

An oral history from Bruce Smith of the VSCRC, 2016.

Oral histories taken for the VSCRC 50th Reunion Oral History Project in Blackstone, VA. Professors Brian Daugherty and Ryan Smith interview former members of the VSCRC to obtain information about their work with the organization in the 1960s, in addition to their work with Civil Rights in general. Virginia Student Civil Rights Committee Oral History collection.

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(Unedited)

And I thought only people Massachusetts and New York had one. Then we moved to Tennessee and I found that everybody had an accent.

[Ray Bonis] Well, Bruce, welcome. Thank you for coming. This is just a little formality here. I'm [Ray Bonis, I'm a Senior Research Associate at VCU Libraries and I'm interviewing Bruce Smith Today, April ninth, 2016. Bruce was a former member of the Virginia Students Civil Rights Committee or the VSCRC, and we speaking on Saturday, April ninth, 2016, in the Mapp Room of the James Branch Cabell Library. Bruce to agree to be interviewed and recorded?

[Bruce Smith] Certainly Thank you.

[RB] Okay. Can you tell me your full name?

[BS] Bruce James Smith.

[RB] And was this the same name that people in the VSCRC knew as?

[BS] Yes.

[RB] Bruce. Okay. What and where and what year were you born?

[BS] I was born in Sibley Hospital in Washington DC in 1944 on April the 13th. Cause there were no hospitals in Northern Virginia.

[RB] Wow. And what's the names of your parents?

[BS] My father was Fred Lester Smith, born in Cleveland, Ohio. My mother was Winifred Bay Smith, born in somewhere in south eastern Ohio. Grew up in Columbus.

[RB] When did they end up in Virginia?

[BS] They came to Virginia, I think in 1934, 1935 My father was director of aeronautics for the State of Ohio. He came here just to setup air-traffic control system for the United States. And he was the first director of air-traffic control for the what became the FAA yeah.

[RB] Wow. And did your mom have an occupation.

[BS] My mom was a brilliant woman who graduate high school at 17 or 16. Couldn't go to college because girls didn't do that. She wanted So she, they sent her to Business School. She became a legal secretary. And when my father passed away in '59, she took a brush-up course and then she was teaching business, skills and did eventually got a job for a health department, health education, welfare, for the federal government. And she, they had a whole school in town and moved to Rockville, Maryland where they would have in-house training for people who came in with lower level skills, they want to, but she was still teaching shorthand and typing and

that sort of stuff. But she, on her own, aside from what she did occupationally in-between, She became a Republican Party activist because she was given a job in Ohio by the most powerful law firm in Columbus, which was Republican. And she was a loyal Republican ever after that, but she was a Republican. And I said, you might know this, part She would circulate the Equal Rights Amendment with Republican women in the early fifties. As well as you know petition against the poll tax that would be unheard of in Republican circles today.

[RB] Yeah. She, so she was very progressive.

[BS] Hm.

[RB] Did you have any brothers or sisters?

[BS] Two half brothers, one of whom was killed in World War II before I was born. He was a Navy flyer. My nearest brother was killed flying a very similar plane in 1962. Most devastating thing that ever, ever happened to me cause I was a senior in high school.

[RB] Where was that, where did he...?

[BS] He was in the last I talked to him He said he was he was training for close air ground support for a war somewhere. It was Vietnam,

[RB] Wow.

[BS] But of course and I'm not sure if he even knew where they were headed. I found out in later conversations, if you read my book, you've found out 1965, hitchhiking to Nashville, one of his shipmates pick me up. Totally. Yeah. But and I had another brother, half brother who was 20 years older. He became a doctor with a pediatrician in southern Ohio. He passed away of a brain hemorrhage 20 some years ago. He died when he was 63. My father died when he was 63 when his father died when he was 63, that was a difficult year to see if I could get through.

[RB] Sure.

[BS] I have a sister who's ten, who's ten years older. She's a mental patient, lives in Florida.

[RB] Were you involved in any social activism before becoming involved or the VSCRC?

[BS] Yeah. That was fairly early. I was a civil rights advocate. I'm influenced my mother, but I was a Republican. I was a young Republican, I organized the Young Republican Club at Lynchburg College.

[RB] What year was that?

[BS] Would've been 1963, '64. And I was still campaigning for Republicans, for office. First time I met, First time I really met some right wing Republicans, but when Goldwater Oh, in '63. The one Republican congressmen from Virginia was Joel Broyhill from Northern Virginia. My mother had worked for him, there's a whole story about that, but I won't get into that now. So she used her influence to give me a summer job working for city government and working for the highway department in a survey truck. That was good except just standing in the heat. But getting paid, you know, the had a certain amount of summer jobs but they, There's no local government, DC, it was all Congress appointed three commissioners around the city. There was no local elections at all in DC. When the march on Washington was coming about, we began to talk about it, now there was a two or three college students then the rest were men in their thirties and forties. And it ended up with, I think three of us that were for civil rights, it was all White males. Three of us were for civil rights and there were three or four guys were racist and anti civil rights. And the rest of people listening. That is the first time I'd ever gotten into advocacy. Among grown people.

And, when the march was come as we got closer to the time of the march, the story was in Washington and in the press and on TV and papers. There's going to be a race riot. And it was seriously passed around enough that the, I think Bay Rustin who was organizing a marched for Dr. King, took advantage of the situation, talking to Robert Kennedy to get him to shut down the city government and the federal government so the employees could go to the march. And that went and, that worked out. So local people can attend more local people going down to the March, but it was, they were closing city government offices so that people could avoid the violence because they're going to be this bloodshed down on the mall. And I didn't believe it. And it was just, it was hysteria talking And so I asked could I come into work anyway? And there was three of us, was most of the young guys who asked him If we could come into work and nothing was going to happen. So we went in to work and on that morning, about four o'clock in the morning 'cause you had to get in, the 82nd Airborne occupied DC from Anacostia airbase. Where they setup, where we were all way to the Capitol. And I wasn't beyond that, I didn't get beyond there. We went to work in the morning and said, well, what do you want us to do? we took out all of the survey equipment from the trucks so we could put the bodies in because we were going to be emergency drivers to get the dead and wounded off the mall. That was our job. We sat, there all morning, and the happiest thing was was the racists were saying "howdy, local blacks" then it's gonna be all gonna be local people won't come it's all going to be blacks from New York and Detroit, Chicago, these nasty places up north. All morning, there was a stream of cars going past that place. We were right at the bridge going from by where the Kennedy stadium is over across the Anacostia River, it was southeast of Washington. There was a steady stream of cars with black people. This is a hot August, 20th of August, dressed in Sunday clothes, the men all had ties and women were wearing dresses, windows down 'cause nobody had air conditioning in their cars. But everybody had a little pennant on the antenna, "The March on Washington" like three hours. And some were probably from Prince George's County, Maryland. And that was very inspiring. Just to see that, yeah, local people are gonna make this March And at some point at midday a call came from downtown. "There's not going to be riot. There's no violence and you can let the people go home." And I found my way. My mother lived in apartment in Alexandria, I found my way back to my mother's house. And I thought, well, maybe I should drive over to Arlington and see if I can get into it state troopers had blocked off 95, which goes by the Pentagon and then you go can go over to Arlington cemetery. Well, that was blocked off. The bridges were shut down. And I just turned around and went back to my mother's house. And what got me to, I had to do something, was that night a couple of nights, maybe it was like Wednesday or Thursday, but that Saturday night I had a party at my mother's apartment, with guys I went to high school with a couple of the guys said they went. We attended The March, they told me about seeing George Lincoln Rockwell's guys coming down and the people surrounding them nonviolently, they got scared and said, "Can we please leave?" and they said "Yeah, ya know?" They brought down a can that they said was full of gas. They were gonna throw on people to set 'em on fire. But the people was, they just got all around them. let him come into the middle of the thing and then they closed up, they, that scared 'em and the Nazis left and I said, "Well Goddamn I missed that. I'm not missing anything else." I didn't see but one of those friends again, After that, we went different directions to

college. I went back to Lynchburg College and I said, I'm going to be in the Civil Rights Movement. And I was in trouble by let's see Kennedy was shot in, in November. And we were definitely, by that time, I had a new group of friends, the people that sang folk songs and that stood along the bank at night.

[RB] What school was this?

[BS] Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, Virginia. And we uhh, shortly right after that there was a group of peace marchers, nonviolent peace marches that come through the Quebec to Guantanamo peace March, well, what we went out to meet them, that we're interested in, nonviolence and what Dr. King and others were doing And we got little peace buttons and heard about pacifism. And what happened when the peace marches, left. A school teacher, who was a Quaker, was fired from his job because they found out then local papers and in Lynchburg News in Advance put an article that this teacher had invited one of the pacifists into his talks with social studies students in middle school. And they defiled the communist bastard, and he was fired the next morning. And I mean they called anybody who was a liberal, was a communist. And he needed to be fired, he was fired, gone, and that inflamed us. So we went down and picketed them for being racist and pro-war. And we were basically we were dissembled pretty well by the local media cause- I mean, the paper they said their photographers and reporters came out and took pictures, and made us look as dumb as they could. And they did a whole big spread on us the next day.

[RB] What newspaper, do you remember?

[BS] Lynchburg News in Advance, which now has a different owner, and that paper was owned by Carter Glass, the third whose grandfather wrote the Jim Crow Constitution of Virginia. And establish the, the whole. I can tell you other stuff about him that I found out but, so I mean they were arch Right Wingers. But what I didn't know was that article went out around the South, to different places and a few weeks later, we got contact from some people from Nashville where Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had Marion Barry. Was that the staff leader of the SNCC in Tennessee. He and John Lewis, But Marion was the first president of SNCC He was in-charge of it. They sent invitations to us. They would send out invitations to white students who've taken a stand on civil rights around the South it to get an organization of, of white southern activists who wanted to, could help each other out and build a movement against racism. And they knew that eventually you gotta get white people gotta get in the Civil Rights Movement, white Southerners. At that point, all these white students, involved in Civil Rights were pretty much were, except for two or three of their staff were from Ohio and New York, California. So I went with that with with three other people that participated in action

[RB] And when, do you remember?

