

TRANSCRIPT, Interview of Harvey Miller by Ben Trollinger, December 3, 2008

This is Ben Trollinger. I'm sitting with Harvey Miller at San Marcos, Texas, at 3:30 p.m. on December 3, 2008.

BEN TROLLINGER: Harvey, could you state your full name and date of birth?

HARVEY MILLER: My name is Harvey Ercy Miller, and I'd like to make a comment on that "Ercy Miller" before I get to the rest of it. My grandmother was named Ercy and my grandfather was named Harvey. And when I was growing up in high school they used to call me "Sissy" because of my name being Ercy. So later when I grew up and had to get my Social Security, I changed it from Harvey Ercy Miller to Harvey Edward Miller. So right now my name is officially Harvey Ercy Miller, but according to my Social Security check and Social Security number it's Harvey Edward Miller. And I was born November 4, 1929 in Georgetown, Texas.

BEN TROLLINGER: So you grew up in Georgetown...

HARVEY MILLER: Grew up in Georgetown.

BEN TROLLINGER: And where did you live in Georgetown?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, I lived at that time we had ah...three sections of town. We had what we called the Grasshopper...and this was before integration, you know. White people lived on one side of town--Caucasians and Anglos lived, you know, almost wherever they wanted to. And we lived on the section called the Ridge/Grasshopper/and the Tracks. And I lived...we lived out on the Ridge. I lived there for a lot of years when I was growing up and going to Carver School. I guess you know where the Carver School is located?

BEN TROLLINGER: Where is that?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, it's down at the end of Martin Luther King Street and Martin Luther King Street used to be Timber Street at that time, so down at the end of that street there--that used to be there--and now they've got some other buildings and things there. But if you go down Martin Luther King Street and when you get to the end of it, on the edge of a bluff there was the Carver School...was built there. And that was where Carver School was.

BEN TROLLINGER: So, what were your parents' names?

HARVEY MILLER: My daddy was Frank Miller...Frank Red, they used to call him Red. And my mother was Elnora Miller. And my daddy was...he had some white in him from way back when he grew up, you know so he was real light. A lot of times he could go into the front door of the cafe--back in those days black people had to go in the back door of the cafe. So he could go in the front door because he was so white at that time...you know, compared to others, but his name was Frank. And we just called him Frank Miller and we just called him Red--his middle name was Red--Frank Red Miller. And my mama's name was Elnora Sedwick. And it was a unique thing. There was only two of sisters, Elnora Miller and Willie Mae Miller. And those two

Sedwick girls married two Miller boys and ended up being a big family. And, like say if we had 32 kids and I run this genealogy check and I could only account for 23 even though Grandpa was married...he was married for...he was married twice. He was born on a plantation in Birmingham, Alabama and he...his daddy was a Bagley and he supposedly killed a white man on the plantation and his daddy changed his name from Bagley to Miller and sent him to Texas to keep him from hanging.

BEN TROLLINGER: So that's how they got to Georgetown?

HARVEY MILLER: That's how we ended up in Georgetown. So we've been Millers ever since. And I'd like to say when I run this through the genealogy up to the...and we say we're always there...we always say we was Creek Indian...but actually what I ran into... and I showed you that little form...to the Indian Bureau of Oklahoma...we found out we was Seminole Indian. So that's why I grew up here and graduated from school here in 1949... Carver High School...down on the Ridge, down in that part. So I lived on the Ridge...in the Ridge part section of town.

BEN TROLLINGER: Let's kind of pick up there. So, approximately when did the Millers arrive in Texas and in Georgetown?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, you know what, I've got that history on that and I don't exactly know the date 'cause I could never get the dates 'cause when I...you know, like my daddy was one of the oldest sons, next to about, I don't know he was about number three or four...Frank Miller...and he was born in 1906. And, like I say, Grandpa was born in 1865 and I don't exactly know what date it was...couldn't find no records on what time they actually arrived in Texas, but they just come to Texas. And I believe...and I'm sayin' this...course I've got some relatives in Georgetown and I do most of the history on it, but I believe that he was...Georgetown was the area and we leased another section that I call Rocky Hollow, up there, and we've got a cemetery called Rocky Hollow there in Georgetown, so a lot of us lived there for a long time, in Rocky Hollow. So we moved back and forth between Rocky Hollow and Georgetown.

BEN TROLLINGER: Do you know what street you grew up on ?

HARVEY MILLER: No...ah...

BEN TROLLINGER: Do you remember the house? What it looked like?

HARVEY MILLER: I kind of got an idea of the house when I was growin' up...little old log cabin-type house, you know...I can't...but I remember Grandpa (Paff? Pap?), he lived down on the Ridge, way down close to the Blue Hole down there, and I've still got some pictures somewhere of him where he was sittin' on the porch there at that time and we lived on...I don't know if we lived on a street called Timber Street at one time and other streets. I guess I'm kind of gettin' a little old tryin' to remember that now...

