

Interview Transcription of Dr. Ron Hurdle

April 19th, 2021

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [0:02]

This is Sylviane Greensword, I'm here with Dr. Ron Hurdle. We are in Rees-Jones, today is April the 16th, the year's 2021, and we are here for the Oral History Project with the Race and Reconciliation Initiative at Texas Christian University. Dr. Hurdle, thank you so much for joining us this morning.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Sure, thank you for inviting me.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

So, we are going to discuss several things chronologically for the most part.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Okay.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [0:37]

But we will also pause and maybe elaborate more on some parts of your accomplishments more than others. So, let's start talking about your upbringing, can you tell us where you're from, where you grew up, and what it was like being you?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Well, I'm the youngest child of seven siblings.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Oh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I was born in Dallas, Texas and at that time it was called South Dallas. There's a little distinction now on what South Dallas means today. But I grew up, my father worked as a laborer for Sears-Roebuck, and he retired there after 30 something years, and I grew up in a predominantly Black neighborhood that evolved over a period of time. When my dad purchased the house, it was a Jewish community and as more People of Color moved into the community, the Jewish community moved out. So, by the time I got to elementary school, it was predominantly a Black community. I attended high school there at James Madison [High School], which was only a very few blocks away from where I lived. And like I said, I had three brothers and three sisters. One set of the-two of the sisters were twins. We have a history of twins in our family-

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

I see that.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And grew up there, was part of the Disciples of Christ Church. My dad was a deacon there and a later an elder there, and so that's where the bulk of my upbringing took place, in the- in the Disciples of Christ Church and that's how I basically got over to TCU.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [2:32]

So, the school that you attended, schools that you attended, were predominantly Black schools. Were your classmates interested in pursuing a college education, were there a lot of educated Black people around you?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Sure, I graduated from high school in 1967 from James Madison, it was a predominantly Black high school. At that time, segregation did not exist in in Dallas. Most of the high schools were segregated, well all the high schools were segregated. There were 4, 5 Black high schools you could attend, and then the others were white schools you could not attend. Fortunately for me, we had a very good class of students who really wanted to inspire to do other things, and a lot of my classmates have gone on to become doctors and dentists and those kinds of things. So, I was in a very- I was in company of good people who wanted to aspire to do new things. We recently just had our 50th class high school class reunion.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Oh. That must have meant something.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And we went overseas and there were a lot of people there. So, to answer your question, yeah it was a group that aspired to do other things, to kind of advance themselves so that kind of helped me in my pursuit as well.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [3:55]

And you say you chose TCU because of your affiliation with the Disciples of Christ Church. What were your expectations?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Well, I had two other friends who were at TCU.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Okay.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And we all grew up in the Disciples of Christ Church, like I mentioned.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Do you have the names of them?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yes, one is Larry Dixon.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Okay.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And I spoke to Larry Dixon not too long ago, and the other's name is Anthony Cregler, and I also spoke to him. We meet periodically on Zoom just to kind of stay in touch, but they were two years ahead of me. We all went to the same high school and they graduated, and they decided to come to TCU. So, when I graduated, I decided to follow them, and partly because of my relationship with them as good friends, and then the relationship I had to the Disciples of Christ Church.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [4:49]

And how involved in the church were you after you joined TCU? Did you find the Christian environment to be what you expected it to be?

DR. RON HURDLE:

I did, we went to, I can't think of the name it's been some time ago, but there was a minister by the name of Ralph Stone. I'll never forget his name. He was the campus minister to the TCU students, and we were very involved with him. He used to take a bunch of students down to South Bend during spring break and we would go down there with him. But he was a very caring guy and he was very receptive to incorporating students, all students, into the Christian life of the church.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Regardless of color?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yeah, right he was, very good.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [5:40]

Okay, very good. Did you already have a major in mind?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yeah, and that's a long story. I don't know how much of it you wanna hear.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

I have all the time we need. (Laughs)

DR. RON HURDLE:

Okay. When I was in high school, I was a good student, I had good grades, I was in the National Honor Society, all the things that lend some credence to your academic capabilities. So, when I came to TCU, I wanted to be a doctor.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Ohh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

A medical doctor, that was my aspiration. And I came over and I got my counseling with my counselor and evidently, and I understand it, but evidently the first semester is packed with a lot of stuff.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Chemistry, biology, all the things necessary to pursue the medical degree.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And probably designed to weed out those people who really don't know if they can do this or not.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Correct.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And it was pretty successful in weeding me out.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

(Laughs)

DR. RON HURDLE:

As a matter of fact, after my first semester, I came home and I told my dad, "I'm not going back to college."

