[0:00:00]

Courtney Eskew: -so I applied and interviewed and I've been working with Crossroads since then. So since I arrived at Rhodes I've been working at Crossroads. And that was right before the Web site got published. So the Web site became available for the public and for viewing in – was it April? April of 20--.

This is Anne Stokes. On behalf of Crossroads to Freedom I welcome you to Rhodes College. Thank you for coming and being willing to interview with us today. As you know and I explained to you on the phone, this is a very laid back, general interview. And so I'm going to be asking you simple questions and hopefully it will evoke memories of your life in Memphis and your life now in Memphis.

Anne Stokes: Good. Well, I'm glad to be here.

Courtney Eskew: Thank you. I'm going to start with an introduction. If you could, just state your name.

Anne Stokes: Anne Heard Stokes.

Courtney Eskew: Okay, Anne. And what year were you born?

[0:01:00]

Anne Stokes: 1937.

Courtney Eskew: Okay. And where were you born and raised?

Anne Stokes: I was born in Greenwood, Mississippi, which was about 30 miles from the town I lived in. There was no hospital there, so. Leland, Mississippi, which is in the Mississippi Delta. Very close to – Leland is just right outside of Greenville, Mississippi. That's how I identify it usually.

Courtney Eskew: Who were your parents and what were their names?

Anne Stokes: My father was Luther Martin Heard and my mother, Miriam Dean Heard. And my father grew up in Elberton, Georgia, and all of his family was from there, and mother's family was from Leland. And her parents farmed cotton. That was in the big days of, you know, cotton farms and plantations.

And I don't know exactly how my grandmother got

[0:02:00] my father to come their way rather than take mother to Georgia, but she did. *[Laughs]* And so we grew up – I have two other sisters. The three of us grew up in a small town in the Delta in – it was back when things were very, very different, if you could imagine, than they are now. But it was a comfortable, happy life. Small towns I think tend to bring that out anyway. You know, we could play outside until dark and, you know, no television – I mean we finally got television, black and white, and it was all snow, and we thought it was wonderful if we could just pick out a picture here and there.

But it was very-

[0:03:00] -we played Capture the Flag and we would have Monopoly games on weekends and in the summer that would go on for days. And our parents, you know, you didn't lock the doors of the house or – I probably drove a car before I was supposed to. But it was just – it was fun. It was a nice – and Leland, as it happens then, that was an experimental station, the largest cotton experimental station in the country was right outside Leland, in Stoneville, Mississippi.

And I didn't really realize this while I was growing up; I realized it much later, when I thought to myself, "Why was it that Leland had such a good public high school?"

[0:04:00] And it was because there were 42 PhDs out at Stoneville, and all of those kids were in our school, and they really set the curve. And I think that probably attracted really good teachers so that – just amazing. I mean I got a very, very good education, except for Latin. Oh, I hope Ms. York will never hear me say that.

I got a really good education out of Leland High School, which is sort of an amazing thing too. But Jimmy Henson was one grade above me, you know, who was the Muppet guy.

Courtney Eskew: Oh wow.

Anne Stokes: Yeah. So. And he was the most – he was the quietest little shyest guy I ever knew. But he moved when we were in about the ninth grade, but I can see why

[0:05:00] puppets and everything was his forte, 'cause he didn't like to be out front himself. *[Laughs]*

Courtney Eskew: Do you have any memories that are striking from either elementary school or high school?

Anne Stokes: Striking memories? In what – I mean what area – anywhere?

Courtney Eskew: Yeah, just from classroom experiences, being on the playground, anything that you carry with you to this day from education.

Anne Stokes: Well, let's see. Let's see what I tell my grandchildren that was things that we did then that I don't know. First of all, one thing is that the girls and the boys played football up to sixth grade on the same, you know, together. So that's sort of unusual for then and now.

[0:06:00] You could do all the sports, because the schools were – the classes were small enough that you didn't have to kind of choose your sport, so you could do it all. Not very well particularly, but do it all.