[BS] In April of 1965 So this is

[RB] What year school where you in by then?

[BS] I was a junior. I guess, it was in the beginning of my sophomore So I went through a whole- after the march on Washington so I was a sophomore. Yeah. I was only a sophomore that year. I guess.

[RB] In what year? Sophomore in

[BS] In April of 65, wait a minute, I graduated in 62. So after 63, I must have been a sophomore.

I was a sophomore when a march on Washington happened.

[RB] Okay.

[BS] And then anyway, in April we go down to, to Nashville. We get involved in a southern student organization, what turned out to be the founding meeting. It was myself, two other white guys and a black woman that I was then dating in Lynchburg. And then in a month, we get back. They all moved to DC because they just don't want to be around all this racist B.S. anymore. And when the big push came out, some of them pushed for their support, the SNCC Civil Rights Project in the south, that summer they broke- and I wasn't going to go by myself. So I took, I say a flyer for the Quakers to go to a project in Mexico. I worked with the Quakers in a rural project in Mexico because I knew a little teeny bit of Spanish. What -oh, that's a whole other experience. But what that taught me, to be more sensitive- Yeah. I didn't know there was a Hispanic people in the United States, except the stories you get from Westside Story that there were Puerto Ricans in New York? I had no, no concept that there was a Spanish speaking population in the United States I mean, much less Mexicans in the US and that there were seasonal workers who came here every year. So I came back out of that with another, I realized there were two big minority groups. African Americans and Latin Americans particularly Mexicans. And that informed my actions later on. The next school year because my friends had all moved to DC. I wasn't real active in college stuff, civil rights because every time I could get any money, I went back to DC. So I would go to DC and I found what, at that point, were Beatniks. Hippies hadn't been invented yet determined. But a woman they lived on Q Street in Washington invented that. Didn't invent the term, which was invented by a journalist in San Francisco. But she realized that that was the heart of the Beat community of Washington where she and her husband who were both writers lived. They owned a building. Shit damn. We got hippies in Washington. And she did a big spread in the Washington Star and in other papers, I suppose The Daily there. And that neighborhood became awful after that because all the runaway children, everybody looking for drugs and everybody want to beat up queer people came to Dupont Circle. So it became a dicey place to be, but then it's been a progressive community ever since then, a center political fulmination and progressivism since then. So I, but I was going back and forth to Washington. That next year until I found out, come the spring of 65, I had finished my junior year, that there was students at UVA and Mary Washington, organizing a Civil rights project in Virginia, connected with the Southern Student Organizing Committee and sponsored by Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee who set SSOC up. So I went up to Charlottesville to meet with them and met some of the leadership of SNCC. And then I met another student at Lynchburg, who became my best friend and roommate after that. We we only occasionally met each other, drinking before then.

[RB] And who was that?

[BS] Bob Foley, he's passed away but he was he was it a wonderful crazy guy.

[RB] Was he in the VSCRC?

[BS] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[RB] When did it really get going? The VS CRC?

[RB] That year.

[BS] That year

[RB] In '65.

[BS] So in the spring of 65' the VSCRC really got going with under the tutelage of of organizers for SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, I'll call it. I wasn't working directly with them, but they were working with Howard Romaine who'd been a leader in an SSOC the Southern Student Organizing Committee , he'd gone to UVA, he was a graduate student. He really brought their attention to Virginia. Stokely Carmichael came up and I- A few other people's names they may come to be while we are talking. And at that meeting in April of 65', a couple of people from SNCC were there. And they were singing freedom songs and talking about Mississippi and what they wanted to do in Virginia. And it was very exciting. And Foley was there. So we became friends at that meeting. I'm not sure if Donny Brockman, was there, I know Dottie Edwards. She was at Randolph-Macon she was graduating from Randolph-Macon that spring she was a year ahead of me And in the course of the next two months, we enlisted for the summer organizing project in Southside, Virginia. Bob and I were the two from places] other UVA while Mary Washington's had two people, Nan Orock, Nan Grogan-Orock And Betty, who was Betty Cummings, I'm not sure what her married name is. But they came from Mary Washington and there were several from UVA and Lynchburg College we were about it. And we went to we we met in what Jennings Ordinary which is right on Route 360 and its actually in Amelia County, but right there, Amelia and Nottoway County come together near Brook Bell, Virginia, almost to Brook Bell. Stokely Carmichael was there. And I get confused between which the SNCC, other SNCC leaders We met, I met in the spring or there. But basically they gave us some classes in how to do community organizing, how to get white people working in black communities like they'd had white students in Mississippi and Alabama. So it was something they were familiar with. What to say and things like "make sure to take a black person with you" Well, why is there a white person knocking on black people's doors, well don't expect them to talk to you because they don't know who you are and their not gonna talk to you. So just the big things like that The funniest story I remember that Stokely told us While they were giving us our orientation was, you know, you can go to this kind of place and you talk this way and make sure you be polite to people and take notes. If people are nervous, you need to remain, he taught us, how you talk to people and then have your notebook outside. Don't start writing in front of people or you'll scare 'em to death. But soon as you get outside, you've gotta write down what you remember from the conversation. Of course, their names. And what interested you, that sort of stuff don't, don't write in front of people. That was a good organizing lesson I learned right then.

[RB] Organized for what? To do, what?

[BS] We were organizing people for voter registration, I'm sorry. That was the part-

[RB] Was that the key thing?

[BS] Yes. That and it turned out where we were there was a health fair be organized for rural people at the Presbyterian Church and SCLC were involved in that people would come in, your doctors and nurses come around, maybe get people to first health screenings that they'd ever had, you know, get a chest x-ray and blood pressure and all this other stuff to kinda get some more information and support for people. So we were talking about the health fair and we we're talking about voter registration, but that was the primary thing. But one thing Stokely reminded

us about, was that the one place you do not ever go, is pool hall. It has too many weapons. Everybody in a pool hall always got weapons, you got knives and guns, and you just do not. And of course, thinking about it later, that they would have been segregated anyway, we're going to white pool hall. I would have been just an one of the most dangerous crazy things you'd ever done. Or like a bar. You don't go in bars and you don't go in pool halls.

[RB] That health fair, Do you remember what month was that that say the summer of 65?

[BS] Yeah. It was in August.

[RB] So the fall of 65, you're still in school?

[BS] I was back in school.

[RB] That was your senior year?

[BS] Yeah.

[RB] Okay.

[RB] And at the summer of 65, I was organizing in Amelia County, we went there to encourage people to register I traveled in my little Volkswagen with a black student who had just graduated high school. She was going to Virginia State and I don't remember her name. I kept notes that summer. This is a terrible funny story. At each weekend I would send them to my girlfriend in West Virginia. And the end, end of August, I got a note from her: "I hate you and everything you believe in and I burnt all your letters." So it's all. all gone.

[RB] Was she officially a member of the VSCRC?

[BS] No. No. She was sympathetic but she was back living in West Virginia, she was a doctor's daughter and living in an upper middle-class community in Beckley, West Virginia. As her she couldn't talk about me with her white friends. She didn't have any black friends so, it just so she, I caused her to be pretty isolated, ostracized. So, but anyway I lost all my Anything I'd record of that. So it's just a vague vague memories of peoples names. I forgot that young lady name that I went house to house with. Because with a young black woman standing there, people would open the door.

[RB] That's what I meant, the young black woman. Was she a member the VSCRC ?

[BS] No.

[RB] No? Ok.

[BS] But she was she was she was working with the local NAACP. We worked primarily through the local NAACP. And a very important part to record is that, you know, who, who hosted us? How did we get in there? Organizationally its through the NAACP in each county. But the people were almost invariably military veterans. And the men were veterans of World War II or more recently the Korean War, who had gone to fight for the United States for freedom and came back in a much less than desirable situation with democracy out of reach of their families. So the gentleman who sponsored me in Amelia County was Lester Randall who's in his nineties and still living, I think.

[RB] Lester who?

[BS] Randall, Lester Randall.

[RB] Randall. Okay.

[BS] But they were they were the Miller brothers in Brookville, Virginia. Lester Randall was in Amelia They were in the construction business. They were both military veterans. But why were

these people? Because as they were military veterans, they got their impatience because they had been in places where they risk their lives for freedom and came back to face gross discrimination and wanted to help free their own people. But how, how were they able to do something. Most of the black people were farmers. They had to borrow money from the same tiny group of white people that control the banks. They had the big land and owned the local, they controlled the local commerce. But these guys had independent businesses. They were in construction, Mr. Randall was in construction, the brothers the Miller Brothers in Brookville, they had a brick laying business. They were fairly well-to-do. They had a brother in in Amelia who had well he had a shoe shop but it was in the courthouse, so he was our eyes and ears on the courthouse. And in fact, the fact that there is a military connection is this story's not told, but there were a lot of military veterans who became the bedrock of support for was then primarily white civil rights workers. Between the military veterans and people who, people who ran funeral homes. Because their business with all the black community, they did not have to depend upon, white people couldn't take any business away from them and they didn't get any from them. So and they were doing this job for black communities, they got more business. So you got the, funeral directors, there was some preachers because they got their money from the churches. But some preachers were principled and won't say riskier but others weren't- weren't going to take a risk for anything

[RB] Can you name any of those ministers or what what congregations? It's a long time ago.