BEN TROLLINGER: That's OK. What is your earliest childhood memory?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, I remember I was very sensitive to things even at a young age, you know, I was very sensitive to things in schools...I mean in Georgetown, or just in our way of life, you know. I remember back in those days...like I say...we had a water fountain one said "Colored," and I've got some pictures of that, one said "Colored" and one says "White," you

know...and restrooms "Colored" and "White". And I remember one day I was in the Courthouse, I believe it was, in the Courthouse, and I went to use the water fountain and I used the "White" water fountain. I must have been about, I don't know, twelve, thirteen years old and I used the "White" water fountain. And it just so happened a policeman was there and he says, he called me over and he said, "You didn't see that sign?" and I said, "Yeah." "Why didn't you use the one you're supposed to?" I said, "Well," and I'm always tryin' to be funny and I didn't realize even then, I said, "Well, I just wanted to know if the white folks' water was colder than ours." And he said, "Was it?" and I said, "No, it's the same." And he started laughin'. But I was pullin' little tricks like that way back there.

And I remember when I was about 16 years old and I went to Austin one day on the Greyhound bus. Back in those days all black people had to sit in the back seat of the bus. And there's only about six or seven people could sit back there and if it was full, then the rest of them had to stand up back there regardless of how many seats up front was open, they still had to stand up. And I remember one day I was on my way to Austin and I was about 15-16 years old, and I was standin' up behind the driver and holdin' on to a little rail there...and I was lookin' at the scenery and everything and I was really tryin' to pull a little trick like. So what happened, a little white lady sittin' over there, she said, "Why are you standin' up?" I said, "Well all our seats are full back there and I don't have a place to sit so I just thought I'd come up here and watch the scenery." And she says, "Sit down here with me, there are a lot of vacant seats here." And I sat down with her and all them other white people start lookin' and sayin' "What's that little colored boy doing sitting down with..?"

And I was pullin' kind of tricks like that way back there, you know, about water fountains and ridin' on the bus and comin' in the front door of the cafe. You know at one time you had to eat in the back. Even when I was a cook at the L&M Cafe--I was a cook--people had to come up in the back, black people had to eat in the back. And my daughter, the one I was just talkin' about, the oldest daughter, Chris, when she was young one time and she came in up front and sat up front. She deliberately did that. She was pullin' tricks even though I didn't realize she was going to end up on 48 Hours only 'cause she was kinda like that. And the waitress come and said...she ordered a Coke...all those white people was lookin' at her...Chris...and waitress name was Chubby...she came in and said, "Harvey, your daughter's up front and she wants a Coke. What am I goin' do?" I said, "Well, Chubby, you know what to do. Just send her back here." She said, "No, I'm just goin' give her a Coke." She went and gave Chris a Coke and Chris got up and walked out. I talked to her later on about that, you know, about what she doin'. But she was just pullin' them kind of tricks. "Well, I was just seein' everybody else up front, so I went up front." And things like that you know, so I watched a lot of things, you know, like say at that time we had to live on one side of town, we couldn't live over on the white side of town, so down on the Ridge. You're familiar with Georgetown?

BEN TROLLINGER: Yes.

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, the Ridge and Martin Luther King Street there I remember I went back there with them we changed the street down here and I went back there and brought it up to'em about that and they got a committee together and changed Timber Street from Timber Street to MLK.

BEN TROLLINGER: So what were the areas where you could go and what were the areas where you couldn't go when you were growing up? When you were a boy?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, the areas of, for instance, even at the theater there on the Square there, kind of on the Square...used to be the Palace Theater, and we used to go to movies and at that time black people had to sit upstairs, a little place upstairs, there, we had to go upstairs. We couldn't sit down there...you know, white people sat downstairs and we had to sit upstairs you know. And I remember that, and like I say, you go in the back door of the cafe and ride on the furthest row of the bus, and we could go around town, even at Southwestern University, I was kind of young but...and I even ended up being a cook up there at one time for a while. But at that time we could go...you could go anywhere in town you wanted to go, you know, as far as going and everything, but as far as living as a residence, you know we couldn't do that and couldn't, you know, go in the front door of the cafe for a long time...and things of that nature. Now going in a grocery store...wasn't no problem there, you know. Course you had a certain restroom you had to use, you know.