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The biggest event in high school by far, and this was my senior year, was that the school burned down. We had the elementary school and then the gym and then the high school, and the high school was a very old red brick building. And I sang in a quartet in high school, and we had gone to the elementary school to sing before this PTA meeting. So we had done our little deal, and we're leaving and walking back past the high school and it was just

[0:07:00] glowing, the roofline was just glowing. No flames, but just a glow. And so, you know, smart little kids that we are, we run back to the other school, run in saying, "The school's on fire. The school's" – 'of course, we caused havoc 'cause they thought the building they were in was on fire.

But that night the school burned to the ground. As soon as they opened the doors the top blew off. And so I didn't have to write a term paper. That was the thing I remember~~ed~~ the most. And I remember having biology in the boy's locker room and we'd have to put on gas masks we thought just about to go in there. And then you'd have second period at the Methodist Church, which was down the street. And then you'd have third period at the Baptist Church. And it was quite a thing,

[0:08:00] so by far the most memorable.

Courtney Eskew: Did you, h~~H~~ow did integration or segregation affect your educational experiences in Mississippi?

~~[begin segment2] [0:08:12]~~

Anne Stokes: We were totally segregated. And, you know, they had a school for the blacks in that part of town~~ime~~. And Leland was 4,000, 6,000 people in all and about 4,000 African-American and 2,000 White. And I lived the most sheltered life, looking back on it, after what

happened here in Memphis, you know, as I grew up and just matured, it just amazed me that

[0:09:00]

I was so unconscious, frankly. I mean I wasn't awake as far as segregation, integration, the way, you know, races treat each other and that type of thing. I loved – I mean we had a cook that worked for us forever when we were – when my father was in the Second World War. Dee Dee moved with us to Murray, Kentucky and then to Long Island, and she was as much a part of our family as anybody. And yet there was this huge gulf in difference. I mean I don't – there was just a line that you just, invisible as it was, you knew there was a real difference there.

[0:10:00]

And my father was very much a segregationist, and he was very, very afraid of integration, mainly of the mixing of the races, interracial marriages. And so I grew up with that, and then when I was here – so there were no blacks really associated with me in my education in Leland High School. And then I went to Stephens College, and basically there were no African-American students there. And then onto Vanderbilt, and there really weren't – there may have been, but not many there. And this would've been in the late '50s.

~~*Begin Segment2*~~

~~*[0:11:18]*~~

So that's why the Martin Luther King assassination here, that it impacted me incredibly. It was a very defining period and point in my life, the way I had to take a hard look at things that I had never considered.

Begin Segment 2:[00:11:29]

And I really do think – well, during that period, I can't even remember whether it was before or after, whether it was before 1968 or after, because that was kind of when I was involved with what was going on in Memphis in a more political way. I had come over to Rhodes to – they had a leadership something.

[0:12:00]

~~something.~~ It attracted men and women that were 10 and 15 and maybe even 20 years out of college, that just wanted to come back and be revitalized or just – and one of the courses, one of the things that we had to read was *Peep's Diary,* which is the diary of

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– and it might not even be Peep's, it may be Pip. Oh no, *Peep's Diary*. Okay, good. I'm safe. *[Laughs]*

But it was just a daily diary of a man that grew up in the 1700s, and he would write about beating his wife just like, you know, it was nothing, I mean he had no shame or conscience about that.
[0:13:03~~0~~] ~~I mean he had no shame or conscience about that.~~

And he would talk about walking into town and there would be hanging, you know, some thief, and they'd quartered him and, oh, just horrendous things. And then we had to write a paper thinking back, thinking forward 300 years, what would that person look back on my generation and say, "Can you believe that? Can you believe they lived that way or did that?"

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And we read another article on consensus trance, and I've really captured that phrase as what happened with a lot of southern people in that area, especially the younger people. We just were in a trance that, by consensus I mean, you know.

