regular first day of school or were there a laying of ground rules or were there any problems between the students, did they not want to sit by each other or anything like that?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Not to any unusual extent. [End of side one of tape]

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: On the first day of school did you have any problems with the white and black students not getting along or was it just a regular first day of school with you setting down ground rules or any types of problems like that?

Hortense W. Bouldin: They were so busy deciding which class to get into. And see Mecklenburg County had the five levels and they wouldn’t say I don’t want to be in your class, they would want to go to level 2, or level 3, or level I think 5 was the highest so ah, even if I guess they didn’t do real well a large number of the troublemakers would be in class five, group five [inaudible sentence] and of course group one was mostly black and they didn’t change that until since, after I retired.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Were the levels were the different ability groupings of the students

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yeah that’s what it was suppose to be, but see students would to be with your friends you could perform on the level you wanted to perform

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes

Hortense W. Bouldin: So now we knew that was unfortunate.
Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes, umm lets see, like in hindsight how have you in the years teaching after integration and since you have retired how have you seen that integration has effected the schools or has it changed it for the good for the worse?

Hortense W. Bouldin: We went through a period when you lost respect for discipline and we no longer prayed at school, the children did not fear don’t fear the teacher, No God or anybody else, and therefore it created ah, more problems. See Once upon a time we had, ah before integration people were religious and went to church and we had, like open school with prayer and sometime we had a period of meditation over the intercom that type thing.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: okay

Hortense W. Bouldin: and see as that went away the more, now I don’t know if you can say it was just integration. It is a change in people’s attitudes and of course I blame a lot on the television, when they started depicting, meant showing parents as stupid and the children smarter. Umm you know a child can be smarter than his parents but the parents experience has to be considered also.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes

Hortense W. Bouldin: And ah, you can’t protect them if they consider you stupid.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That makes sense

Hortense W. Bouldin: uhhhaa

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Um, how have the race relations in Mecklenburg changed since integration, have they have become better, is there like no problem now, or is it still kind of divided.

Hortense W. Bouldin: I will approach, I feel comfortable approaching most anybody in this county and we started working with, I tried to keep Thine out of this, but when

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: That’s okay

Hortense W. Bouldin: when I started working with Thine I wanted to take that community wide and let it be a community project and instead of a black-white project

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: uhhhaa

Hortense W. Bouldin: and I have worked, and I have found I have gotten a lot of cooperation and that takes in ah, Dr. Smith. I have been trying for twenty years to get someone to write a book on the history of Thine. Now I am a math teacher and what I like to do is to itemize and I do not wish to write a book.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: uhhhaa
Hortense W. Bouladin: I don’t mind information working on the information this type thing but I did not want to write the book. So, when she said yes. I was excited, very excited, because I just, we what I am really taken with is we went to a school the principal was white most of the teachers were white and I even had then I had black teachers, so they all acted except maybe one or two, but they all had to adhere to the same rules and principles.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: uhhhaa

Hortense W. Bouladin: And in working with this I have not been able to find anyone, any student to say they were not treated fairly, you may have gotten punished, but you felt that I had it coming. And I think that’s just wonderful, I think that’s what’s missing in school now. They want to know that they are treated fairly, even if you put them out of school, I don’t care what you do just as long as I am treated like everybody else. Do you see what I mean?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes

Hortense W. Bouladin: Now, ah, now you were asking me about the community. I think some of the community is still mixed, but ah, recently I attended the banquet for the chamber of commerce and I enjoyed it and was well received, and enjoyed it very much and still played my tactics, I ran and got me a seat and ah a member of the board of supervisors sat next to me on one side and ah a young lady on the other side which amused me because after you teach school you know

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: who they are?

Hortense W. Bouladin: Yeah, so I found it interesting, gave her a little interview, your name, what are you doing she’s trying to be [inaudible sentence] then of course then after awhile you forgive and forget and go about on your business. But she was pleasant, she sat beside me on one side of me, of course this person from the board of supervisors was very ah, helpful, but the thing about it they accepted us there and it was enjoyable, it was pleasant and I was just like any other person. And I can say that about most of the meetings I have gone to and there are a few stories I can tell you when the tape is not on.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, reflecting on the past do you think there could have been anything that, you have had a pretty positive experience with integration, but that would have made integration in this area easier on everyone involved?

Hortense W. Bouladin: Yes. The PTA not dispended, when they dissolved the PTA they created many, many problems, when we had the Parents Teachers Association we would come out at night and they could discuss the problem. You could meet the parents and you would talk about a problem before it got out of hand. The parents would go back in and help take care of it. You see, the parents and teachers and principal worked together, but now when you no longer have the PTA it’s he said, she said and you don’t know, you don’t really know the truth and I feel sorry for parents, know I don’t blame parents, I love my child, and my child is telling the truth, I don’t know, I don’t know any, I don’t know if he is not telling the truth, but all children do not
Transcribed by: Kaitlin M. Aardahl, 11/14/03, Tape 1
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necessarily tell the truth, and you know any two persons observing an act, they don’t necessarily come to the same conclusion

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Correct

Hortense W. Bouldin: So you don’t, they don’t have a chance to mediate what is going on, so then you let problems drift until they get into serious problems

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ah, So was PTA dissolved at the time of integration? There was no longer one

Hortense W. Bouldin: When they stopped having PTA, and they have dissolved it in most of the schools, some schools are having a PTA, and a good example I think is Chase City Elementary school, and I think they still have PTA, I knew they had it a long time and I think they still have it because they are still working on projects with the PTA. And therefore that was one of the schools doing the best work, out ahead and now they are helping a school in Danville ah, satisfy the conditions, you know satisfy the

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: SOL’s?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yeah SOL’s

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ah

Hortense W. Bouldin: So that PTA, the parents, you see to teach a child it takes the parents and the teacher combined

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: ummhmm, I strongly believe that

Hortense W. Bouldin: And I want to be sure I got that on, I wanted to be sure I got that in because that’s a big mistake they made. And if you go to a PTA meeting it doesn’t hurt you to sit in there even if you wanted to sit on your side and I sit on my side as long as we can discuss the problems and deal with it.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: ummhmm, umm, what effect do you think integration had on the education of black and white children? Like overall, do you think it helped them to become better, better educated, or better people overall to contribute to society?

