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William Watson: I was born in Scotland Neck, North Carolina, August the 16th, 1923.

Blair Murphy: And did you say North Carolina or South Carolina?

William Watson: Scotland Neck, North Carolina. S-C-O-T-L-A-N-D. Scotland Neck, North Carolina.

Blair Murphy: And what was it like there when you were growing up?

William Watson: Memorable. What I remember by Scotland Neck, North Carolina happened more after I left. Now it was racist. I did live on Main Street. I lived on Main Street and all my neighbors were White, but I lived on one side and they lived on the other. I lived right across the street, categorized from the school. I think, I guess it was elementary, high school, I don't know what it was. Of course, we couldn't go there. But I left there when I was eight years old. So I don't remember that much about Scotland Neck, only that it was racist. Just like everything else in North Carolina. People were poor. Schools closed in October. Some Black kids had to go out and pick cotton and stuff like that, you see. And none of the White kids had to do that, just the Black kids that go out and pick cotton. I never picked any cotton, my mother would not submit us to do anything like that.

Blair Murphy: What did your mother do for a living?

William Watson: She worked for White people, she worked as a cook man for people. Where she made— I'd say my mother made $10 a week and in the 30s making $10 a week. You were doing really well.

Blair Murphy: Yeah.

William Watson: But she worked for the same people in North Carolina that she worked for on Virginia Beach.

Blair Murphy: Oh, okay.

William Watson: See, Mrs. Moore had a cottage here in Idaho. And so my mother worked for her at home during the winter months, and cooked for her in summer months at the—

Blair Murphy: So is that why your family moved here?

William Watson: Yeah, mm-hmm. My mother figured that if she was going to come here every year, every summer to work. She might just come down here and stay. And I was glad, she said that was the best move she ever made in her life.

Blair Murphy: And what was different about this area than North Carolina?

William Watson: Totally segregated. But you did not have to take the things, you were freer. Although it was segregated, you were freer in Virginia than in North Carolina.

Blair Murphy: What were some of the ways it was more free?

William Watson: In North Carolina, you had to take whatever White people said to you, you just have to take it with a grain of salt because to them, they could beat you up or put you in jail or whatever they like. In Virginia, somebody messed with you, you [indistinct 00:03:41] part and go about your business. No, you didn't have to take that kind of stuff. You didn't have to get off on the sidewalk. My sister and I went back to North Carolina just for a few days, must have been right by 1945. We left there in 1931 and we'd gone back there on occasions to a funeral or to visit, but not very often. But in 1945, my sister and I, we decided, I said, "Well, let's go to Scotland Neck." I was going to college at Virginia State in Petersburg. I said, "Before I go, let's go visit Scotland, Neck." Hottest day that I've seen my life.

William Watson: So my sister and I were down what they call downtown. And when the White kids got out of school, they went into the drug store and all of them came out eating ice cream. This is in 1945. So we said, "Oh, it's so hot, let's go in there." so we hadn't been accustomed to that because in Virginia Beach we could go in and get it. You might not be able to eat it there, but you could go in and get it. We went in and ordered two cones of ice cream right behind the White kid, and the great big pot of cream is in the bucket. She said, "I'm sorry, we don't have any." My sister said, "What? You said you don't have any?" She said, "I'm sorry." She said, "What you mean is you don't serve to Black people." And she just stood there.

William Watson: And my sister and I went home and packed the few things that we had brought with, caught the next train out of North Carolina. And I haven't spent another night in Scotland Neck since. I've stayed in North Carolina, but not in Scotland Neck. It's different now because in those area right across from where we lived, it's all integrated, you see. But personally, I'm not really fond of living. I wouldn't be fond of living in North Carolina. I'm totally Virginian. I'm totally Virginian.

Blair Murphy: What school did you go to here in, I guess it was Princess Anne County at the time?

William Watson: Yeah, I went to Princess Anne County. I went to Seatack Elementary School for three years.

Blair Murphy: And what was that school like at that time?

William Watson: Do you know where the community center is?

Blair Murphy: Mm-hmm.