[0:14:03~~0~~] ~~by consensus I mean, you know.~~ But nobody, we just didn't think; we just accepted the culture that we were born into and didn't question it in any way, and I think it took these, you know, this dramatic things, like the garbage strike, just like you mentioned earlier, the two men that were killed in that garbage truck. I mean that started a whole 'nother rippling effect of people saying, "Now wait a minute. What's going on here?"

So when Martin Luther King was killed I remember I was playing Bridge, and we all left, you know, stopped by consensus I mean, you know.

[0:15:01~~0~~] ~~and went home.~~ And I remember my housekeeper, who was like a member of our family until she died, Mary Hubbard was there. And so John came home and he said, "Mary, I'm going to drive you home." And she kept saying, "No, you don't – don't do that." And he insisted. And he did, but it was very – it was scary. I mean and nobody knew what was going to happen and how bad it was going to get and whether there would be riots or whatever. And so that was the beginning of my examining myself on the racial issue and on the segregation/integration issue.

[0:16:00]

We did a lot of things; some friends of mine and I, Sally Thomason, who was – what did we call those? We would meet at the library and it would be a group of women, black and white, and

we would just meet and try to talk with each other and just get to know each other. Sensitivity groups, that's what they call it. And everybody was trying, but it just didn't come off at all. I think you need something real to get connected with another person, other race or not. I mean, you know, you've got to – your children have to be on the same soccer team or you have to have something that is not so artificial.

[0:17:00] But everybody was trying, that was the point sort of, is that everybody was trying.

Begin Segment 4: [00:17:04]

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And then when the garbage strike was threatened, again in '68, I was one of the people that was asked to come down and meet and talk with Jesse Epps, who was head of the union, and just let him explain what the conditions were. And as a result of that meeting we agreed that we would gather – and I was real active in the Junior League at that point; I was treasurer – that we would gather a lot of women together and they were going to supply us with these busses

[0:18:00] and we toured the – well, they worked, the barn where they worked, we went through to some of the homes.

The situation in my opinion was that the conditions that they worked under were just terrible. They had no bathroom facilities provided for them and the pay was just nothing. And Henry Loeb, who was the mayor then, his contention was that he couldn't give them a pay raise because if he gave a pay raise it would have to be across the board. So even a $0.10 an hour pay raise would just cause the top group just to get these huge raises

[0:19:00] that the city couldn't afford. And to me that was just, you know, ridiculous that it had to be an across-the-board raise.

So anyway, after these bus rides we decided, this group of women decided that we would go to the city council meeting and ask to be heard and say that we supported the sanitation workers getting a raise. Nobody, you know, that's the only group we were addressing. And so we did, and they didn't give us the time of day. They were really quite rude, we thought. *[Laughs]*

[0:20:00]

So we left the city council meeting and Jocelyn Wurzburg and Happy Jones and somehow – I don't know how I got swept into it, but anyway, we decided that we were going to meet at Sienna College. There was a nun too, I can't remember her name right

now. But anyway, so they said, "Well, Anne, get up on that bench and tell everybody where we're going to meet, out at Sienna College at 10:00 tomorrow morning. We'll plan what we're going to do after that." Well, the newspaper *[laughs]* wrote it up and they say, "And Mrs. John Stokes." They never used a woman's name then; you were

[0:21:00] always Mrs. John Stokes or Mrs. So-and-so. I wasn't Anne then. And they said "treasurer of the Junior League, climbs up on a bench", and, you know, so anyway, I got really drawn into it then, because reactions – oh, I was going – you know, the heads of the Junior League came and suggested that maybe I should resign if I was going to be a spokesperson for this group, we called ourselves the Concerned Women.