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Oh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And he says, "Oh, you're wrong. You're going back." He says, "I don't care what you do, but you're going back." He said you gonna go to college, you're gonna get a college degree. And that's the kind of dad I had.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And it changed my whole life, that little conversation we had. I went back and I changed my major and I switched to a theater degree-

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

That's very different.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And I became involved in the in the theater program at TCU and that's the degree I got. I got a Bachelor of Fine Arts in theater.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Correct. Yeah, yeah. I was saying that 'cause I remember in the yearbook seeing a picture of you performing.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yeah, I was in-

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

It's just so different from medicine, (laughs).

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yeah, you know, when you're a little kid and you have these aspirations and I kind of wish, I'd kind of stuck it out.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Just as an aside and I'll tell you this real briefly, not to belabor this point, but when I was about 40 something years old, I got a call from the Dallas Morning News editor. And he was looking for some people who had been involved in a lawsuit against Dallas Independent School District.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Oh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And I was kind of young at the time, and I didn't realize that my father had filed a lawsuit against Dallas Independent School District because they wouldn't let us attend the school because it was still an all-white school, that was only about a block away from my house. And I told him that I wasn't familiar with it because I was kind of young at the time, and he came out and did an interview. And come to find, he had pictures of the of the group that was like, I think, 9 plaintiffs. It was me and my twin sisters and several others. And at that time, he asked me the same question that you asked me about coming to TCU. And what my degree was and why I changed. That kind of conversation went to discuss the separate but equal segregation concept we had at the time, and we talked about how the facilities in the segregated Black schools just were not up to par to what the all-white schools were experiencing. And basically, I said I just wasn't really equipped. I didn't think that I didn't have the mental capability to do it because I think that's what's kind of forced me to go on and do all these other degrees and everything else, I've been able to do, but I didn't have the equipment, the capacity, the facilities to compete in that level, and I didn't realize that until actually I got to TCU.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Wow, wow. Interesting, so separate, but not so equal?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Right.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [9:36]

And so, you did get your fine arts degree. Can you talk about what you did after graduation?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Well, to have a theater degree, a bachelor's in fine arts. Your opportunity is somewhat limited.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

You could either go to New York and try to get work there or to go out to California and I thought about that. As a matter of fact, Betty Buckley, which was a cheerleader just before me and I got to know her before she left, she went on to New York and she did quite well. She was

in *Cats* and some other things, and you know she was kind of an inspiration, but I decided, well, do I wanna really take that risk? At that point, I decided I was going to get married. And so, I thought to go into something a little more stable that could offer a- more of a guaranteed feature. And so, I joined the Navy.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Oh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I went into the Naval Officer's Candidate School in Newport, RI.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Huh, okay, what a culture shock.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yeah, it's a little different from a spending time on a campus as a theater major then going into the military.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Right.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I had been in the ROTC in high school, and I think I attended one year here at TCU, but then I decided I wanted to go into the military. That was during the time of the Vietnam War. And people were getting drafted. I wasn't afraid of being drafted because I think I had a pretty high draft number.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Okay.

DR. RON HURDLE:

But I had friends who were in the military, who had gone in as officers, and so I decided to-

[VIDEO BREAK]

So, I had friends who were military officers, and so I decided to join the Navy. And, I went to the Naval Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island; and I got my commission as a naval officer in Newport.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [0:16]

Okay. Is that where you developed the taste for the law?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Well, you know that's kind of an interesting question too, because I was somewhat involved in- basically, I worked for the legal officer aboard the Davis Station in Charleston, South Carolina.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Oh, okay.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I wasn't an attorney at the time, and I really didn't have an aspiration to work in the legal field at that time.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

But I was assistant to the legal officer and I did a lot of his work from a legal perspective while I was at Charleston, at the naval station in Charleston.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [0:54]

So, when did you decide that “No, I think I need to look into being an attorney?”