William Watson: Well, that's exactly where it was, but it was only three rooms. And, of course, the whole

building had been destroyed. But they was one of the larger elementary schools in Princess Anne County, and now we had to walk to school. White kids rode the bus. They would come by every day and dose us with that proverbial cup of water. They are riding the bus and we had to walk. And of course we would— Whoever got off the bus at the same time that we reach a certain spot, but we would whip those kids totally unfair because they might not have— Somebody said, did they throw the water? I said, "We didn't care. We just [indistinct 00:07:02] them. They'll stop the others from throwing it." So that was true, even through my high school days.

William Watson: When I went to high school at Princess and County Training School, Mr. Sharp, he was a community person living in Seatack, he did a lot of things for the community. He knew that we did not have a way to get to school. So he bought a bus and furnished it for the Black kids who were going from this area out to Great Neck and up to [indistinct 00:07:47] area, going to the training school. We paid $2 a month. The city did furnish one bus coming from Queens and they paid 10 cents a week, I think. That was to pay the driver. All right. I finished there, I went to elementary school, three years. And I started there in 1939 to the high school, and for four years I was there.

Blair Murphy: Was it controversial that Mr. Sharp bought the bus for the Black kids?

William Watson: No. Well look, it wasn't controversial, they didn't care how you got there, they weren't going to punish anybody. The establishment was not going to punish the bus. And I learned that later on when I was away, 'cause I went to Virginia State College in 1943, finished in 47. Then I taught in Sussex County from 47 to 52. But in that interim I learned that Mrs. Harrison, who just passed, went to bat for the Black people. She said they got a bus and Ms. Harrison was an activist. She could talk, she said anything she wanted any time she wanted because she was a teacher, but she didn't. But she could have lived without teaching and she didn't ever let him buy her. She was not docile by anybody. She just died the 21st of July.

Blair Murphy: Did she taught at Princess Anne?

William Watson: She taught at Oceana Elementary School.

Blair Murphy: Oh, okay.

William Watson: And she was the first principal of a consolidated elementary school in Seatack, that's who state I'm working on there.

Blair Murphy: Okay. And what was Princess Anne County training school like when you went?

William Watson: Four rooms, in an agriculture building.

Blair Murphy: Did it have heat?

William Watson: We had to make the fire. We had to make the fire every morning. We had to go out and get

the wood that [indistinct 00:10:16] and whatever and leave it there so we could make the fire in the morning when we got there. We had to sweep the floor. No cafeteria. What we had was one of the closets in one of the classrooms, they had two ladies who came out there and fixed some soup or something like that. And that's where we had the cafeteria and that was about it. The teachers had to teach whatever was taught. Ms. Goodman taught— It's Ms. Hatty Louise Goodman, she was the first Black high school teacher in the city. Lethadius Clay Smith was the first principal of that school, of the Princess Anne County Training School, Lethadius Clay Smith.

William Watson: Now one of the other teachers, Mrs. Frederica Rogers Vallard. F-R-E-D-E-R-I-C A, Frederica Rogers Vallard. V-A-L-L-A-R-D. And Ms. Betty Fogs. And they taught everything, whether they knew how to or not, they taught it. Ms. Goodman taught algebra and she didn't even know simple arithmetic, she cried every year when he told her, you got to teach it. She taught algebra and she taught French and she taught English. So you just didn't— You said to teach [indistinct 00:12:10] was bad? Mr. Smith taught geography, geometry, and he was the principal. Ms. Vallard taught Home Ec and biology. And Ms. Betty Fog Williams taught, excuse me, all the social studies. And she also taught some arithmetic. Well that was the school, finishing there in 1939. I finished in 1939 and went on to Virginia State College.

Blair Murphy: What was Virginia State like at that time?

William Watson: Virginia State College?

Blair Murphy: Mm-hmm.