[BS] There was a Presbyterian minister, And, and he's mentioned in my notes and my book enough, in Amelia. Who ended up he volunteered- when we were getting people registered to vote you had to have somebody to vote for. So he ran for House of Delegates. Because you'd have a name of somebody to go vote for. Just you know, go vote and not mark the one the one Byrd Machine candidate. So he had to have somebody to oppose the Byrd Machine generally they would run as Independent otherwise the the machine would control like a primary election. That was kind of silly. So they would run as an independent, an independent Democrat. And in a primary, you could have someone to organize voter registration around, who to vote for. Now I want to think of the Reverend's name. His church is still there in Amelia, he lived right off of 360.

[RB] Did he get many votes?

[BS] I wasn't there in November when the election was taking place. And he ran the next year

[RB] In 66?

[BS] Now, we had, there was a white teacher from Virginia State who- Carey Stronach- because he was such a character. He, when he ran against the most powerful senator in the State Senate; Garland Gray, who was just one of those.

[RB] He ran the Gray Commission, I guess.

[BS] Yeah. But he was a very out in out racist when I was testifying to the Prince William Board of Education, another guy was telling me

coughs] excuse me. He's put this on a website. See, I just downloaded the other night, a speech, the Mills Godwin made in 1960 about segregation now and forever. And he sounded more like George Wallace than George Wallace. And that's, that's Garland Gray and Mills Godwin were a hardcore, we're never. Say Lindsay Almond was governor of Virginia in the mid-fifties, when desegregation was ordered by the supreme court. He was a segregationist, but

when the US Supreme Court told him you have to comply, he did. And Mills Godwin was the, was apparently a leader- a leading voice in the Virginia Senate, and he said, "well, if he won't fight the blacks, I will" in the US courts. Because we can't have no federal power go and and tell us what to do. So we were trying to expose and get these counties we were working in had black majorities or nearly black majorities. Course, where they were there might only be a 100 people, 100 black people, registered to vote where they were? 10, 15 thousand blacks eligible Age wise, what and whatnot, that could vote. So the fact that there were people willing to put themselves out to be candidates, give us something to organize around. We organized a Voting Rights rally and Voter Registration rally in the Amelia Courthouse And there were in several other, other counties around, but I worked on that. Get people come to talk to me. To come out to the rally. NAACP sponsored that. We weren't sponsors. We just, we were just trying to get them to come to support the NAACP.

[RB] What did the local white officials, how did they react to a voter registration by African Americans in the middle- at the courthouse.

[BS] They generally try to avoid. But the voter registration was only open like half a day a week, maybe on Thursday morning. And sometimes they would change it, oh now its on Wednesday night. Well, but they would try to make it sometime when when working people wouldn't be able to come. And so on Thursdays from 9 to 11 in the morning. How many people can get there on a weekday, cause We gotta work. In Amelia. They weren't, in most places, the voter the county officials were not outspoken. They didn't talk to us at all. They weren't going to the press anymore than they had to. They were afraid of The Press. They were afraid of us. But they would manipulate behind the scenes to move because you find out what the rules had changed when you went. But with increasing, we got to increasing federal pressure. In 1965. the Voting Rights Act, Voting Rights Act passes 64 but it wasn't being enforced. The Public Accommodations Act went through in 65, but few people were willing to push it, to try it. But can we get served? It took a lot of courage for people do this in your own community where again, if a kid did that, nothing might happen to you. You might get beat up, you might get arrested. But your parents would get fired from their jobs. So I mean, it was a very dangerous thing to do. But the fact there was some, federal movement, laws were passed. And so when we knew, had some support. One example of that, we did a sit in. Bob Foley and I and one of our black co-workers did a sit-in at a restaurant in Amelia It was totally unplanned. It was not sanctioned by the group. 'Cause Duke was upset that we did this. Well, I didn't call him and ask. I think people had kinda just said there's a, there's - a restaurant at a gas station on 360 on the road to Richmond which is gone now, its called the Rock Shop. It was a Texaco gas station, they have a souvenir thing, cause there were some there are some strange crystallize, crystalline rock they grow in Amelia County, and you can find 'em. And this guy was selling unusual rock souvenirs. And then there was a lunch counter. And people would eat breakfast and lunch in there, unless you were black, you could go order something. You could stand at the cash register and pay for your gas and order something to go. I think some of the, a lot of the men were construction workers in Richmond and they had been telling us about it was really upsetting. And I think I stopped in I got gas or not realize it. When you went inside though, Right by the cash register, There was the the the lunch counter was to the left- to the right. The cash register, was right in

front of you And next to the cash register before the- there were some pictures of Martin Luther King at communist training school in Tennessee. Highlander Folk School. The whole thing was, you know 'cause Civil Rights is communist voter registration is, you know, for blacks is Communist. Part of we were beginning to learn that anything that was progressive was called communist. But then even, even worse than that, just to to the side of that there was a rack with post cards on it. And it was Nazi party stuff George George Lincoln Rockwell. As we realized oh, this guy's more than just your average racist, he's a Nazi. Certainly a pro Nazi. His name was Baltzly

[RB] Last name?

[BS] Baltzly B-A-L-T-Z B-A-L-T-Z-L-Y

[RB] Did you see him there?

[BS] Yeah, oh yeah. 'Cause we did a sit in. We went to check the place out.

[RB] When was this, do you remember what month?

[BS] In August.

[RB] August of 65 ?

[BS] It would have been August of 65. So some of the members are saying, ya know we can get gas. We can buy Nab's, you know, but we can't sit down and get a cup of coffee! Can't sit down and get breakfast. If you 're tired coming home, you better not sit down. He'll take your money for the gas. But you can't get something to eat. so afterward- talking to some local men- Bob and I said well, let's just go and push the issue. And one afternoon we went over there and we went in, I would say probably three o'clock, or two o'clock and afternoon. Two white guys and a black and we sat down. And did traditionally you just ignore 'em. If you ignore the, if people come in maybe they don't know the rules. Maybe they'll go away or maybe they'll go up to the counter and ask for something to go. So nobody comes around to the table. He's walking around behind the counter. Getting increasingly pissed-off the longer that, you know, we're there. So finally he realized we're not leaving, and we came there for a purpose. So he's trying to think what to do. He's got a billy club. We'd heard he had a gun under the counter too, but we didn't see the gun. We just saw the billy club. He was knocking that around on stuff. So he comes up with a strategy: I'll just close the place. So it tells everybody, other white folks and he's closing down. Its about 4 o'clock and I'm closing down so the guys all leave and he locks the door. And then he then picks up its billy club is walking around because we didn't leave. Okay. So he calls the police.

[RB] So you're inside still?

[BS] Oh, we're inside, sitting inside. The difference between- because the Civil Rights Act, and the Public Accommodations Act had passed. And a Virginia State trooper lived down the street. His name is Douger, who was a good honest man, knew it. He calls Rupert Douger and said "I got these guys sitting in my restaurant, I'm closed and they won't leave." So Rupert Douger came over I had never had the slightest conversation with him, but his employers had told him about the law and he knew it, what had happened. He came in and talked to the owner, and he told it to him well these people came in and sat down, I closed, they won't leave. And well the Sergeant he , just listen to the guy then he came over and talked to us. He said, "Boys, Mr. Baltzly said he's closed his business And he told me he didn't want to serve you. I told him he is

required to serve everybody now, federal law said he had to serve whoever came in that door." Okay. You told him that. "But he said he's closed and you won't leave then he wants you arrested for trespassing. I will give you this opportunity if you want to leave, to leave." So we figured we'd done what we needed to do. And we left. And Duke was standing outside the window, waving at us to come out. Because we didn't have permission to do that. Duke was a, Duke Edwards was a black man who was our project director.

[RB] How he become Project Director? We're going to interview him next week. Briefly, how did that happen? And when?

[BS] They, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee set the group up, set the project up. Our directors were black. The county workers were white. But they want to make sure we had black direction, leadership.

[RB] Sure

[BS] And we were working with black people in the, in the counties. So, but the college students coming were all white. There were eight or ten of us, I guess maybe. At anyway, we're joined by Cooley Washington who was a young black man from from DC. Who came down to help David Nolan in what Brunswick County. But he was only blacks- for a while we had some- There were some local black people who would- became regular volunteers and in a couple of counties they came on as staff. But the initial group, was- was white college students

[RB] Did you consider yourself staff?

[BS] Yeah.

[RB] Yeah.

[BS] Yeah. We were the staff for the summer. For as long as we would stay. And the reason we didn't stay is because the war in Vietnam exploded. And it became clear, if you stayed, you will be drafted. And our dedication was to equal rights in the United States. We didn't know about Vietnam. I didn't know much about. But if all the white racists in the congress were for it, which they were, it couldn't be good. Nothing they were all for, but I mean, the worst ones were all, they were banging, "we need to go kill the communists in Vietnam" You know this is, something's really wrong with this picture. So we better go back to college and study it. And then we can help on weekends, we come in and help, help the Civil Rights Project. So we went back to school, Duke got in trouble he'll tell you about that and he got in trouble when he went back to Petersburg.

[RB] When did he get, he got involved early on, say like May or June then?

[BS] He was- by June we were all in field. By early June we were all in the field So Duke got involved sometime that spring.

[RB] Okay.

[BS] And he and Butch Montgomery- Benjamin Montgomery who's name was Butch - went to Hampton. Duke went to Virginia State. And they were supposed to keep these white fellas under control and doing what they were supposed to be doing.

[RB] So summer was about three or four months. What else did you do that summer of '65 in regards to VSCRC activities?

[BS] Well, what I did That was most- one of the most interesting things that I did, was getting involved with organizing farmers.

[RB] Black farmers.