And I got some pretty strong letters, you know, anonymous letters. It was a very interesting time. John, who was working for Merrill Lynch at the time, a struggling stockbroker, you know,

[0:22:00] he lost a couple of accounts, but he got a good one too. So it was a time that you just had to say to yourself, "Can I live with myself if I turn my back on this and just walk away and say" – I'm making the majority of Memphians, and certainly the group that I was associated with, you know, my friends, just the social structure that I was in, they're basically on the other side. And I'm very – you know, I'm very glad that something woke me up and I could try to do a little bit anyway.

Begin Segment 5: [0:23:030] ~~try to do a little bit anyway.~~

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That's probably more than you wanted to hear.

Courtney Eskew: No, that's it. I loved hearing about all that. I do have one question. What brought you originally from Vanderbilt to Memphis? 'Cause you just described a very vivid history of Memphis I guess during what sounds like the beginning of your family. So if you could describe how you got to Memphis. And you did mention John, who, as your husband, right?

Anne Stokes: Yes.

Courtney Eskew: So if you could state the name of your husband and maybe the story of how you were brought from Vanderbilt to Memphis.

Anne Stokes: Well he was – John Wildemore Stokes, Jr. from Mayfield, Kentucky originally, and he also went to Vanderbilt and we met

there. And we married the summer after we graduated from college, which was 1959. And initially

[0:24:00] went to Atlanta, Georgia. He had taken a job with a metal and supply company there, and he hated it. Nuts and bolts. I mean he's a good salesman, but oh, he couldn't stand his job as it turned out. And he's also an avid duck hunter, and we were pretty far away from a flyway in Atlanta.

And when he was at Vanderbilt he had taken all of those tests that, you know, tell you what you ought to do and where you ought to go and which job you ought to take, and he had answered them just the way he thought the heads of the company would like for him to answer them, you know. And so he went back to Vanderbilt and took those tests again and answered them honestly, and that directed him into the brokerage business.

[0:25:02~~0~~] ~~into the brokerage business.~~ So we moved to Nashville for him to start with Stein Brothers and Boyce. And then about a year later I had an aunt – two aunts and uncles that lived here in Memphis, and John used them to help him find a position, and he started here with Merrill Lynch. And of course Memphis is on the flyway, so that's – so he was happy once we got to Memphis.

And I was too. It was a perfect spot for us, because Leland was 130 miles to the south and Mayfield was 130 miles to the north, and so it had everything that we wanted. So that's how we ended up coming here. And that was in 1961, so we've been here for quite a few years now.

[0:26:03~~0~~] ~~quite a few years now.~~

Courtney Eskew: What do you remember about Memphis when you first moved? Just about the city, about the people?

Anne Stokes: Well, our first apartment was in the Georgian Woods Apartment, which was right there at Union and just over the parkway, you know, right there at Union and – it extended in Union just about. I remember that by the time you got to High~~y~~land you were running out of, you know, ~~up~~town. So it was – I liked – we'd lived in Nashville and Nashville has a very tight social culture.

[0:27:03~~0~~] ~~culture.~~ And I loved Memphis because it was quite open. I think they have so many people moving in from Arkansas and Mississippi and Missouri that it was a very, very friendly city to live in.

We've always lived – we then lived in the midtown area, on Carr Avenue, in Central Gardens, for 20 years. And that was very much like a small town for me. You had the suburbs were sort of all the age group living in an area, you know. And in midtown we had older and younger families living around, which we liked a lot. What we did when ~~y~~our children got to be school age, we did choose

[0:28:00] private schools for them. And I really struggled with that, because after the garbage strike and all of that development and Memphis started changing in there dramatically, the next area was the schools. And I felt badly about that, but I didn't think that I should – I thought that I should do what I could do, but not put it on my children. Getting a really good education was more important, you know. Totally honest there.

So that kind of put me out of the loop of

[0:29:00] so many of these women that were real actively involved in the Concerned Women group, they went on to be. And I was – I did things like we did the ~~Funfiniti~~ Fun for Needy School C~~c~~hildren and some – and I was a tutor at Georgia Elementary and it wasn't like I didn't do some things, but my children were in private school all the way through.