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yeah, well, I have a good friend of mine. He's still a very close friend. His name is Ken Baker. I hope he doesn't mind me using his name. But we would talk, we both worked together at Southwestern Bell.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Okay.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And we talked about doing something different, and we said why don't we get our real estate degree?

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Hmm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Our real estate license.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

So, we both committed to do it. I went to school and got my real estate license. He didn't and I got my real estate broker license. So, I practiced real estate for a while.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

But then we both talked about going to law school, and this was later on in life, and I did it and he didn't.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

(Laughs)

DR. RON HURDLE:

So uh, there's two commitments that he kind of broke with me.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

But it worked in my favor.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

But I decided after spending some time in telecommunications and sales and some other fields, that I really wanted to be an attorney.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Hmm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I felt like that's where my skillset lied and so I decided to pursue law school, and I think when I started law school, I was 43 years old. So, this was really late in my career.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [2:05]

Wow, okay. (Pause) So, what was it like to be like one of the older students in the room, with all those kids, maybe like just fresh out of college?

DR. RON HURDLE:

I think it was good for me.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

It was?

DR. RON HURDLE:

I found that I was older than most of my instructors. But I think at 43 years old I was focused. I knew what I wanted to do.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Right.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I wasn't there to please-

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Mom and Dad or to look for a husband or wife.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I just wanted to get a law degree.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And so, it helped me because I was focused. I think all my prior experience and all my other jobs, and careers helped me too to get a better perspective of that job.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And it paid off. It really helped me to do that.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [3:00]

What was your specialty or specialties?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Well, when I came out- when I came out of law school, I really didn't really wanna go into a corporate environment and basically, they weren't looking for people like me. Here I am, 46 years old. They're looking for the young, aggressive attorney-

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Who's wants to make a name for himself and that really wasn't me. I was just focusing on wanting to practice law, so I initially started in private practice with a friend of mine. I did that for probably about a year.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And then I got called in for an interview to work as a trial attorney for an insurance company.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And, uh, I worked for that first insurance company for about 12 years doing trial work. I managed their local legal office for a while

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And then in total, I probably spent about 25 years working for insurance companies doing trial work, defending insureds, lawsuits for homeowners, car wrecks and those kinds of things.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [4:01]

Now, did your theater experience help you with that? (laughs).

DR. RON HURDLE:

It did. It did and everybody says that everybody who knows that I had that prior experience say that because as a trial attorney, you're trying to convince people.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Correct.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And they said some of it is acting. But you gotta believe what you're doing, so I think the experience I got working on a stage in front of people that I don't know.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Trying to deliver a message paid dividends in working in front of juries.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Hm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Trying to convince them of issues and perspectives. So yeah, that did help.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [4:36]

(Laughs) okay, very good. So now we're moving back in time.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Okay

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

And talking about your time at TCU. So, we know you for being the first African American cheerleader at Texas Christian University. How did you even get to be interested in cheerleading? Were you cheerleading in high school? Did you have...

DR. RON HURDLE:

No, I never thought about it, really. You know when I got to TCU, I mentioned we had some other friends-

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And I had another friend of mine, from high school who came over to TCU with me.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And so, there were, I guess there was a group of maybe about 30 or 40 African Americans who we knew each other. We would meet together in the student center and we would play cards and talk. And the first two years like I said, the first year was very difficult for me academically, so I didn't even think about it then. And then after I came back and changed my major, several of us were sitting down talking about getting involved and says, "What can we do to get involved in the life of TCU other than just going to classes." And so, we all decided to do something and so I decided, well, I think I'm gonna run for cheerleader. At that time, I'm assuming it's still the current situation is that you know it's an election. There were no tryouts at the time, so it was a popularity contest, really. And I got the support of a lot of my friends of course, and then I was able to get some support of some people from some of the sororities and fraternities. There was this guy by the name of Truett Burke, I'll never forget him. He decided that he would be my campaign manager, so we began to formalize this in some kind of formal campaign, and we printed up flyers, and we made presentations in front of different groups, and before you know it, I was elected.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [6:34]