[BS] Black farmers. The way that came about was we would- we would go to church on Sundays to talk about the civil rights problem, about voter registration. Two or three of us would go to church and one person would ask to get up and talk and whatever time. I remember one particular time where we had a young lady got up and spoke about civil rights, and we were just sitting there; white civil rights workers in a black, church. And she got done and the preacher got back up and got the choir to sing: "I got Jesus. And that's enough." And I said no, this is And yes, its like OK, there's no mention support for, yeah, we know this is dangerous but you know, people who can't vote. Just they ignored the fact that she just talked about voter registration and the importance of voting and registering to vote. And I've been realizing there might be eight men in the church with 70 women. The men were all on the board of Deacons and the preacher. I said, other men are somewhere around here. So I started asking and I found out, oh all the men go down to drink beer and play softball. So I said, that's where I'm gonna go. So I started going to the softball, I found out where they were and talked to the men. I didn't play ball with them as much as just go talk to them about stuff. And what they were concerned about. An one of their major concerns was the unequal distribution of commodities to farmers for agriculture; seeds, fertilizer, and then how come the white guys, when they get more land to plant? And tobacco these were- if you had three acres of tobacco plants and you make good money, you had nine or ten acres of tobacco, had real good money. Most people had like 2.5 acres or some had half-acre or eight-tenths, six-tenths of an acre, one and six-tenths acres. How come we can't get any more? The white guys got five acres, ten acres, some of them got 20, 30 acre tobacco, very wealthy people. And so I decided to try and help 'em. We formed a group. We organized it that- I worked with the guys to organize a group of, of black farmers. I forget what they called it. but he was a group of- They, they built them all over. Wherever there was, particularly where there was cash crops like tobacco. And I went up to DC and went to the Library of Congress to research it. And what are the laws? Because the local, there would be one person in each county who was in charge of distributing federal commodities, It was always a white farmer who had lots of land, whose friends were other wealthy white people. And it was almost invariably segregation and so he didn't want to give the blacks anything. So they wanted seed, they wanted fertilizer and they've been screwed on distribution of seed and fertilizer and as well as just, how much you were allowed to grow. Because you couldn't grow more than you were allowed.

[RB]So they might have, a farmer might have had five acres, but was told through this guy who's running the federal program. You can only do- You can grow two and a half?

[BS] Through the whole nationwide, it was called a crop allotment system for cash crops and they do it in a Midwestern, I guess, for wheat? And I don't know if they still call it the same thing. It came out of the Depression when there was too much- crops weren't worth anything, corn, wheat, tobacco, because there was too much of it from what people could buy. So there's- what we're going to do is everybody, everybody grow 50% less. Or 15% less . So then they would come out with. Ok. They're looking at the market from one year, 1937 and say, well, 1938, depending on what money people had then everybody can grow 75% of what the grew last year. Or in a good year you can grow 125% of what you did last year. And it would be on a

percentage basis. Sorted nationally. And this would come down through the local extension agent, who was that large farmer.

[RB] I see.

[BS] And in each of the smaller farmers would want, okay, well you had somebody, I can grow 5% more or 5% less based on what the market prediction was. What I learned. When I went to Library of Congress, I got my books, I sat down And I've lost the name of this guy was in my notes. I sat down next to somebody who'd been in FDR's administration. He started talking well he was an economist. He was just encouraging me to, and maybe he suggested some of the stuff I looked at . What I discovered, and looking at the whole thing. But they, the National Recovery Act had been passed, I guess 33 or 34. After Roosevelt was elected in 32. National Recovery Act was a very broad act. It "will bring the economy back," and there were two, two pieces of it that were critical to what I was talking about. What was; one piece, to get farm production back up and to support small farmers. The National Recovery Act said, to give small farmers a better chance to compete with big farmers. They can band together to buy equipment. We can get, they can get government loans to buy tractors. And to just, just for the general cost of running, the major cost of operation. 'Cause they accomplished, we figured out we have to farm on a bigger scale. We can have these teeny tiny little farms are just too inefficient. If the little, if the, if ten little farmers would get together with their one-acre apiece and put, make a ten acre operation. They can maybe buy a tractor and I'll use it. And they can get in and they can make more chance, greater chance of a more profitable operation. Well, the big farmer's felt that was unfair. They took a case to the Supreme Court. Supreme Court overturned the National Recovery Act. And said it was unfair competition for big farmers, by allow the little ones to get together and compete with them. So they had to rewrite the law. And the law was re-written. The Roosevelt people looked at and said, agriculture has got to be collectivized. somehow. So we'll put a system in that, gradually, built- makes farms bigger, and they did it like this. When we, we do the redistribution, we figure out how much people can grow cash crops. Corn, wheat, tobacco, cotton. When there's a- when there's a decrease, when there's a cut in how much people can produce. Everybody gets the cut by percentage. 10%, 5%, 2% - Everybody get cut. When there is an increase, only people with more than five acres in production, in production, and you can own 40, but five acres in production could increase. It might've been ten acres slowly since then it's gone- that number that went five to ten to 15 to 20. So that when you had a small farm, eventually you would realize, we're not gonna make it. we can do it this year, but it when we go and get cut to the point that it won't won't be worth doing anymore. And you could sell that allotment to a bigger farmer. Didn't have to sell the land. You could sell the allotment on that land. Or you sell the whole land. If you got to where you couldn't afford to run the farm. You just sold the farm. So slowly but surely. Small farms, small farms didn't disappear accidentally. They will legislated out of existence. And I had to go back to Amelia and go, "You know, we could do something about discrimination in the, in the the distribution of fertilizer and seed. But we can't get any, there's no way I can help you. You can't get any more land, Supreme Courts already said. This is what the law is. And there were only three black farmers in Amelia that had more than ten acres. And they were pretty, but but I mean, there were a 100 or 200 that had five-tenths of an acre, or one and five tenths, but they had less than three or four, five acres.

And they were all doomed basically to get- go out. But whites will be effected the same way, they just wouldn't get the discrimination, the distribution of other stuff as well. And that's why all small farms have disappeared. Small farm now is about 50 acres. And I don't know what it is, I've gotten away from that, but I still know there are organizations of black farmers in the South and of small farmers to try to defend their interests.

[RB] Did you have any luck helping them out at all?

[BS] Yeah. I mean, they were happy just to know that. Okay. And there was an election for the county agent, besides the the election for local sheriff and the county board supervisors, that county agent was elected. So there was a chance that black farms- you had to join the whatever the association was. But there was a chance you could elect a county agent who wasn't a racist. You probably couldn't get a black guy. But you might get a white guy who wasn't terribly discriminatory and there were those people, someone who wanted to be fair. But say that the most depressing thing I found out was, I can't get you a better cut of the deal. And that, that's my story on that I spent a good bit of time in August working with the farmers, as well as we were doing, were still doing the voter registration and we had a rally at the courthouse. Oh, the Reverend, the Presbyterian Reverend we worked with was Craighead Reverend Craighead. Presbyterian Minister Robert Craighead That was his name. He had to be very courageous guy cause he had- he lived right on 360, he had a wife and family. I don't know if he had children, but he was very vulnerable, ya know? A public person. So he put his name on the ballot to run against these well-known established figures in order to help to give black people, somebody register for. It was, it was quite courageous. 'Cause you were a target.

[RB] Do you know afterwards, just in case people want to know when listening to this. Is that was August of 65- helping those farmers. Say a year later, Do they feel a little bit better about their situation? Or was it like no we're kind of stuck with that particular agent where we don't think we can vote him out.

[BS] I don't know because I planned to go back the next summer. But after I'd finished Lynchburg College. And as you'll see it, if you haven't read my whole story on- that was a tumultuous, terrible year in my life. But I finished Lynchburg College, I was going back to Amelia County And I got a call from the Chairman of Students, Gene- Gene Guerrero, who'd been the head of the Southern Student Organizing Committee. He was working on a labor project in North Carolina and the industrial union department, AFL-CIO, had just- well the AFL-CIO, had just open up to Cesar Chavez. In California, brought the United Farm Workers into the AFL-CIO. And they said, ok, besides supporting them in California, we want to help organize, to help them organize farm workers in Texas, in Florida, everybody that's coming into the stream north. So they thought, well, maybe we can get some white or white- any civil rights workers. Most of them were white. Civil Rights workers to work with some professional union organizers and go out in the summer. So I ended up working to help organize farm workers in Virginia and later in Michigan that next summer,

[RB] Summer of 66.

[BS] Because I spoke a little bit of Spanish and had some experience in Mexico. I had some sensitivity to the issues that, that Mexicans I mean these were, mostly Mexicans and Latinos went through here. So I, so I was diverted, not hostilely into what was a very interesting, rather

dangerous. But so I didn't go back to Amelia except a couple of times to see people.

[RB] Sure.

[BS] So that next summer experience, I missed

[RB] The summer of 65 doing all those things. And during the school year, maybe on weekends, you said you did stuff. What did your parents think about what you're doing?

[BS] So as you know, my father had passed away that my mother had been a Republican leader, but she was a she was a civil rights Republican. She was quiet about it, but she - had her, one of her best friends was a National Republican Committee woman from Virginia, which there were like two. And they supported voting rights and whatnot for black people. Even though they were then at that point, there were enough arch racists were beginning to go to go the Republican Party. There were beginning to be a minority in the Republican party. She expressed her concern, that is was dangerous, but she let me take a car down there. There that summer when I was there. And she quietly supported me. She worked extra jobs and she I didn't get a lot of money from her.

[RB] How about friends and family from home, how they feel about what you were doing? What kind of feedback did you get?

[BS] I lost- not through hostility just through this- I went out looking for new friends. All new friends and I didn't have any friends that I grew up with. But there were just people that I knew when I was teenager. And my friends were from, people who were from elsewhere. From where I went to school or DC or Nashville or Richmond. And so that... but my family my mom, of course my brother just been killed. His family. His widow was busy with their children. My sister was in California with a young family and my brother, in Ohio. He just said "take care of your momma" and I just, that was, He was a, was a very moderate, sort of conservative, quiet, quiet type. Within the overall context of things, he was fairly liberal progressive. But politically. he was not a get out and do stuff person. So I was pretty much just on my own. Figuring it out.