William Watson: [indistinct 00:12:52]. Let me qualify that, although it was a state school, it wasn't just a state school. You could consider somebody when you went to Virginia State College, it was an elites school, although it was a state school and we had great pride in it that made it better. It's not what it used to be and I made it better, but I don't see that. And we just had a lot of pride there and we learned a lot there. We had good teachers. And so in 1943, I was just a proud graduate of Virginia State College. [indistinct 00:13:35]. I thought that the world was waiting for me, but it wasn't. I vowed that I wouldn't work any place under $200 a month. I taught for five years in Sussex County and I'd never got $1900 a year. All I got was 190— I think if I had gone back, I would've been getting $190 a month. But I was there for five years. And then you just want Virginia Beach, but you don't want conditioning Virginia Beach, is that right?

Blair Murphy: Oh, not necessarily.

William Watson: Oh, I had a superintendent in Sussex County and his one focus was co— [indistinct 00:14:31]. He cared nothing about education. I don't say he doesn't care anything, but when he come to school, all I have to do is make sure that I got the code coming down to shoot right, and just got good grading. [indistinct 00:14:47].

Blair Murphy: So what was teaching like?

William Watson: In Sussex County, I taught the sixth and seventh grade in one room. A lot of that was all right 'cause I knew how to do it because I was taught like that. And [indistinct 00:15:29] as this scene, that passport test that students had to take now in the state? Our students had to take them in the 40s in Sussex County before they could go to high school. We had to teach so that those students had to pass the test before they went to high school. And it wasn't any test we made up, it was a state test. And going back a bit, my teachers at Seatack Elementary School, I wrote my memory of them I had Mrs. Marguerite Preston who were the good math teacher. Marguerite, M-A-R-G-U-E-R-I-T-E was a good match math teacher and I learned a lot from her. I was there and I went to her in the fourth grade. I was in her room all one year.

William Watson: And then I went to the other teacher, Mrs. Margaret Martin. She's a Barfield now. Margaret Martin. And I was there in the fifth, in the sixth grade. Did not go to the seventh grade. I skipped that one. I went on to high school. Ms. Cassie was starting at eighth grade then. But Mrs. Martin was the best teacher I've ever had in my life. Excellent, the best teacher, still living. And I'm 72. She's the best teacher I've ever had in my life. I didn't know until many— After I'd finished college that I used to keep her up all night. She was trying to figure out what I was going to ask her. And I didn't realize this until— 'Cause I knew I was inquisitive, but I didn't realize that. But she was the best teacher I've ever had in my life. She was an excellent teacher. For everybody, she was an excellent teacher.

William Watson: And I have a high school diploma, a college degree, I have two masters, a masters and a professional from Columbia University. And she is the best teacher I have ever had in my life. I would put her up against anybody. All right, now let me see, where do we go from here? I came back to Virginia Beach in 1952.

Blair Murphy: Why'd you come back?

William Watson: Got a job teaching here. Hired at Princess Anne County Training School. My White kids used to say, "What did they mean by training school? Did y'all have some kind of student with some kind of special problems or something?" I said, "No." I said, "The idea of Whites—" I'm talking to White students, they knew me I'd say anything said. I said, "Their philosophy or their idea was that if you were Black, you had to be trained and you only taught White people." That was the only reason I could see why they would call it training school. We eventually changed the name to Union Kempsville High School.

William Watson: We would have students who would leave our school and go to some northern area of the country. And the child could not convince those people that they weren't some bad students coming from a [indistinct 00:19:18]. And they'd write to us and we had to call them and let them know that it was just the name of the school. It was an academic high school. But they didn't— It was one of those things. So I went to a scholastic achievement program that the papers were sponsoring, the Pledge Star was sponsoring and the man looked at me and said, "Why don't you people get together and change that name?" I said, "We're in the process of doing that man." The cop said, "Well it was embarrassing one." And really when I was at Columbia, they'd say, "What school do you teach?" I said, "Princess Anne." I didn't go any further because there was a Princess Anne down the street. So I didn't say Princess and County Training School. I just said Princess Anne because it sounded better.

Blair Murphy: So what year did you go to Columbia?

William Watson: I went to Columbia in 50— Let me see, must've been 54. I did my records [indistinct 00:20:31] mine. And 57 I got my master's. In the 60, I got professional diploma.