BEN TROLLINGER: When you were a boy, were you conscious of that? I mean, you said you were playing tricks, which seems to me like that's pretty bold to do at the time. Was it something you were very aware of and conscious of when you were growing up, and how...was that something that your parents pointed out to you? Or, was it something you just instinctively knew was wrong?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, that's what I said. Even at a young age I was very sensitive to things and really didn't realize what was happening, when a lot of things was going on in the South, when it was race riots in Louisiana and Arkansas and Alabama and all that stuff and I was very sensitive to all of that and I...it's just the way our life was. My momma and daddy didn't really get too much involved, you know, they sometimes they tell me, "Now Harvey, you're not supposed to do this," you know.

BEN TROLLINGER: Did you ever get in serious trouble?

HARVEY MILLER: No, I never did. My daddy and my momma and that didn't hardly whip me...and my daddy sometime spank us...spank us, but my momma never did very much. But, I don't know, I just realized I was very sensitive to things even when I was growing up, you know.

BEN TROLLINGER: What did your parents do for a living?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, Momma was just a common housewife, you know, and I think she worked in some houses and things like that. My daddy was a mechanic...and he worked at...he worked as a mechanic almost all his life as I remember. Course, he used to be a great fisherman.

BEN TROLLINGER: I know from doing a little research that really...the black community of Georgetown was very...ah, independent, I guess, in the sense that they had their own mechanics...like your father...they had their own restaurants, their own clothing stores, things like that. Is that true?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, they had a few, not too many. You know, we just had to use...but they had a few down on the Ridge...they had a few stores down there. I forget what some of them was named. Had a few, kinda like cafes and things like that, downtown.

BEN TROLLINGER: Do you have positive memories...I guess what are your best memories of growing up in the Track/Ridge/Grasshopper area? Do you have kind of fond memories as a boy?

HARVEY MILLER: No, I just think it was a way of life and everything was just normal, you know. Like I say, we knew where we was supposed to go and where we could live and all of this and I just tried some tricks sometimes, you know. I remember one time when I got a little older (words not clear)...I organized the first black Boy Scouts in Georgetown and one year we was supposed to come...I was just lookin' at that article the other day...one year we come to Camp Tom Wooten in Austin for a campout...a week's campout for Scouts, Boy Scouts...called Camp Tom Wooten...and the black kids would go the last week in the month. And that one month I delivered...brought my kids down there. Think it was about thirteen Scouts...and brought them down there...and the guy at the gate said, "Mr. Miller, that your name?" He said, "We can't take the colored kids until next week. You all can't come until next week." Now it just so happened that the man that was over the program was not far away...kind of close to the gate...and he called to me and said, "Come here a few minutes...is your name Mr. Miller?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "We got an openin' down there and nobody's going to be in that booth down there, so go ahead and take your kids down there." Cause I told him, I said, "You know what, these kids goin' be so hurt...they goin' be so disappointed coming all the way down here and they not going to be able to stay." I was just playing a game, you know...and so, I was already married and I was up in the twenties by then, I think. And so I took 'em down there and I tell you what, it was the first time they ever had black kids there and they just...all of them just had a good time together. They just...it was somethin' new and it wasn't long before they...next year...next two years after that they decided every Scout could come. So I was in the process of doing things like that, you know, and before it led up to integratin' the schools.

BEN TROLLINGER: Did you and your family belong to a church?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, we belonged to Gay Hill Baptist Church. Now that's when I was growin' up here. Now when we lived in Rocky Hollow, before we moved to Georgetown, kind of out in the country. I think Rocky Hollow is back up toward Florence...Andice...somewhere in that area...Rocky Hollow and we still go up there now 'cause the cemetery's up there. Matter of fact, a lot of our people was born kind of north of Georgetown, Rocky Hollow, up in that area.

BEN TROLLINGER: So were you born in Rocky Hollow or were you born...

HARVEY MILLER: Well, I was born kinda on the edge...ah...one time I knew the little old...kinda like the section I was borned in...but it was kinda in the outskirts of Georgetown. But I don't remember now what the name of it was. I was goin' pull out some of my stuff...you know, I didn't know exactly what you'd be askin' me, but...but it was just in the kinda outskirts of Georgetown where I was actually born, before they moved into town and he went to work. Like I say, Momma mostly all she ever done was just kinda workin' to clean kitchens and things

for the white ladies, stuff like that. But yeah, we went to Gay Hill Baptist Church and Rocky Hollow Church..up in Rocky Hollow...out in that area at that time.

BEN TROLLINGER: What do you remember about the church?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, it was just a...'course like a way of life, you know. It was just a black church with all the people black in it. I guess it wasn't until years after the celebration of Juneteenth...that they finally, after integration...that they started kind of mixin'...some white people come and join our church and some of the black people be workin' together in restaurants, things like that, and they'd get to be friends and they'd invite to come visit their church and we'd invite them, but back in those days all of the churches was just black churches and down on the Ridge right now they have...there in Georgetown they have...ah, I think they changed the name of Gay Hill...but they have Friendly Will Baptist Church, I think, still there, Macedonia Baptist Church, and Methodist and stuff of that nature...