[RB] That summer, did you live in Amelia county?

[BS] I lived in the Triple X Inn, which was a building on route 360, owned by one of the Black Funeral Directors they would , they were quite a big support. And they had a bigger funeral home, it might have once been a funeral home, but you know, but it had been an inn down on the first floor, it had apartments in the second floor. We made our office was part of the first floor. I don't know what else was there in the basement. They weren't any coffins or bodies in there.

[RB] So this was the VSCRC's local office.

[BS] It was the triple X inn, X-X-X Inn, right on 360. What a wonderful place. And we had a telephone in there, We had my little portable manual typewriter, a desk, and a couple chairs. And that was, that was it,

[RB] You were producing reports. And who would the reports go to?

[BS] Reports would go to Duke in the other officers in our staff in Blackstone, weekly reports. About what we were doing, who we were visiting, what we're doing. And we would have a staff meeting in Blackstone every, every week. And the staff meetings were endless talk-a-thons they'd go on for hours because the, one of the reasons that SNCC didn't want white people in their organization. Because white people talk and they talk and talk, and talk, and talk, and talk particularly White males, they don't know when to shut up. And we would talk and talk and talk

and talk and talk. And I came out here and I was smoking cigarettes at the time. You just smoke, just to go outside just to, ya know go "oh god" And it was sort of arguments were won by attrition. When the other side gave up or enough of the other guys left the room because it- everything had to be done, and we got this from SNCC- everything had to be done unanimously.

[RB] Ok, wow.

[BS] So finally you go "fuck it, you can do what you want."

[RB] How many how many people would be at a meeting?

[BS] It seems to me from from well seven or eight, if enough people are outside, that didn't come that that week to 15 to 20. There were probably about 12 of us on staff.

[RB] Okay.

[BS] I can remember 10. 10, 12 people.

[RB] And there were a few women who were members. Three or four

[BS] Well, yeah they would count them. Dottie Brockman, who was still Brockman they weren't married Nan Grogan, who was the she was an awful lot about being, the outspoken woman who would stand up to men, and cuss at them went with a lot of shit because she had to put up an awful lot of. Cause we were yelling, people would be yelling at each other. And Betty Cummings who basically disappeared after that year, Nan's friend. And Lynn Wells, Lynn Wells is another person but she, she came down later. They didn't- she wasn't one of our core group. But Lynn was- because we we are out of touch with her now she's kinda gone off on a strange direction politically and whatnot. But that was a 16-year-old Civil Rights Act from Montgomery County Maryland whose parents were old Leftists. And at 15, she'd led students strikes and stuff up in Maryland and gone into DC. So she was- maybe at 14 'cause she was 15 years old and out working with us, old people who were 20. And by the time she was 16, we were taken direction from her.

[RB] Wow. Did you all talk about your safety much? Were you concerned? Was it a big concern?

[BS] Not as much as we should have. Because there was- the we did, and we talked about it, because people got threats, we weren't getting a lot of threats that "we're going to blow you up" I could tell you about one issue that happened up, in Amelia.

[RB] Sure.

[BS] But that the ultra right wing, uh, took a while to reorganize in our presence because they had to come from North Carolina. One of the side benefits of the Byrd Machine that I've written about was when Harry Bird was Governor in the '20's, the Klan was just on a huge rampage organizing in the United States. They basically, my understanding was they put out a note, "Keep the F out of Virginia." We got it. I got the police. I got the politicians. I don't need you. Stay away. And The Klan was not organized in Virginia- so when we were there and, and the, the people who were freaked out by our presence got help from Marshall Kornegy was nine clans or whatever in Eastern North Carolina. They came up to organize Klan chapters in Virginia. In opposition. It was probably quite helpful, it made it less dangerous that there wasn't an organized violent Klan in, in place in Virginia. And in fact the state police decided there were going to abide by federal law. So the, Mills Godwin, the governor. They didn't have that. They didn't have the state police to put on us. So yeah, local sheriffs. And the sheriff of Amelia County, for example, Sheriff Duke was an interesting guy because I had a couple incidents with

him. The black people said, oh Sheriff Duke was one of the reasons- this was opinion- he got elected sheriff because: he's a coward. Well, maybe he was smart, because Sheriff Duke's policy, he would not bust into any situation where people were fighting or armed. He would let the situation cool down and go later to find out what the hell was going on. But he wasn't walking into any situation where people were angry, screaming, yelling, or waving weapons around. So blacks and whites kinda liked him because they kind of do what they want. And Sheriff Duke would take his time. He wasn't going to come waving his badge and his gun around in the middle of what you were doing. But it did make it. So but so there was no Klan. Unlike Mississippi where the sheriff's wasn't letting the sheriff's office wasn't an outlet of the Klan. Or poor people I mean I'm sure there were activists in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana had active Klan leadership in the local Sheriff's Department. That had to be just horrible. We didn't face that we the sheriff might not be supportive. But they weren't the Klan. So there were some threats. There were some but they would they were- It got a little worse that next year. As I understand. But the Klan, Marshall Carnegie he came up to Amelia County and we did- we went to the first big Klan rally in Amelia. Now we didn't succeed in discouraging them.

[RB] Now again, this is the summer?

[BS] In the summer of 65. They were, I think it was on the west side of Amelia courthouse in somebody's land, old white guys got to land and by the highway because you want to be seen from the major highway. And I went out there with with- probably two or three white guys and some black people we knew and mostly guys, I think. With six or seven of us, we parked by the side of the road and watched the Klan rally. People coming in and they go up on a hill and a, and the Klan leader was and at this point they didn't have robes and stuff but they had the big cross up on the hill. They set fire to it. But He's he's on the back of a flatbed truck and he's talking to the assembled crowd about you know- the terrible federal government, we gotta get rid of the federal government, and the civil rights activists. A part I remember was just, this was just, this is just priceless stuff. And of the white civil rights activists that were there with VSCRC, all but David Nolan, were southerners. David was from New York. He's lived in the south all the rest of his life since then, but he was a New Yorker. We were white Southerners. So we knew about these people. So maybe we were from the city, but we were white southerners. What, so the Klan has to- the Klan is trying to explain what the hell these white people doing working with the blacks. "Well I'll tell you about these white civil rights workers," He said, "They're all homosexual. And I can tell they all homosexual 'cause they got slant-y eyes." And we fell down the hill. I about fell in a drainage ditch laughing. And we were just laughing and beating on the- ya know it turned out my roommate then was gay, but that wasn't a part of what we were doing. But "they all got slant-y eyes" was just too much.

[RB] Its a known fact, Bruce

laughter] How many Klanmen at that particular rally that day? What time of the day was that?

[BS] Early evening.

[RB] and how many, how many people did they get to come and listen?

[BS]I'm guessing over 50, 75. But to see- by the time it got dark. We left. My roommate, Foley, we were living in Lynchburg. He was organizing in Powhatan, when the Klan had, another rally south of there, I don't know, one of the counties just south of Amelia. Well Foley one of our

guys, he decided to go into, go into the rally. So he could get close to what they were doing. Well, he had a- I had a blue VW, he had a black one. And the word had kinda gotten around about civil rights workers, they only have a couple of cars.

[RB] VW's.

[BS] and he's in the middle of this Klan rally and the guy says: "I know those guys, That car- they's the Civil Rights workers." And he almost ran- this was before he cut the motor off. So he almost ran several of them over. They were trying to get around him, getting out of there. But he was he was amazing. It was- anyway. And Bob, Bob was, his father was a white preacher from Lynchburg. He was had more of a southern accent and I do. He had never lived up in Northern Virginia. And he was, he was also an actor. So he could, if he wanted to really talk like a redneck, he could do it, be very convincing because we were both pretty close to that.

[RB] Did you get a stipend every week?

[BS] We got five at \$5 a week.

[RB] And room was free and board at the Triple X?

[BS] Yep, room and board was free. Occasionally, Mr. Randall would would arrange for somebody to feed us, but maybe once or twice a week for breakfast.

[RB] When you went back to school, what was school like for you was your mind just obsessed with going back to Amelia County, or anywhere else you're working? Could you concentrate on your classes?

[BS] Well, school kind of exploded. I went back, both Bob went back. We both were seniors in Lynchburg, we we're going to room together off-campus. He went back, say almost say early September. I don't think our classes started until the middle of September, which is unusual for colleges. My classes didn't start till like the 10th or 15th of September. So I could stay out until Labor Day or later. And I was working with the farmers, like Richard had already gone back to UVA and I was by myself in West Virginia. But I was going along fine. And so the time comes, Okay, I gotta go back. So I drive back to Lynchburg. Bob is there and I know he's working cause he was dramatic arts Major, he's in the drama department. He's building sets or something because the head of the department hadn't come back and he worked for him. If you want to put, out in some work, making some money. So I get back early afternoon one day and I'm a look for Foley and I pull up behind the arts building. This is- what I didn't realize until that something was- it was going to be a difficult year I'm getting out of my car. I'm just in your regular clothes, like going back to college clothes. All of the sudden I hear a bunch of yelling. And around the corner, this was freshman orientation, couple buses of screaming, white kids. Next thing you know, I'm under my car with both hands full of gravel. While this horde of screaming white freshmen go running by. I'm going "Oh shit. Ya know. This is going to take some.." I never did adjust.

[RB] What were they trying to do?

[BS] They were just doing- what you do. Running freshmen around playing stupid games.

[RB] So they didn't know it wasn't, had nothing to do with civil rights or anything like that. Just Silliness.