Wow, and what was the campus reaction to your election?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Varied. I can remember my roommate, my first and second year, was a guy named Landon Schultz, a very good friend. And after the election and the results were posted, a bunch of us went out just to celebrate. We went up and down Berry [Street] and we were just having a good time.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And we got back to the room. And my roommate Landon, I could tell something was wrong with him.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And I said, "Are you okay?" He said, "Yeah, I'm okay," but I knew something was wrong 'cause he was a very jovial nice guy.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And a few minutes later, the phone rang. And he tried to pick it up, but I got it instead. And there was someone on the other line, made some comments, and I'll try to paraphrase because I never forget the call, but obviously I can't remember exactly, but it was something to the effect that, he used the n-word, and "You'll never be my cheerleader. And as a matter of fact, we're coming over there to get you now," and he hung up the phone. Well, it was kind of startling because I was coming off of this high that we have been celebrating with my friends, and now I'm thrust into this this attack. Is this something that someone is going to physically do?

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And I knew that, you know there had been rumors about what would happen if I would get elected. Primarily, because everybody else on the squad was white. And you always had to pair up with a partner, a male, and a female.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

So, you know I'd heard rumors that if I won, you know which of the white females would wind up being my partner, and you know those kinds of things. But I dismissed that at that point, but at this point I realized that this is a serious consequence of this election. So, the word started circulating in the dorm.

[VIDEO BREAK]

So, the word quickly circulated through the dorm I was staying in Tom Brown [Hall] at the time and all of a sudden, everybody was accumulating. They were all there in support. We stayed up late, kind of wondering if somebody was going to come and fortunately nobody ever showed up.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [0:22]

Did you call security or anything like that?

DR. RON HURDLE:

We did not, and I guess, I'm not quite sure why we didn't, but it was so spontaneous.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Right.

DR. RON HURDLE:

It was almost a combination of anger, of uncertainty, a little fear.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

So, we just kind of kind of assembled together, and kind of reassured each other. There probably were about maybe about 20 or 30 guys. At that point, the dorms were the segregated-

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

So, it was an all-male dorm, and I knew everybody in this dormitory. I lived there for two years, so I had real good friends there, and so we would just kind of stay up waiting to see if someone would show up and nobody ever showed up.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [1:11]

Hmm. Wow. So, what about the football team? What was...

DR. RON HURDLE:

I really didn't interact with them that much that intimately, but I didn't see any adverse responses from them.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

We travelled with them a lot, not directly with them, but we would go on trips when they would go out of town, the cheerleaders would travel as well. And we would see each other, but other than just you know, exchanging, you know, hellos, goodbye, good game, etc.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

We- I really didn't have a lot of contact with the football team.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [1:44]

I see. So, whenever we read your story, that's the thing that always comes about is the pairing, that we know at some point you would have to be paired with a female cheerleader. There was no non-white female cheerleader if I'm correct?

DR. RON HURDLE:

No.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

So how did that play into?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Well, like I said, the rumors were kind of circulating before the results of the election, so I knew that was going to be an issue.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I didn't know what kind of position to take,

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

To approach someone, and fortunately, someone approached me.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Her name was Susan Beard. I love her to death. She says, "I wanna be your partner."

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Ohh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And she was the captain that first year, and we became very good friends. And I think she helped to relieve any apprehension I had.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

By coming forward. And so, she volunteered, and we were partners for the next two years.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [2:45]

Mhm. And how long did that- how long before you were elected, were you able to actually perform?

DR. RON HURDLE:

I'm not quite sure when the election was, but we have had like a cheerleading camp the summer before school started.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And that's where we would go and work on our cheers, that kind of stuff.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And I think it may have been over in Dallas, maybe SMU, and it's a big competition.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Uh huh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And they award trophies etc. So, we met there, and we went through all our routines, and then when school began, I remember one of our first games was an away game.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And we flew, I think it may have been Wisconsin, I'm not sure, but we got checked into the hotel, and our sponsor said that the chancellor wanted to meet with the cheerleaders.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Oh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And that's kind of strange, you know?

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

The year was just?