Blair Murphy: And you went on Virginia's rule about sending Blacks to the north?

William Watson: Yeah.

Blair Murphy: Instead of going to Virginia—

William Watson: I said, isn't this a stupid idea? I said, this is utterly stupid. All the people from, not even my area who were White had to pay to go. I got all of mine free. I said, you people wanted to keep me from going to the University of Virginia. And I said, thank you Jesus 'cause I don't like Charlottesville. I didn't want to go to Charlottesville. I love New York and so that's helped me. Then all the states did that. Columbia was full of southern Blacks. People have been so silly. When you look back over the thing that they did, now personally, segregation existed in [indistinct 00:21:58], surely. Never bothered me, I was too busy working, trying to get an education. And I didn't have time to do all the other stuff anyway. I worked for some Jewish people and I was their student, they just loved me like I loved them. And I was with them for 50 years, not just working but just with them.

William Watson: And I was shielded from a lot of things that you'll ordinarily go through there, I was shielded from that. And then I was in school in the winter and so really, I knew all those things existed, but I was so busy working and don't [indistinct 00:22:49]. But I was so arrogant. I didn't think that anybody to think that anyone was better than I, was just impossible 'cause I didn't think most people I met— I just thought I was above everybody else. I wasn't, but I really thought so. I was just arrogant that way. And so I think it helped me with the conditions the way they were.

William Watson: Now, I'd go down to the beach when I got ready and Black folk didn't go down the beach except early in the morning and late at night. But I'd go there in the middle of the day, you know how? I would take the dogs and put them on a leash and go down there and we'd play in the surf. They think that Black people didn't have a leash, but—

Blair Murphy: Were they your dog?

William Watson: No, they belonged to the people I worked with.

Blair Murphy: Oh, okay.

William Watson: But anybody could have put a leash on a dog. But I had a leash on a dog and so that qualified me.

Blair Murphy: No one ever asked you?

William Watson: Mm-mm.

Blair Murphy: Okay.

William Watson: I had a Wirehaired Terrier and an Airedale and that Airedale looked vicious, mounted out there, I guess they were afraid Mountain might attack.

Blair Murphy: I didn't know that Black people went to the beach early in morning or late at night.

William Watson: 'Cause I after leaving, usually Kempsdale was closed in 69. I went to Kempsdale High School right down the street. And my student said to me, "I know you can swim because you were living as close you can get to the beach. I know you were in the water all the time." I said, "Well I can only go at night and early in the morning." He said, "What you talking about Mr. Watson?" You always got something going. Why couldn't you could go down there when you get ready?"

William Watson: I said, "I couldn't." He said, "Well the ocean doesn't belong to anybody down there." I said, "I know, but if I go down there, they put me in jail." Oh, there ain't nobody put you in jail for going down there. I said, "Ask your grandmother and your grandfather." I said, "Man, you might even ask your mama." I said, "They can tell you." 'Cause they didn't know anything about segregation by that time I started. I taught there from 69 to 85, for 16 years. Taught at my school that I graduated from for 17 years. And I enjoy it. I loved it. I loved teaching.

William Watson: And I've never experienced problems because I don't dislike anybody. I don't dislike somebody because they're White. And I got a lot of dear White friends who would do anything for me and I would do anything for them. Someone said to me, said, "Well would they do that for everybody?" I said, "Do you do everything for everybody?" If they know me, why would they go out here and do what they would do for me and do for you and they don't know you? You see, so that's a silly question. But I got along fine. People that come from high school.

William Watson: And that weren't that many of us Black teachers teaching there. But the one thing I let everybody know when they come in contact with me that they weren't dealing with any dumbo. Don't dumbo yet. And we got lost fine.

Blair Murphy: How did the process of desegregating this area happen?