[BS] I don't think they even saw me. I mean I got under the car so fast that they didn't even see me. So I went back, I was the head of the International Relations Club. Had been in debate, in

International Relations. We had an intercollegiate discussion group where we talked about civil rights and stuff with students from Sweet Briar and Randolph-Macon and Lynchburg Baptist seminary, which was a black school. We met every month that I was the head of Lynchburg, in that. I was in several different clubs. I said, well, I got- I was in a fraternity. A social fraternity, but still it was a fraternity. So I got, I'm a senior and I was gonna wear a coat tie and get students from Lynchburg involved in civil rights. And we had organized, we planned before the summer, we would have a a meeting at Lynchburg college. Probably like early October. Early or middle of October cause it took Foley and I two weeks to even find a place to live. A black dentist found me, because we would tell people we're going to have integrated friends. Black and white people we're scared to rent to us, so finally the dentist said fine. And he was the head of local SCLC chapter.

[RB] Do you remember his name?

[BS] George F. Jackson. Wonderful, wonderful man who, who broke down more barriers and helped us out. Kept, he kept, kept me alive emotionally and give me place to be. Where as he couldn't give us money, but he could give us a place to be. And you know, some emotional support in rough year. But we had- when we organized a Civil Rights meeting for students from around Virginia. Cause we wanted to bring more, more students from more campuses. And there was a group from VCU, from RPI

[RB] I was going to ask about that.

[BS] See, I get my book because I got the guy's name. Who was the leader of the group from from RPI.

[RB] Is that the year you met Ed Peeples?

[BS] Probably. I can't remember exactly meeting Ed. He was-

[RB] It was before we got to Richmond though?

[BS] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So I had to have been in that time, that year I met Ed because there were a couple of meetings in Richmond. I came to meet with the RPI students or students from-students at RPI.

[RB] Do you remember where you met at RPI? Okay. Its a long time ago.

[BS] Somewhere on Franklin Street,

[RB] Okay, like a house.

[BS] Yeah. Could it could've been a university...

[RB] Owned building?

[BS] Building- You know, it wasn't a classroom. But you know one of the old townhouses they had offices in and a living room that becomes a-

[RB] How did RPI Did you get an impression of RPI that it was, those students were very active. Or, just like any other college in Virginia as far as the white colleges go?

[BS] RPI was a center of, at least the liberal students, we didn't, we didn't have any RPI students on the project. But it was a campus where there was support for civil rights. They were involved, there was a Virginia council, College Council of Human Relations, and the group here, I'm seeing the guys name number remembered a minute. Who was the head of the group.

[RB] It's in your, your what you're writing though?

[BS] Yeah.

[RB] Okay.

[BS] Anyway, they were connected to the College Council of Human Relations So we're going to have our meeting to bring people together. And we went to do it- and as the Lynchburg College chapter of the either Southern Student Organizing Committee, or the Virginia Students Civil Rights Committee. But we couldn't because it wasn't a registered organization. And it wasn't recognized as being anything. It wasn't incorporated anywhere. But the Virginia Council of Human Relations was. So we said well, we'll just call our selves the Lynchburg chapter of the Virginia College Council of Human Relations. We're gonna have the meeting on Friday night. Everybody come to Lynchburg College. And Saturday, all day, different places and then Sunday and they go home. So I get, you know, a process And that was going on fine. 'Til say the Monday before It was supposed to be on. People coming on Friday night. The President of the college, they were scared to death of racists with money, not giving them any money. cutting them off from their funding base in Lynchburg. I guess. We would hear that. "Now. We don't, we don't, we don't think your organizational connection is- strong enough or whatever you filed your paperwork in. You can't meet on campus." "You can't meet here." So what are we- invitations went out over a week ago. Everybody is coming to Lynchburg College this Friday night. Can't change that. So they go, "Oh, okay. You can gather people here on Friday sort of for the reception. But you gotta find someplace else to meet." So first I thought, probably from Dr. Jackson, my landlord, talk to the Catholic Church They immediately said, Yes, come use our school. Why the Catholic Church? As I began, I found out next year in graduate school. After the Civil War, when the Klans rebuilt, while they were everything against blacks and against Catholics. Because the Irish were coming in and Irish were a sub-race that they didn't want anything to do with. So no blacks and no, no, no Catholics. So the Catholic Church was very sensitive to supporting, opposition to racism. Now they weren't leading the march everywhere. But they will give you support. Well they said Yeah of course, just call come and meet, we can meet in the Catholic school. So we moved everything to there on the Friday night, we had to, we had some people came in, we met them at Lynchburg College. Smoothly, we gave everyone but, and some of the students were meant to stay in dormitories on the college. That was off. And the students that were coming, were mostly white, or I guess those, they were all white students.

[RB] How many you think, total? 20, 30?

[BS] 20, 25? Not any great number. Some students just came down for the day. Like UVA students they came down but they went back. Mary Washington, oh, but Mary Washington probably came overnight. So 11 o'clock or something that night, I go and visit them, in the dormitories where people are supposed to be staying. Make sure everything was ok. Roommates, we had one black, Stokely Carmichael was supposed to come stay with us. But Willie Ricks, who is still living, was then the Virginia person for SNCC. Traveler, they called them the campus traveler, like I became, later. So we sent Ricks and Bob Foley and my other roommate had taken him back to our apartment. I was checking on things on the campus and I see a police lights up in the center of campus. So I go, "Oh shit, what's going on?" So I go, there's the president of the college. At least one police car, so there's a policeman, and press. One of my former dorm mates from "being funny," shit, a little racist called the police and told

them there was a race riot. On Lynchburg College Campus 'cause there was black guys talking to white girls and the white guys are gone and gotten straight. Nothing had happened. So the police called, oh the paper, they called the paper first. The paper called the police to ask if they knew about it. So they all ran out there to stop the race riot. Where there was nothing. Called the president of the college, and they were all looking around for race, riot. I didn't know any of this had happened and I'm walking up. See President Brewer, the president of the college out there. And I said, "what's happening?" And he said, "I don't know. Do you know what's going on?" I said no. I was just putting up- getting all my people taken care of. As far as I know, everything is quiet. They didn't tell me anything else, so I left. Went on home, figured I'd worry about it the next day. Well, the press went on about, "What is this thing about black people being on Lynchburg College Campus?" Because there's no black students. Well, he must have, he said something like, well, the Civil Rights Activists wanted to have a meeting. But we told them they couldn't meet here. That was in the Washington Post in the morning. He had come out of the Kennedy administration, as head of civil defense.

[RB] Who did?

[BS] President Brewer. Carey Brewer, who was the president of the college. When Kennedy was killed he, he came off the Kennedy administration, he got a job as the president of where he'd gone to college. Well, his phone just went on fire. What the "f" are you doing? Running civil rights workers off your campus? "Well I didn't do it! Bruce Smith did it." I'd "set him up" It wasn't in the papers, he didn't go to the papers but he blamed me for setting him up and put me out of school.

[RB] When did he put you out of school?

[BS] Week or two later.

[RB] And he talked to you? He told you this, said: you set me up? Or, you heard that?

[BS] "You created this whole situation" I was kicked out. Out out. And Foley, my roommate, got a petition up and he got a couple hundred students' signatures on it Appealed it, so they changed it to a two-week suspension. I was gonna, I was so pissed off. I was just totally freaked out. So I said, well, I'm going to chain myself to the doors of the art building, get arrested. I'll get arrested and make them arrest me to get me out here. And I went to my professors to talk to them. They weren't supposed to give me credit for work. And they all just nodded their heads and none of them messed me up academically, I had a chance to make up work I wasn't supposed, wasn't supposed to do that But so I talked to a couple of professors and to my landlord. But one particular professor who I've written a lot about is Dr. Shen, doctor she had been Zhou Enlai's roommate in college in 1924 and '5.

[RB] Who is that? Dr. Shen, Sen-Lin Shen

[RB] Oh, but he'd been who's?

[BS] He was Zhou Enlai's- Zhou Enlai was the second leader of the Communist Party of China, the foreign minister of communist China. And then Dr. Shen had also Been Jiang Kai-Shek's [Chiang Kai-shek] personal secretary later. When they split, he was the go-between, between the Communists and a nationalists and the Chinese. And then he came here as an advisor to Eisenhower on China, that's the short story on it. And I had economics under Dr. Shen, and actually I was taking a class at Eastern religious philosophy from him. And he was one of them,

my professors. I went to, to ask him, "What should I do?" Well, he gave me a copy of a poem, which is in my book. It was, he was a Daoist, and he gave me a Daoist thing, and a Confucian thing. But basically the Daoist thing, we had talked about, the story of these middle- But basically he said, "You just take it, much more traumatic things could happen to you. Then getting kicked out of college. Just take and it will make you stronger. Just deal with it. Don't freak out, deal with it. Make the best of it. Cause I got through the whole Chinese revolution without getting killed. And I was right between the warring parties." So I did. But that's meant a whole lot to me.

[RB] Sure.

[BS] During the two weeks I was out, which were the first two weeks I think of November, I got to go cover Thomas Wansley trial. It was was a famous rape trial. He was being defended by William Kunstler and Philip Hirschkop I got to meet both of their work with them and get students to come help them on the defense. Thomas Wansley's defense. And I got to sit in on a monumental, you know, trial. I was reporting for the Southern Patriot, a civil rights magazine in Louisville. I had a tremendously educational experience.

[RB] And where was that trial? Up in DC?

[BS] In Lynchburg?

[RB] In Lynchburg? Oh.