DR. RON HURDLE:

That was my first year. That must have been, let me see, '69 or '70. He wanted to meet with the cheerleaders before the game. I think we flew in like Saturday morning or something and the game was going to be Saturday afternoon. And so, we all met all the cheerleaders were there, and our sponsor, and then the chancellor came in, and he prefaced the conversation with you know, and I'm trying to paraphrase again 'cause originally, I can't remember the exact words, but you know, "Things are changing, and sometimes people are slow to accept change." And he finally basically said that he'd been approached by some of the alumni, and they were concerned with us doing cheerleading drills that involved boys touching the girls. And so, it became apparent to me that, well, you know these are cheers that I've seen in my last two years here, and I'm assuming that they've done them long before I got here. I'm thinking what's changed. Why is there a need now to have no contact drills basically?

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Right.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And so, I quickly figured out the issue.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

But I didn't say anything. Because I was little apprehensive as well. You got the chancellor of the university asking you to not do contact drills during the football game, and I think it may have been Susan as our- she was my partner- as the captain of the squad said, "Well, these are the drills, that we practiced all summer. These are the ones that we know how to do, and these are the ones we're gonna do." And with that, the decision was made. We just continued to operate as we normally would have.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [5:42]

Did y'all get in trouble?

DR. RON HURDLE:

I don't think there were any consequences that I saw.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Uh huh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I wouldn't go as far as to guess that no one contacted the chancellor and no comments were made-

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

For people who were watching the game, maybe, but that was an away game which kind of made a little difference. But I didn't get anything direct, not directly to me.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [6:08]

Okay, that's interesting. Did you know that prior to integration, so we're talking back in like '63, chancellor, I believe it was Chancellor Moudy, said that one of the major concerns of integration and one of the reasons why they had delayed it, is because they were trying to prevent interracial courting and interracial marriages. This was one of the biggest concerns and the reason why they refused to integrate for so long. And now you're coming here and you have physical contact. Although it's in the context of cheerleading, but it's physical contact, nonetheless with female cheerleaders. What do you think? What do you think was the statement that people perceived?

DR. RON HURDLE:

I think, and I've got the benefit now 50 years later so I can look back retrospectively and say that, and maybe I can't even do it then, that there's been an unspoken taboo.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And it's a fear, that the majority has against black and white relationships, especially a Black man and a white female.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Yes.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I mean, that's so deeply rooted, and it's very real, very real to them that it's inexplicable as far as trying to rationalize it, okay. But I know it existed. I knew it existed then. And that was the basis for the rumbling, like "Hey, who's gonna step up and do this?" or "How is he gonna find him a partner?"

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Yeah.

DR. RON HURDLE:

"Because that's something we don't want." And I'm sure that was the basis by the alumni's concern about changing how we did our drills, so.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I don't know. I'm sure there are people who can explain the basis for that, but yeah, I understand that. And I know it was real then and it may be even real somewhat today. But I did not know about that concern before I got here, especially from the university's perspective. But it doesn't surprise me.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [8:42]

Mhm. And one of your fellow African American students at TCU? What was their experience based on what you know?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Say that again. What's your question again?

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

You told me that you know most African American students, like we all knew each other, we used to hang out. What was their experience at TCU as the minority as far as you know?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Well, we kind of hung out together.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And I think my personality was a lot more outgoing, so I was able to kind of intermingled.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

With the majority, a lot better than most.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

I see.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I would say the majority kind of hung to themselves. And they really didn't have the benefit of that integrated environment and the goods or the bads from that as a matter of fact.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Right, right, right.

DR. RON HURDLE:

But I think they all realized that they were in an environment that was somewhat segregated and maybe even somewhat racist at the time, and I think that was based on their limited exposure too.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And what was going on throughout the whole campus.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [9:56]

Yeah. And that's the thing that you being so outgoing, you took the chance to get hurt, you know? So, I guess that when you kind of keep to yourself, you have that layer of protection. But at the same time, you're missing out on so many social opportunities, yeah.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yeah, I never saw myself as exposing myself.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Hm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And it's interesting, when you're doing something, you know you may not see it from the same perspective as if you would later on look back on it.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Or maybe it was how others see it. I saw myself as wanting to be involved. And I think that provided me with some opportunities to see some real good things at TCU, I met some very good friends. I had my roommate, like I mentioned earlier, he was a white male from D.C. He and I were very good friends, and we're still good friends, he was at my wedding. And I met some good people here and I think, and this is kind of the conversation that we had earlier. I think when you look at any situation, any environment you gotta understand, it's just a microcosm of the country as a whole.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Correct.