William Watson: Mr. Kellum, Lord Kellum— Not [indistinct 00:27:01] but a Sydney Kellum, I'm sure this is the way it happened. He had a meeting with all the powers to be at Virginia Beach and he said, "Everything is desegregated as of now." All he had to do was say it. Mr. Kellum, I thought it was a fine man. He consolidated Princess Anne County with small city of Virginia Beach. You see Virginia Beach was what is

Virginia Beach Borough now, which starts on this side of Park Avenue and goes down to the ocean front. And on the other side is Lynn Haven Park.

William Watson: So Norfolk had annex portion of Princess Anne County and now to prevent them from doing that again, excuse me, he began the process of getting the people together, getting them to vote on and [indistinct 00:28:03] annex and are consolidating Virginia Beach and Princess Anne County. Now that was done in 62 I believe. But put a question mark about that date. I think it was about 62. And we had nothing but a big sprawling farm. And Virginia Beach has grown from a little town that nobody even knew it was there. A man said to me this year, "Oh yes Norfolk used to own Virginia Beach." I said, "Sir, what?"

Blair Murphy: Used to own it.

William Watson: But that's what we originally— I said, "I don't care what interview you considered. I said Norfolk have never owned Virginia Beach." And he tried to get out, change the subject, because I didn't want anybody who was that stupid to talk to me. And they would loved to have taken it all when they were in the process of annexing a portion of Princess Anne County, some of the teachers from Booker T High School came out there to check out a school out and see what facilities we had, athletic facilities and all these things. But the anticipation that they were going to be able to take— They wanted to take Union Kempsfield and Princess Anne High School. Of course we stopped them. We stopped them from doing that. And [indistinct 00:29:34].

Blair Murphy: So was Sydney Kellum, did he have an office or?

William Watson: Just politically. Mr. Kellum knew everybody, he was a good man. Helped a lot of people, Blacks and White. And I think he was once a treasurer in Princess Anne County, I'm not sure. But he didn't hold any political— He was just a political boss. And I thought he was a good person because he could get things done. I had a friend who was running the restaurant over there and he wanted to get bill license. So I told him to go to Mr. Kellum and tell him, 'cause he was having a hard time getting it. He said, "Well I don't know Mr. Kellum." I said, "That doesn't make any difference, you go to him." So he was going, he went out, I told him where he was, up on Pacific Avenue. So he was on the island of the crosswalk going up to Sydney Kellum [indistinct 00:30:43]. And this man walked by him and said, "Good morning Samuel."

William Watson: And he didn't know— He didn't have any idea who this man was. And he got in the office said, "Mr. Kellum would be back in the minute." They owned an insurance company. And when he came back he even in the office, it was Sydney Kellum. And he asked me, he said, "Well how did he know my name?" I said, "He's a politician. Politicians know names." I could never be a politician because I can't remember names. I cannot remember names, I just forget. People say you're lazy or you don't place any importance to the other person because when you can get the names so fast, but that's not it. I think all people are important.

Blair Murphy: You just have to purposely memorize the name.

William Watson: I just can't remember the name. I can forget the name as I'm shaking the hand. I've already forgotten the name. But Princess Ann County— Now I love Virginia Beach.

Blair Murphy: So did you live in Virginia Beach, like this area of Virginia Beach when you were teaching?

William Watson: I lived there, you see where the building— If you come down, and see where they're building out there. But I lived up on Cypress Avenue. [indistinct 00:31:59] Yeah.

Blair Murphy: Okay.

William Watson: But strange enough, this is considered oceanfront.

Blair Murphy: Mm-hmm.

William Watson: It's considered oceanfront. And I guess they will take this soon, I said just give me a few years here and pay me my money and they can have this too. But yeah, I've always lived in this area. I've lived right around in this area for 64 years.

Blair Murphy: Were there Black businesses in Virginia Beach?

William Watson: There used to be Blue Boy Blues and one across here, Bruce— What is that thing called? Les Grill, Cookies Cafe. And my mother had Anna's Cottage. And what else do they have? They had little businesses here but I can't think of all them, now they're all gone. And now there was one down there, what is that called?

Blair Murphy: Do they serve a Black clientele?