[BS] Right in Lynchburg, at the Courthouse. At the state courthouse in Lynchburg. And, if you get the details, the Kunstler did a brilliant, brilliant summation work with the jury. And they got a hung jury. Best, best they figured they could do was a hung jury because somebody wanted to go for no conviction. Once he got convicted the next year when I was in graduate school, when they took the death penalty out. And say, I've explained the whole case in my notes. But I but I go back to Lynchburg, but I went back to Lynchburg College. But I was basically crazy. The other thing that may be crazy was that I had no money, had no meal ticket. My mother paid for my tuition, but I didn't have a meal plan. Girls were bringing me. I was at a job working in a language lab of the college. In the evenings, you know, help. I could help with Spanish, I could help you. I just put on tapes and people would listen. And girls were bringing me food from the cafeteria. I think in baggies, when baggies were just invented. And I could take them to the student lounge, later and heat it up, and eat it. But some of the stuff might not have been cold and I was snacking and on it. Well somebody told on me. And the woman I worked for was this one the Spanish teachers was a Paraguayan and she was a Paraguayan, and a little pro-fascist. She loved the fascist government of, of- so she hated me. So she fired me. And so then I had no income, I'd lost my little job. So I dependent on handouts to eat. And that's- there's a whole other story about that.

[RB] And that was the whole year of..

[BS] Yeah, the whole year from the middle of October on.

[RB] And did you try to organize anything more civil rights wise on the campus are figured, no this is not the place to do it this year.

[BS] No, no I was barely able to keep- what money I had, I bought wine with it. We drank beer and wine every weekend, barely eating. We'd bum- a guy gave us a bottle of pig's feet. We ate that for a week. I can't eat one now. Somebody gave us, another one gave us a case of potted

meat. We ate meat and crackers for 2-3 weeks. And that's it. And that was it- because Dexter and Bob my two- with that little job with the dramatic arts department. They had a little bit of income. And if we had any extra money, we bought a few cans of beer or some wine. So we're malnourished and drinkin' alcohol. And I don't know what- we didn't kill anybody. Because we just- we just got through that year. I got put out again in the spring because my girlfriend was coming to stay with me on weekends. And she got reported by girl she'd been rooming with for several years. She was, obviously, sneaking out.

[RB] She was sneaking out of the dorm-

[BS] Of the dorm.

[RB] And, to stay at your place. And she and her girlfriends had been rooming together, covered for each other.

[RB] Sure.

[BS] Well, her girlfriends figured she was down there with, you know, them people. Because Bruce and Bob live in that nasty black neighborhood. And goodness knows, so her roommates turned her in. And she got put out of school.

[RB] Of?

[BS] Lynchburg College

[RB] More of a suspension or just totally-

[BS] They tried to expel her She had a brilliant, for the Honor Court, Sheldon VanAuken. Who was the guy that invented the term sexism. Brilliant person. Very progressive guy, he had to be 'cause he- his obituary in the New York Times. He made sure he, he wrote, he invented the term sexism in a letter to the New York Times a couple years later. But he made sure in his obituary that he had and excerpt from, he wrote his obituary before he died, he had cancer. So that, that would be, that would be credited in the Oxford English Dictionary. That sexism, a term by Sheldon VanAuken of Lynchburg, Virginia, it said as such in the quote from his letter. Well, VanAuken was an Oxford scholar. He had a first from Oxford, which meant that he was the highest in his class. And at the girl's trial, she was given an Honor Court trial for "lying" basically and going to my, my apartment. He went in and addressed the Honor Court. He dressed in his Oxfordian robes and a hat and the whole bullshit. Asked "me Lords," talked to him in his phony British accent. And basically said, the people that did wrong here were her roommates. And the Honor Court agrees. Technically, she broke the rules, but he's right. So she got it two weeks suspension. But I went nuts. I went absolutely nuts. They gave me a letter when we were in- were we weren't suspended then. We were ordered to move out of our apartment. And I'm sitting there and the student lounge. When I get this notice, you've been- you got two weeks to be out of your apartment because you're in the wrong place. And I went for the Dean, the Dean of Students office and I hit the door, the glass door, it broke and cut my hand. And all I did was throw some blood, the door was locked so I just threw blood on his door. And I was just crazy. But our, Dr. Jackson came and saved our butts. Cause Dexter, my non political roommate, was drinking a beer across the street at the bar and mentioned what was happening. Well, he had a little bit of money he had a little job, to the other black guys in the community, you know, that we were put out. The next day, Doc Jackson called Bob Foley and I in. He'd heard about whole thing. "I got a plan, "I've called-" he had been sort of secretly given money, Lynchburg College, a

\$100 a year for several years, encouraging them to desegregate. They weren't officially segregated. But nobody is going to come. And so he was really pissed off, really upset. Said, "I'm going to talk to the dean of the College and I want you and Bob to come with me. But you have to agree not to say anything unless I ask you to talk." Which he didn't. But I said sure. But he went and we didn't know what he was going to say we went to meet with the dean. And he said, he told the Dean he said now I know you've ordered the guys, these boys out of my- I offered these boys there was nowhere else for them to stay 'til I fixed up the place above my dentist office where they could stay. And you've just ordered them to leave, you know how offensive that is? Well it's out of my hands. It's got out into the community. And if it stays like it is probably this weekend there's going to be a march. From downtown, a torch lit march for the black community to Lynchburg College. To protest this. And the Dean about shit in his pants. He just turned- you know blanched white he couldn't talk. He said "Well I'll be right back." Well the president's office was in the next building. I guess he called Dr. Brewer on the phone and said I need to talk to you, stay where you are. He came back and a minutes later and said you boys can stay in the apartment. I just want you to agree that you have an adult come stay at- if there was a downstairs area, that could be made so an adult could stay on the premises. Like, at that point we were all 22 years old.

[RB] Yeah.

[BS] "Okay." He didn't ever put anybody in there. But he- eased up. But I was nuts, I was nuts. I was just- I graduated on time. Bob and Dexter finally graduated at the end of the summer. But I was just crazy as shit. There was not The student, the Student Nonviolence Organizing Committee had a traveling, you know, black and white folk festival getting going. We had, they came and they performed in in Lynchburg, once, I wasn't able to do much even to help them promote tickets. I mean, I was just barely holding together. Plus, eating, stupid, crazy.

[RB] What did you graduate? What degree did you get?

[BS] I got a BA, I got a BA in political science.

[RB] Did you minor in anything.

[BS] No, I could've gotten a minor philosophy. Because I'd gone one summer and to do all of my political science stuff so I took all philosophy. And realized to study philosophy you studied the same stuff you did in political science, but you studied the cultures the people came out of. So it makes sense.

[RB] So you graduate, say May of 66 did you have any dealings at all with the VSCRC in 66? Officially, did you do anything other than just

[BS] In the 65, 66 school year I was going back to parts, to support. There was a boycott going on. In Nottoway County, I was going back to support the VSCRC and Nathaniel Hawthorne and the boycott. I went back twice to visit families in Amelia, just very briefly.

[RB] Briefly, what was the boycott in Nottoway about?

[BS] To my recollection-

[RB] Was the boycott of white..

[BS] White businesses that did not hire blacks to work. Cause it that at least half their shoppers or more were black and there were no black people working there. And they want them to just make an agreement to hire a black applicant comes in. If they were qualified. And and some of

them were, were accused of being Klan supporters. And I wanted to have something to do with it. So the boycott went on for a year. So we would get students and go down on the weekends and hand out flowers. And just be down there in support of the community to boycott. There was, um there was a draft resistor at Petersburg Penitentiary that somebody remind me of, I went to that over there. So but, my intentions were going back to Amelia. When I got invited to go to the Farm Worker project. Just got sorta short-circuited.

[RB] Briefly, if you can. What did you do? What's the outline of your life after say 66? You said you went to grad school. Did you graduate? And what school was that?

[BS] I did finish, but I didn't graduate. Organize Farm Workers, in the summer of 66. And, again, you had to go back to school, or you were going to the war. And I did some draft stuff then. I got drafted, or went to a physical. And I was like, well, I can get one more year if I go back to graduate school. And this was a Quaker graduate school. Wonderful year I spent there.

[RB] And where was that?

[BS] In Chester, Pennsylvania, only time I've ever lived above the Mason-Dixon line. At the Crozer Theological Seminary, our professors were, were Baptist preachers or a Quaker activists. They're all, they were all activists. And we, so we, we had fieldwork jobs where we worked I mean, I did tenant organizing. Which was- I learned that there was something other than black and white.

[RB] Tenant organizing up north.

[BS] In Chester.

[RB] In Chester.

[BS] In a community that had a First Community in Chester where the Irish, Polish, and Ukrainian lived in the same -and there were some black families there- but they weren't really paying attention because it was- When the tenants, the tenants had a fundraiser, they couldn't tell their parents. Because their fathers would get drunk and come and cut and shoot each other. Ya know, it wasn't because there's some Blacks in the neighborhood. Because it was the Irish, Polish and the Ukrainians that were there. And, Oh! and Italians, I'm sorry. Italians, there was four white groups. And that's first time I realized, that thing I heard Dr. King talk about the one time I heard him speak a year later was: there's an economic process that turns people- makes people afraid of each other, turn them against one another. And that really helped me understand more of what the United States was about than black and white. That, that was just way too simple. You know, religion, and nationality. Dr. King said When I went to hear him speak about it in Chicago, if we were all exactly the same color, it would be some else. It would be religion. If we were all Protestants, it would be Presbyterians and Methodists, Baptists, cause they've killed each other in big numbers in Europe. And so just, its the economic system. If the economic system doesn't provide for everybody, then people find some excuse to isolate other people. Less powerful groups and victimize them. So anyway, that was my beginning of my understanding. So graduate school in Pennsylvania. At the end of that year I was asked by a Quaker activist when people were going into Vietnam taking vilanterol, I'd taken medical supplies to North Vietnam. And getting arrested for it. The North and South. You didn't get arrested for taking it to South Vietnam, And you would get arrested for taking it to North Vietnam, If you didn't get killed. That was really dangerous. So a guy asked me, he said "I'm

going to sail to Cuba, to break the blockade of Cuba." To find out what the hell we're bombing Vietnam for. I thought he was crazy. But five minutes later I said I'd go. People went: 'why did you go?' If you were invited to go to Antarctica or the Himalayas? I was invited to go cause I knew a little Spanish.