Hortense W. Bouldin: [long pause] It’s been ah, it tends to be a negative change. Umm, we have too many students in school who do not believe they can achieve, you know what I mean?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: ummhmm
Interviewee: Hortense W. Bouldin (A retired school teacher from Mecklenburg County VA)
Interviewer: Kaitlin M. Aardahl, 11/11/03

Hortense W. Bouldin: then even if I work, I want to be sure that I am given the grade that I
deserve and another mistake they made was when they took, when, if the children are 50/50 it
would be much better if the teachers were 50/50. And then if I didn’t understood, if I didn’t
understood what my white teacher was saying, there was a black teacher who could help me to
interpret and understand and vice-versa. Now it doesn’t mean you got to be black or white to
teach. You understand what I am saying?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: ummhm

Hortense W. Bouldin: It is experience and language. Now I learned a lot when I ah taught, was
teaching white students, I had one young man that I’ll tell you the truth I loved dearly he use to
tell me I am the best redneck you have in your class. And he, when you got that attitude you can,
you can help them. But, it has had a negative effect on a good many and only thing, the thing that
bothered me a lot was picking up each other’s bad habits. And they have done that. Don’t you
think so?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yes, I agree

Hortense W. Bouldin: They may be picking up a few of the good habits too, but the thing I am
cconcerned about is picking up each other’s bad habits.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Umm, going back to what you said about the faculty being 50/50 if the
students are going to be 50/50. What was the racial makeup of the faculty once the schools
integrated. Was it more white or more black or?

Hortense W. Bouldin: There were fewer black

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: there were fewer black

Hortense W. Bouldin: Even till now they are not many black teachers at school, you have four or
five, but I mean you just needed to have enough to, in different levels. Even the students would
ah think ah, got to thinking that if you were a black teacher you were suppose to be inferior to a
white teacher, ah, and a black teacher could be inferior to a white teacher but the point is that’s
not the general population, you see what I mean, that’s not a general thing, and I mean you had
some of that but, it wasn’t to serious, and sometimes I’ve had students who didn’t wish to be in
my class but came to me after class to help them with their work. You see,

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: ummhm

Hortense W. Bouldin: So, and now I worked with, the teachers were nice though, I dearly loved
the ah teachers I worked with, and I think till the time I retired I was head of the math
department and they worked well with me, so it wasn’t that’s not the situation. But I do think
they need to ah, no question about it we grow up, black and whites grew up in different kinds of
homes.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: ummhm
Hortense W. Bouldin: My daddy was a share-cropper and my so that wouldn’t be the same relationship ah, I recall my mother working for, helping a lady, ah, ah, a white family, and their daughter, I use to just think about the wonderful things she could do, going to parties and all the experiences she had, and then in latter years we were teaching in the same school, we were even colleagues and now to me that was surprising, that you could even make it to the same level knowing the difference in experiences, your a sharecropper and here she was almost like a little socialite, you see what I am saying?

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Ummhmm, and you managed to make it to equal ground.

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yeah, yeah, so um, so sometimes the children, some of the children need some experience with people from different backgrounds. I can’t sympathize with you if I’ve had an entirely different life from you and I don’t even know what you are talking about when you tell me certain things.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Yeah

Hortense W. Bouldin: I think that’s part of it.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Are there any other comments you’d like to add about integration or education or any other personal stories that I did not hit on the questions you wanted to talk about something?

Hortense W. Bouldin: Yes, that I have found that most parents love their children, and even if they come to you with peculiar stories, it is out of love. Now I’ll recall one of the head men at Burlington, had a son in my class, and he was playful and didn’t want to do his work, and said my daddy does not have time to stop his important job and come over here to see what you are complaining about me not getting my lessons in, I am just so sure he was laughing about it. Before he could finish talking, I got a note, the principal sent me a note that his daddy was in the office waiting for me to finish their class to talk about his son. This was before lunch, when he was shocked, of course I was shocked to, and then when the daddy asked about him, and we were talking about his work and what he was doing and how I was trying to get him to work, his daddy was so hard on him that before we finished the interview, the discussion, I was asking him not to be so hard on him, he said I am gonna take his bike from him, I am gonna take his baseball bat, I said now we want him to have a life, we just want him to get his lesson to, see to it that he has this period to study, check on his lesson, and then I would ask parents to look at their homework and just sign it, I didn’t ask them to check it or anything, just signed, he worked at home last night, something of that nature. But, ah, he didn’t make but one visit never heard anything else, and the child went to work. But he was shocked, he thought his daddy was too busy to stop to see about him. Parents are interested in their children, and they should, that’s one thing we really need to emphasize. That they need, it takes the parents and the teachers to produce the best product.
Hortense W. Boudin: Thank you, its good to sit and reminisce. And it wasn’t a miserable experience for me. I don’t think it aged me. It was a lot of work, but not a miserable experience at all.

Kaitlin M. Aardahl: Okay, Thank you.

Hortense W. Boudin: Thank you for asking.