William Watson: Yeah, see that this was before Blacks could go up the beach to anything. You see the only way they could go up the beach at that time was when Whites weren't up there. I said they go everywhere now. I was on the boardwalk yesterday and I think there were more Blacks down there, [indistinct 00:33:36]. What interests me is why didn't they go out there to [indistinct 00:33:40]. But they're there and I'm glad to see them there. And folk have realized that all green money spends, so they have no problem with that.

Blair Murphy: So was this part of Virginia Beach all Black? Or did Blacks and Whites live near each other?

William Watson: This was nothing but a wood.

Blair Murphy: Oh, okay.

William Watson: Pine trees and stuff like that. And down on that end there were White people and over there, there was nothing. [indistinct 00:34:20] little places [indistinct 00:34:21]. But now White people live very well, right there White people— I have them staying here at times. So they stay everywhere, they really

integrated themselves and then Blacks live when they want to. I said they live where they want to and where they can afford to live. You see, it's not anything segregated for them. If they can afford to live there, they lived there. And I don't think we have— We just haven't had that problem. Anybody marching, and throwing bricks on buildings and stuff like that. If it happened, I just haven't heard about it, in the GP.

William Watson: Now Chesapeake, got to expect it happened because there's a clan country. It's not anymore, it used to be. But it was really bad. But I don't have any bad memories of— I mean I don't have any memories that's going to cause me to dislike people, or want to go marching or anything like that. I don't have any of that kind of memory. I always accept the people for what they were and. They could accept me or not accept me. It didn't make any difference to me. I knew I was who I was and like I used to tell my students, I'd say, "I think I'm really great. I think I'm so—" [indistinct 00:35:48], don't you think you're great? Now, if you don't think so, I won't either because you know more about yourself than I do.

William Watson: So people you can see they— One of the things that they don't show are progressive Blacks. They don't show that too much, they don't want— All of them want to show those in the shelter and those who have nothing and they're really in the minority. Until, what's that man name? Reagan. Until Reagan became president, we didn't have any shelters in Virginia Beach. But he ran everybody to the shelter and they said, "Oh what a great job he did." He did. He did a good job at running people to the shelters. He certainly did a good job at that? And the governor of Virginia [indistinct 00:36:48] is mean spirited. He was just as mean spirit as he can be. He's a grimer and I hope he disliked the grimer.

William Watson: So—

Blair Murphy: Okay.

William Watson: People in Virginia Beach who have wanted to succeed and do something have done so. And there are people who may have a desire to succeed, just can't make it because the core we going to always have with us. And for instance, a person working for minimum wage, how can they ever get in the ground? Can't get in the place working for minimum wage and so what happened, the Republican congress doesn't even want to increase their minimum wage. They can't pay for insurance with minimum wage. Yet they want to cut off all free insurance. They want to cut this out and cut this out. But how are they going to get it on minimum wage?

Blair Murphy: You can't get it on a salary.

William Watson: No you can't get it with a minimum wage. Minimum wage, what is 450? Or what is it?

Blair Murphy: 450.

William Watson: You can't do anything on minimum wage. Excuse me, in any place that pays minimum wage, excuse me, does not give any benefits. There are no benefits for minimum wage and you got to take that little money and go home and try to do something with it.

Blair Murphy: Do you think that's similar to the ways people were paid so little for labor before? During segregation?

William Watson: Yeah, but everybody was paid a low. See we didn't even have any minimum wage. We didn't even have any wage. When we moved down here in 1931, we lived what you call diamond line and the our rent was a dollar and a quarter a week, for a duplex. My mama rented one of the rooms for a dollar and all she had paid was a quarter, paid in rent. But they'd go to work for somebody for a day's work and they didn't pay for a dollar, so they didn't have any money either. But they would pay a dollar. But she could go to the store with $5 and you could get more groceries than you could carry. You go with $5 now you could put it in the [indistinct 00:39:17].

Blair Murphy: In a sandwich.