[RB] Invited to go to Cuba? And how long were you there?

[BS] About a month But I said yes cause, like, you're never gonna get a chance to do it is again. Either you're going to do it or you're not going to do it, but this is. So I told him I'd go. Three of us went, we spent a month in Cuba in July and early August of 1967. And then came back from that. And as I came back from that, I worked for the Southern Student Organizing Committee. They had a speaker's bureau, it was originally about the war in Vietnam and the draft in the spring. So added me on talking about South America, Latin America. The US policy in Latin America. And a woman who'd grown up in China. Whose parents were from Britain, and she'd grown up in China, talking about what China was like. So China, Vietnam, the draft, and Latin America. We went, we started in Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and ended up in Virginia. And that was by Virginia with December of 67...67. And I asked and they asked me to be the campus organizer for the Southern Sudan Organizing Committee in Virginia. And so within a month I was living in Grant's Tomb, Coffee House on Grace street.

[RB] Here in Richmond?

[BS] Here, in Richmond. Where I could, so I could hitchhike around the state and work with students all over Virginia. And I did that for a year and a half.

[RB] We've talked about that before. So those people have to look at those interviews. Bruce and I have talked twice before and did recorded conversations. Bruce, last summer was the 50th anniversary of the VS CRC. It must have been important to you that you went and you're still in touch with some of these people? Talk about that. Talk about the reunion.

[BS] Well, most of us had no communication for 20, 30 years. This was the 50th anniversary. And we've slowly found each other. Some, some because of this was being planned. And just because of other stuff, you start looking for people. And you know, that about half the people you knew are dead. So you wanna see who's still alive. Well, when we started talking about this anniversary two years before hand, Duke and Dottie and I found each other. I guess I knew that Duke was at, uh, Virginia State. And we started putting, we started putting this plan together. And we said "Who can we find? Who would come?" My only disappointment was that we did not make enough contact with the black community people we worked with and for and we did not get enough of those names, some of which I gave you, recorded. And I'm worried that the contributions of those people, who risked their their, literally risked their safety, their lives and risked their economic viability. By sponsoring white civil rights activists. Too many of them are forgotten. At, all over, because we didn't get, particularly in the south, where there was segregation. In every town there was somebody that said, "somebody needs to go into that movie theater," some black person. "Oh, no that's crazy." "Well, I'm going to go." And usually one person or two people that would go and get arrested. They get beat up. Or they would go get coffee, and they're, they're all pretty much forgotten. Except, maybe their own families tell the story. And that's terrible. That's how- Bradshaw, I just met in Lynchburg,

[RB] What was the name?

[BS] Bradshaw. He supported is.

[RB] What was the first name, though?

[BS] I don't know- I can't remember. Mr. Bradshaw had a little independent movie company. He integrated the public pool, which was then shutdown for ten years.

[RB] Integrated in what year? '65? Or a little after?

[BS] 65.... probably 64

[RB] Oh, okay.]

[BS] Because when the stuff was happening in St. Augustine, 63, it was probably 63, 64. When Mr. Bradshaw went down there and said, Well, I'm going to see if, I'm going to go to the pool. The city closed the pool, and filled it full of dirt. And they did that in so many southern cities. "No" rather than swim with blacks we'll have nothing.

[RB] Yeah, we need to somehow get to those people. And did some of them show up at the reunion? Some of the African Americans who've- local folks?

[BS] A man from Dinwitty County, who's name I can't- because I didn't work directly with him. But, Roger Hickey worked with, he came. Three women from Lunenburg County who knew Nathaniel Hawthorne. I mean, I couldn't recognize them but I knew their names. They were young women that had worked with Nan Goraro. Because she stayed there for a year. There are only three or four of our staff that stayed, and there was two women. Who couldn't get, they wouldn't be drafted. Because there were no drafted women. So Nan really got more into the community than any of the rest of us did. And made some contacts with some of those women who came over on page staff or volunteers. Played, And of course, Hawthorn became a leader of threats outside. How Nathaniel Hawthorne got, what, how, how did he get his NAACP? I think he sort of had to fight his way to be head of NAACP over some preachers, because he wasn't a preacher. He had a little repair business, I think a radio repair business. But how do you get in there? He was a Korean War veteran, but he had, um, not tuberculosis. Maybe he had TB. Some disease that you get in the South Pacific. Malaria, he had malaria.

[RB] Okay.

[BS] He got malaria from mosquitoes. He died in 67 at about age fifty. Oh um 75, he died in 75. But he was on full disability for the most part, he was getting a disability check from the Army, his wife worked at Fort Lee So they did not work the local white power structure. They bought their house through the VA. They borrow the money from the VA so they didn't know money to local bank. They bought their car through them. So they were economically independent of the local white power structure. That's the way they could do, what they did. He, his children were the first black children in the public schools. At least one of them is still alive. Who's in Baltimore. But I mean that's, the people who had had some. The fact that he was a disabled veteran and getting government checks. That freedom up to, what he was- He was a target, walking down the street. But they couldn't attack him economically. He could be threatened and attacked physically, but not economically. I made a huge difference

[RB]If you had to sum it up in a paragraph 4-5-6 sentences, and you're- let's say you're speaking to a student group going through your life and you wanted to say this is what the VR-VSCRC was and this is what we accomplished. What would you say?

[BS] VSCRC was an organization of black and white college students. Black students were the

that the sort of staff, leaders, and organizers, the rest of us were community, were dispersed to be activists. To help get blacks registered to vote in what's called the Black Belt Counties in Virginia, where there's a large or majority black population, where there's a chance that they could really have an impact on making changes. And that's what made that project unique. We work at, in the black belt counties that was determined by black student activist leadership. People who got Lucious Edwards and others first involved, much before I was. And it was, it was it was worthwhile because it- Civil Rights, Was on the move. Was happening in Washington already because of what people had done out at Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia. But we gotta move in Virginia. We made the black belt counties of Virginia move. And that was very important.

[RB] I think we could stop there, we believe. we've talked for an hour and 45 minutes

[BS] Oh, that's a long time.

[RB] And he's going to run out of video, That was great Bruce, thanks.

[BS] And if you want some other stuff, some other factual stuff it's in my-

[RB] Yeah. What's good about oral history transcript is that we can always, if we have questions. But are you going to make this into a book, you think?

[BS] It's a book online, I put it online. And if I had to put the money in my daughter's house, so I couldn't really afford the editing and publishing in print. Yet. The good part about it, is that you can continue to make editorial improvements online. And actually, a guy I met school bus driver. But he's a former book editor. He lives in Prince William and he said, I'll help you. I'd forgotten it, years ago he was a magazine, a book editor.

[RB] Just for the heck of it, and this will be in the archives for a long time and hopefully online.

How can they access that website? What's the easiest way? I mean, they could go to Google/

[BS] It's Bruce Jay Smith, blog at WordPress, dot.com and might be.org. If you do either one of those, because at the school board the other day someone said, Oh, I wanted you to see. She brought it right up. It jumped right up. There's about ten chapters done. The part of when I was organizing in Virginia is it's about 50 pages long, the 68 and 69 part. So I'm having it to it's sections by season. Summer project where we organize, we organized support for a nonviolent prisoners' strike in Richmond. Organized by black and white. Inmates work together to desegregate the prison. Just, that doesn't happen anywhere else

[RB] And that was downtown right across from Oregon Hill?

[BS] Yeah. It was called-

[RB] I think we got that in other interview.

[BS] And that didn't happen anywhere else. But because we picketed them 23 days, day and night, and never could charge in and beat everybody. They locked him in, person went through hell for a month. And some of the guys were on bread and water for a year. They tried bread, not for long. Court cases came out of that. And just- but it was it was it didn't have a horrible thing like Attica, that didn't happen. And because of the closeness to civil rights movement, the guys, they did a nonviolent sit-down strike. That was where they made all the license tags in Virginia. They wanted, i think \$2 a day for the work. They were getting \$0.50 a day or a dollar And a white guys went with a black guys. Cause the black guys wanted to desegregate. And these white guys, were not- not you're enlightened college crowd. Because they're white, the

white leader, who was a sophisticated guy said, they know how to organize and the white or blue collar guys, well I guess the blacks, they've got all this other stuff, done. I guess they do. They assumed that black people just knew how to do stuff. So it was the reverse of a reverse of inferiority. They sort of had a, black people they know how to do it. So it's going to work. And the blacks agreed to it. They wanted to work, they wanted to get paid in the tag shop too. So they put together the demand for desegregation and to get paid more and did a sit-down strike where we picketed along Belvedere street. To, to try to break the strike the the the prison administration closed- there was glass windows that would crank out. They closed them up in there. No fans in August. So the prisoners, they were being served with plates, they took plates and coffee cups and threw them through the glass, smash the glass out and the only way they could get any circulation.

RB And there was a big trial, court case and a-

[BS] Big court case.

[RB] And things eventually got better?

[BS] Yeah. The court case went on for a year two. That was Landman v. Royster Landman was the white guy of the three inmates that put it together.

[RB] Well, we got that in another-

[BS] Yeah, that was historical court case but that, that happened in Richmond

[RB] He lives in Oregon. He lives right across the street.

[BS] Yeah

[RB] Right across the street

[BS] Yeah

[RB] Right across the street

[BS] Yeah

[RB] Right across the street

[BS] Yeah

[RB] Right across the street