Begin Segment 6; [00:29:31]

Courtney Eskew: Did they ever talk with you about their experiences growing up in Memphis and going to private schools rather than public schools?

Anne Stokes: Yeah. I think, John~~ny~~ and I always felt that our children missed something by going to private schools rather than public school. We felt we both come from public school educations and we thought that

[0:30:00] it was much more the way life is. The public schools, especially in small towns, you've got the whole spectrum of society at the same school. So… segregated, but the whole spectrum of the white society at Leland and Mayfield High. So we worried that our children were exposed to too much of the same people from the same backgrounds and the same walks of life, and that was a concern.

They, I think going through, you know – I should let them speak for themselves, 'cause

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[0:31:00] Jay knows they both can speak for themselves. They probably didn't give it a whole lot of thought until they looked back on it also. Elizabeth, my youngest daughter, when she graduated from Vanderbilt, came and started her teaching career at East High School. And the principal there had talked her out of doing the Teach for America because he needed a calculus teacher. And so she was immediately immersed in the inner city school. She was at East. There were four shootings that first year that she was there. I about – I got a lot of my – my hair was already white, I think, but it would've been white then.

And then
[0:32:00] she moved to Saint Mary's and taught there for several years. And she said, "Mama, I think I'd rather deal with the students than with the mothers. I think out of the parents out there, everybody wants their child to make straight As." So that was tough. So then she moved to Snowden School, which was her favorite, and back into the public school life. So she's been – she probably has more of an opinion about schools and the influence and how, you know, how it came through with her, you know.

But I think they're steps ahead of me. You know, they've now grown up in a much more integrated society

[0:33:01~~0~~] ~~society~~ and I don't think either one of them see color much at all. I don't think Elizabeth does at all. But then, like I said earlier, they've had the opportunity to have friends and associates that they grew up with on an equal basis. And their association is a healthy one, I mean with each other. It wasn't – I don't know, back when integration was first starting on the side, for the blacks and the whites I believe it was just hard; we just never had done that. And we didn't have that basis of having

[0:34:00] been in community together. And I guess Elizabeth and ~~Mem~~ Jim and Jack have all been in community with African-American families, you know, where children have played on the same teams and they've done things like that, that just make them way ahead of my generation.

Courtney Eskew: So did you ever feel the need to explain to them the racial situation in Memphis when you were becoming more involved in the community?

Anne Stokes: Oh yes, because – yeah, because, you know, it had some effects on them too. And I think I had to explain also – and explain may not be the word, but try to

[0:35:00] justify my father's opinions. I mean they came out some. I mean these kids were – and the way I did it was that, "Papa is from another generation. He's from another world when it comes to segregation and integration, and you're not going to change him. And don't – just let – stay out of that area of his, you know, don't get into this type – saying don't talk religion, I guess. But in my family that was the best way to handle it, because that was a huge, huge gap; probably than it had been for several generations, I think. That 60s area, my children's experience through – there was a bigger change in southern

[0:36:00] people and the way they approached life and saw the segregation, integration, slavery, the whole bit, than in any other short period of history like that. So I do think that they got caught in the cusp there that makes them unique.

Begin Segment 7; [00:36:27]

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Courtney Eskew: You mentioned earlier that you received a lot of what you called hate mail the more active that you became in the community. So I was wondering what your reaction to these voices were on your side?

Anne Stokes: Well, it was interesting, you know, one of them was signed "a neighbor," so I always looked, you know, I just kind of looked at all my neighbors every time I'd see anything, "Now are you the one that sent me that letter?"