DR. RON HURDLE:

So, you're gonna have all kinds of ingredients or elements in that environment. But I think that my desire to be involved allowed me to get beyond the segregated racial issues that existed at TCU at the time.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [11:29]

At the risk of sounding a bit redundant, did you know you were making history?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Never thought of it. Never thought of it. You know, as I walked through the tour you just gave me and I got kind of emotional, not because of what I may have done, but because of what you guys are doing. That you see the significance of what we did, even though we didn't, maybe even realize what we were doing at the time and you're building on that. But to directly answer your question, I didn't see that as historical. I really didn't. It was a sign of the times.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I don't- I never patted myself on the back by saying, "Hey, you really stepped up and did that," but just something we just did.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [12:19]

Yeah. This is beautiful. What about your family life? So, you started a family after your enrollment.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Yes.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Can you tell us a little bit about that?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Sure, just before I went to OCS [Officer Candidate School], when I decided that I was gonna go into the military, right after I got my commission, I got married. Married a lady from Dallas that I met my senior year in high school and we just kind of drifted apart, and then we kind of touch bases again my senior year in college, and we got married. I have two kids.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Mhm.

DR. RON HURDLE:

I have a daughter and a son. My son was born first. He lives in Austin. He has twin boys that are 16 years old. And my daughter lives in Connecticut and she's got two daughters. My daughter's an attorney in Connecticut.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Huh.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Which is interesting. I never thought she would be an attorney. I never really pushed her in that direction. She just decided that's what she wanted to do. But I have four beautiful grandkids, and a son and daughter that are doing well, happily married. They both left home when they went to college and they never came back (laughs). So, I never had the issue of the adult child that doesn't wanna leave home.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

I see (laughs).

DR. RON HURDLE:

So, they both became independent.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

And left the nest.

DR. RON HURDLE:

And left the nest. So, I'm happy for that.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD: [13:48]

Mhm. Do you encourage any of your grandchildren to attend TCU?

DR. RON HURDLE:

Do I what?

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Do you encourage any of your grandchildren to attend TCU?

DR. RON HURDLE:

I do. I was in Austin last weekend, and I was visiting my grandsons who just turned 16 and, it's kind of interesting to watch your grandkids grow up, and you take so much pride in them, and you're so happy for them. Not that you aren't happy for your kids.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Right.

DR. RON HURDLE:

But everything you wanna do now is for them. You wanna show them, you wanna instruct them, you wanna teach them, you wanna encourage them; and you see the gifts that they got and you just wanna continue to say, "Hey you can be all you can be." My granddaughter with the recent election, we got her a T-shirt that says the vice president looks like me. And that's to encourage her and let her know you can be whatever you wanna be. So yeah, I'm always trying to encourage my grandkids, and I wanna be there for them for whatever they need.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

Very good. Well, Dr. Hurdle we thank you for allowing us to partake in that history building project. We are very grateful that you shared your memories, your knowledge, your wisdom with us. And, you know, words cannot really express how much we value your contribution to TCU, and how much potential there is to be built upon. You know your initiative to step out and brave the dangers, you know? It seems like, "Well, yeah, I was just cheerleading." No, it's so much more than that.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Mhm.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

It's a foundation and you know, as you can see, the campus is growing. You've seen how much change has happened since you last came here. But it's people like you that the African American and I would say that the Black community looks up to. Just having that boldness to step out and to say, "You know what? This is my campus. I will be involved."

DR. RON HURDLE:

Mhm.

DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:

So, so, thank you is I guess what I'm trying to say. Just thank you, thank you and thank you.

DR. RON HURDLE:

Well, thank you guys for doing this. And I think it's important, like I said, I didn't realize it at the time, but it's important that people can see where we were, where we are, where we can go and to work to take down those barriers, to try to avert their fears, to make this a better place for everybody. So, thank you guys.

END