William Watson: And go on about your business. But they were what they called the good old days, I would not want to go back to. I enjoyed a happy time in Virginia. It had it's problems, it's segregation. And we have people who have those attitudes right now. But I feel this way, they can have all in one doesn't make any difference to me, so long as it don't bother me. You see, I really don't care. And there's so many people who are fair, that's it. Everybody go to school together, and some people try to proclaim that nobody pays any attention to the Black students, after [indistinct 00:40:15] didn't know about other integrated school, I only taught at one and the Black student got as much chance as anybody else.

William Watson: I don't think any Black or White or anybody should want people to just do for them because of their color. You make your own way, you see. And so if they're in a class that's being taught, they are supposed to get that class, do that club course like anybody else. And if they don't know something ask. A boy came to me once and said Mr. Watson, that none of the Black students belong to the clubs here. I said, Ventrest, what [indistinct 00:41:08] name is Ventrest. I said, "Danny." I said, "Which one did you try to join?" But I haven't try to join any. I said, "Well I tell you what, try to join one and let them tell you, you can't join it. And you will never— You will wonder whether the world is coming through here, 'cause I would raise more hell in this school and anyone who's ever known his life. If you try to get in something, you can't get in because you're Black."

William Watson: That very day we had had to get some representatives for the senior class to go to meetings sponsor so they could bring it back to the class. And so we had to elect a person from the class. One of the White students stood and nominated Danny Ventrest. And he promptly declined. And you know what words I had for him after class. Don't ever come [indistinct 00:42:14] with that crap. And I found that pretty fast, once all the Black cheerleaders were turned down, all of them, told them they knew you was coming to the drive because you [indistinct 00:42:28]. And so as soon as I got to school, they came to me. I went to the lady who was in charge of them and when I asked about it, she began to cry because she knew that I wasn't going take that kind of stuff from anybody for those kids. And I didn't go there to be a martyr or a leader of Black children. I was there to be a teacher for all children that I had a all in school.

William Watson: And one of the other fellas said, "Oh Mr. Watson, they was so bad, they were uncoordinated." I didn't pay him any mind, 'cause I don't know what Black kid is not coordinated.

Blair Murphy: Exactly.

William Watson: I mean all you got to do is beat a drum. And that's the one thing we brought with, that we still have. If you beat the drum and we can get in tune to it. So I went to the principal, I said, "Mr. French, why aren't there any Black girls on chili squad?" He said, "I asked the same question." 'Cause the lady who was in charge of them, she was in charge of [indistinct 00:43:34]. He said, "I asked the same question." So he went on and had trials again and about five or six Blacks made it. And I was the only Black there who was a judge in the, and I don't care if you're Black, green, or blue. If you don't do anything, I'm not going to give you anything because of your color.

Blair Murphy: But if you deserve the spot.

William Watson: And you got to be able to do it. And so about five of them, I guess a lot of judges, but about five Blacks made it, and no one told them you had to put these Blacks on there. But they made it, thy certainly did. But Mr. French was a bad teacher. I don't know if he was [indistinct 00:44:17] or not. Because in evaluating teachers, he would evaluate, he would give me written and spoken English superior and to the White teachers and teachers of English, he put average. And I think this is really because if you tell me that I'm average, you got to prove I'm average because I had never been average. So you'd have to prove it to me that I am an average person, because I consider the average low. I've never been average. And so I think they know that rather than to have me to contest with, I got—

Blair Murphy: Superior.

William Watson: And I considered that, that was a fair grade, 'cause I said, well— They said, "Watson, you got superior and I got average." I said, "Well I am superior and you are average." They thought I was crazy at times. But I love to teach. I love teaching. Never [indistinct 00:45:39] students to the office with problems, because I figured that if I do that, then the principal might as well come down and take over my class, 'cause I can't handle it. I'm supposed to handle my own problem. And I love teaching.

William Watson: I wouldn't go in a classroom now on a bit, students talk to teachers too much. And now they're talking about— I heard the last night that they were going to let the students or the parent of somebody select the counselors for their children. How in the devil are we going— Supposed all them want to go to Ellen Powell, is she going to have to take all of them because the parent selected her? I think parent, should have a say, but I don't think it should have—