[0:37:00]

And it surprised me that there were a lot of people out there that felt very strongly – strong enough to – it did worry me a little bit, 'cause, well, you just feel a little more vulnerable. But that period when I was really in the paper, you know, my name was in the paper and I was, that ~~was~~ 1968 right through when the Concerned Women were active. And then I faded pretty much into the background, so you could say I was a bit player in that as far as drawing attention to myself. Now I think it would be interesting to ask some of my old friends,

[0:38:00] my old Memphis friends, what they had to go through to defend me through that period, because I'm sure I was, you know, everybody thought I was crazy and certainly disagreed with what I was doing. But I don't know, you just keep going and don't let it bother you. And it really – you know, it really didn't. I don't think – I can't think of any repercussions later on that were directly attributed to that.

And of course, I think I was on the right side. So probably through the years I've been in a better position rather than a worse position. You know, what I did then looks better now than it
[0:39:00] did then is what I guess I'm saying.

Courtney Eskew: Were your family and your friends defending you for your participation in the Concerned Women group, or was it in other community groups as well?

Anne Stokes: It was mainly this one, because that's where I got the publicity. And I don't think they were defending me. I mean, I think they thought I was crazy too, but at least they – you know, they just shook their head and they didn't – we didn't lose our friendship.

And of course, I think there's always the draw there of people of like mind. And so you develop friendships with people that are very close friends of mine to this day, that were also sympathetic then to the garbage workers, to the sanitation people.

Courtney Eskew: Can you tell me a little bit more about what the Concerned Women group did in Memphis?

[0:40:04~~0~~] ~~Concerned Women group did in Memphis?~~

Anne Stokes: We just kind of raised an awareness of what was going on and said we really don't like this. I mean, for one thing, we didn't want another garbage strike. One of the editorial cartoons in the paper towards the end of this, and this probably lasted a month, you know, or six weeks, but was of the city council – a city councilman sneaking home at night and it's dark and he's coming to the door, and on the other – standing in the door is obviously his wife with her arms closed and her hair in curlers and a rolling pin in her hand, like

[0:41:00] you know, "I'm going to get you."

So that was sort of the way they portrayed us, as just saying, "Look, men," 'cause of course all the city council were men. Ms. Austin may have been up there; I don't know when she got elected. But just about anyway. It was sort of – and this was before women got into politics in a big way, so all of that was just sort of we called the attention, and it did avert the strike. We certainly can't take credit for that, but we were part of that – of what happened.

Courtney Eskew: Did you participate any at all in the first strike?

Anne Stokes: No. I wish I had, but

[0:42:00] I was still asleep then, you know. No, it was the actual Martin Luther King being killed here in Memphis and the "I A~~a~~m a M~~m~~an" signs and those – those were sort of life-defining for me. That's when, you know, you can go along in life and not – and be just kind of walk the fence or not think and not even – and just be whatever your culture has made you and just exist, you know, just float along. And I think that was what I had done up until then; I think that's the danger that I -

[0:43:00] asked my children to ask themselves, and my grandchildren one day, is just make sure that you're what you're doing and what your society and what your culture accepts is acceptable to you, because there are going to be things that should not be acceptable. I mean, well, I'm sure hundreds of years from now look back and I don't know whether it will be pollution or how we consumed or what, but there will be things that those people down the road will say, "Good night, what were they thinking?" So I think that's what that era did for me.

Begin Segment 8: [00:43:50]

Courtney Eskew: You mentioned earlier too that your activism impacted your husband's life, and not only your life and the life of your friends and your children. So I was wondering how that ~~*[0:44:00]*~~ support system worked between you and your husband during this very crucial time in Memphis?

Anne Stokes: Well he was great. And there's no doubt that had he said, "Anne, you've got to shut your mouth" that that could've been a huge problem. And who knows, it may be that that's what I would've done, which would've been horrible too. But he never, ever questioned that, and it was – yeah, it was a bond. I mean he supported me through that whole situation. And like I say, I mean he had things like, you know, like country clubs, and I think some of the people said to him, "Oh man, I hope, you know, you -

[0:45:00] - may not be able to get in here now." And maybe we were members of the University, but there were those type of social things that could've been a problem, but weren't frankly. We weren't – we never felt it in any way, in any really harsh way.

Courtney Eskew: And even when – 'cause you mentioned that his business life was affected too, and he still continued to support you doing that.

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Anne Stokes: He did. He lost a couple of accounts, and they told him why. I mean that was it; they just took them away. But then like I say, Cumberland Presbyterian Church called him and moved their account to him because of this situation. And so it worked both ways, you know.

[0:46:00] You have, Memphis has a lot of good people here that if we're prodded hard enough we can figure out what's the right thing, I think. But it takes them something sometimes to get us going.

Courtney Eskew: Were there any specific people in your life that influenced you, other than the ones that you've mentioned, who are your immediate family members, in terms of support, were there any role models that influenced your activism or that influenced the path that you chose in life?

Anne Stokes: Yes. My uncle by marriage was Edmund Orgill, who was the mayor of Memphis, and he was very active in sort of breaking -

[0:47:00] - the Crump machine. And he ran for governor after he'd been mayor a couple of times, and I worked in his political campaign one summer from, you know, during the summer before going back to Vanderbilt. And he was quite liberal. And really he and Daddy couldn't talk to each other much about politics or anything like that, 'cause Uncle Edmond, I think he hired the first African-American policeman here in Memphis. And he was very – he thought that the integration of the city was the only way that we could ever make it end.

[0:48:00]

So I'm sure he influenced my thinking or I got to meet people and be around people that really expressed those, you know, sentiments. And I realized they were out there in the world too, I mean, you know. So I would say that Edmund Orgill was very influential in my life, in that area of my life.

I'm trying to think of who else, because, you know, I had – Alexander Heard was the chancellor of Vanderbilt when I was there. Oh no, actually he came right after John and I graduated. But I was always very much an admirer of his. And he was very, mainly wise.

[0:49:07~~0~~] ~~wise.~~ To me, he exemplified wisdom, and so much of the segregation integration deal was emotion rather than a lot of reason, and I was glad to get away from that.

Begin Segment 9: [00:49:27]

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Courtney Eskew: Well in wrapping up, have you seen any changes in Memphis from the period that you've been describing for this interview, but also the Memphis that we know today? What would you say are the major changes that Memphis has experienced?

Anne Stokes: Oh goodness. Well, it's a totally different city as far as its openness. I think that the –

[0:50:00] - black population has certainly developed leaders and now, you know, Horton. I mean, ~~Harrington~~ Herenton started out as a – he was a great mayor. But I think that you can just look at the ~~Harrington~~ Herenton situation now and see that people are still dealing with racism, and it is still here.

I can't remember now – John and I were just talking about that, and it was in relation to somebody that we talked with or met or experienced.

[0:51:01~~0~~] ~~experienced.~~ And we were just saying that the bottom of that comment that that person made was racist, and there are still, you know, Memphis is still full of that on both sides. I think it's really hard. I love – I wish you could get my housekeeper, Francis Smith now, and John, my husband, if you could just sit in on some of their conversations, it's just wonderful, because they just – it's so real in that – I mean Francis can't stand ~~Harrington~~ Herenton and John was one of his big supporters, so here we are. It's just like a turnaround reverse thing.

[0:52:00]

There are so many – you know, we've come so far. We've got a long way to go. I think leaders like Horton are just incredible for all sides, but I do think you have black leaders that still are so engaged in getting rid of racism, that race is on their mind too much. Now maybe it's easy for me to say that since I'm white and not black, but it's just hard – it's a hard issue for anyone to let die, and I still think it colors so much of what we do.

I do think

[0:53:00] that things, you know, like the school systems, where – I mean my children, my grandchildren are in a fairly integrated, some of them, I mean the St. George's group, for instance. And as the Memphis campus of St. George's moves in the sixth grade, you know, when they all gather out on the Collierville ~~Cuyva~~ campus it will be

almost 50/50. I mean that's what they're striving for. But it will be a very integrated situation, and I think that's the answer. That's the healthiest thing that can happen to our city, because those people will have grown up together in a very open, equal environment, and they won't see color.

[0:54:00]

I think that Memphis has some real problems, you know, with all the violence and the gangs and the things like that, and that concerns me greatly.

Courtney Eskew: Was there anything that you would like to touch on that we haven't covered yet?

Anne Stokes: Goodness, no.

[Laughter]

Anne Stokes: Let's see.

Courtney Eskew: Jay, do you have any questions?

Jay: Well one of the things that I – it's probably because I'm a new parent as well, or [Inaudible] parent, and I think I'm trying to teach my children certain lessons. I was wondering if you have an antidote, wearing your parent hat for a moment, of something that you may have done with your children to try to inspire them as you have.

Anne Stokes: Well, I think the main – you know, your children just absorb the parent's attitudes –

[0:55:00] - and feelings, and so don't think for a minute – you'll hear yourself through your child's, you know, she will use an expression that you'll think, "Oh my goodness. I know where she learned that." So I just think the best thing is to not make a big deal out of it, but make sure that every, you know, that she and your little boy, who's still to come, just is taught to treat everybody with respect, you know. It doesn't matter, you know, I wouldn't – you know, you don't want to bring the black and the white into it. Because see, that's what I was saying a minute ago, it kind of permeates, when we ought to let that die maybe.

[0:56:00] But just everyone, you should be respectful.

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And I think that there's no doubt children of my generation, and probably some of my children's generations saw their parents be very disrespectful to others, so...

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Jay: Is the conversation with Francis and John something that they would agree to?

Anne Stokes: Oh boy, I don't know. Yeah. I don't know whether Francis would. John would probably love it, yeah. But they – oh, they argue. Mm mm mm. But it's wonderful. I mean, you know, the nice thing about that is that they are both being just honest as can be, and at this stage in their life they love each other enough that they can-

[0:57:00] -that they feel safe in saying what they think. And that is something I do think should be – I mean is part of our relationships with others.

And going back to those sensitivity groups and that type of thing, you didn't really feel safe saying what you really thought; you said what you wanted the other person to hear, and you were – I mean you just kind of walked on eggshells when you were discussing things or issues or issues or anything like that. You have to have a basis of a friendship that is – that makes conversation safe, where you know that you can express what you really are feeling and you're not going to be hated –

[0:58:00] - for it, you know. And I think that's much more possible now than it was then, when we were first starting out.

We had to start talking about race relations in a totally different way at this point. Before then it was this is the way it was and you did not discuss it and you certainly didn't question the way things were handled and how relationships were handled then.

Jay: Is there a current issue that evokes some of the same emotions and things like that or that you're paying attention to right now the way that you did in this era?

Anne Stokes: I think my concern now –

[0:59:00] - is with the Christian Church. I think that the Christian Right has so colored Christianity that I think there are many people, young people in particular, that would agree to saying that they are

spiritual but not religious, and they don't want to associate with the Church necessarily. And I think that there is a rightwing fundamentalist-type of grasp on Christianity as it is defined, you know, that has taken it away from its roots,

[0:60:00] it's taken it away from the Christ of the New Testament and, you know. And that is probably what concerns me the most today.

And of course, we didn't talk about the churches back then, because there were – we were at Idlewild and Dr. Jones immediately announced to our congregation that anyone was welcome at Idlewild Presbyterian Church, and we lost lots of members there. You know, you had Second Presbyterian Church taking the other stand and really barring the doors. But that was another example of everybody having to finally say what they believed and get off the fence,

[0:61:00] I mean, you know. And if you – you could change churches. You know, we got a lot of members for the same reason that we lost them. But it made people declare themselves in a way that I think we had not – no one had had to do up until about then.

Courtney Eskew: Well thank you so much for coming today and sharing your story. We appreciated having you.

Anne Stokes: Oh, well I've loved it.

[End of Audio]