BEN TROLLINGER: Was there a lot of singing in the church?

HARVEY MILLER: Oh, yeah. That's the one thing that they did...a lot of singing. It was kind of like where the rhythm and blues came from way back in our culture. But there's a lot of choirs and stuff like that...singin'...my wife played piano some there and then she come on down here when we moved down here and she was the pianist for years here...she's a pianist there.

BEN TROLLINGER: And what...what hymns, what songs did they sing at the Rocky Hollow Church? Do you remember? Do you have any favorites?

HARVEY MILLER: No, I can't even remember what they might have been then. Cause I remember I used to try to write some songs one time, you know, back when I was growin' up in town, you know, and sang and...I think it was just the standard old songs that they used to sing back in those days.

BEN TROLLINGER: You said you tried to write?

HARVEY MILLER: One time I tried to write, "Somebody hold my hand, Lord, hold my hand," and then I started writin' some poems and, you know, tried to write things...might write some songs out. Can't remember now...I had a folder I could have pulled out...I got so many folders...things that I could've...

BEN TROLLINGER: Did they ever sing it?

HARVEY MILLER: No, I don't think they ever sang mine in church...but I'd be singing when I was out...back in those days when I was pickin' cotton...when I was little, pickin' cotton. As I was growin' up, I didn't mention this...we used to pick cotton and (words not clear) pick cotton...and then at a certain time we'd go out to West Texas and we'd pull cotton...out there...we'd go out there first to pull and then come back to Texas and pick cotton.

BEN TROLLINGER: This was you and your parents?

HARVEY MILLER: Me and my parents, yeah...when I was about twelve...thirteen...

BEN TROLLINGER: And your brothers? Did you have brothers or sisters or...?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, there was ten of us.

BEN TROLLINGER: OK, that's a big family.

HARVEY MILLER: I don't know...if you know any of my sisters and brothers in Georgetown?

BEN TROLLINGER: I know Bruce, or I knew Bruce.

HARVEY MILLER: Bruce...you knew Bruce. And then, well, Birdie Shanklin, you know her?

BEN TROLLINGER: Um hum.

HARVEY MILLER: That's my older sister...I've got three still living. Ella, Ella...not Ella. Ella's passed on. Birdie Lee and Nora Marie and Bessie. The three girls. There was ten of us and I was the oldest out of ten. Ten children...six boys and four girls. And Bruce was the last one to pass. You said you knew him. One named Sam, one named Austin. Out of those nine kids, just a good family. But we had one brother named Austin, and he was the only one in the family...I don't know how old he was when he got killed...but he was the only in the family that kind of sneaked and drank a little bit and shoot dice and stuff like that. He done a lot of little bad things.

And when he got up and got grown he moved to Louisiana and one day he called me...it was kind of sad...he called me and he said, Harvey, you know what, the Miller reunion's coming up pretty soon. I'm goin' ask you a question. There's ten of us in the family. Which one do you think goin' be the first one to die?" I said, "Austin, that's up to the Lord!" You know, I don't know...and you're not goin' believe this. The next day he walks out in the middle of the street in Louisiana drunk and gets killed. The next day...and he had about...I don't know, Austin, I had this thing... I was goin' call..try to stay in touch with him. He got two daughters out in California, I think, or New Mexico somewhere, and I try and stay in touch with them. I call them and try to stay in touch with them and I use this little theory...if we don't stay in touch with them, specially when we had a big family like we had, you know, and even I got a big family myself now. I got four girls...well, I have...well, I had the three girls then...I had four girls, I guess. And I'd always tell 'em when they get up in college and they get to talkin' and they get to talkin' about datin' and they start datin' and then they get to layin' back talkin' about their background...and they say, "now wait a minute, you say you from Georgetown, Texas?" "Yeah, that's where my people are from--Georgetown." "You don't know no Harvey Miller, do you?" "Yeah, that's my grandpa!" She goin' say, "Oh my God, that's my grandpa, too!" And I found out from some lawyers that a lot of people have actually married because they don't stay in touch with each other. You know? Right now I got grandkids...I got kids, like my oldest boy, Austin, now he's got kids got kids and I don't know where they are and they, some of them come to the Miller reunion, you know, when we have the Miller reunion and all that kind of stuff, and a lot of them come and stay in touch with them...so I always try and stay in touch with all of them.

BEN TROLLINGER: So you said that...you mentioned earlier that your mother did a lot of housework and raised the kids, and your father was a mechanic...but you also mentioned that you all would go out to west Texas or you all would pick cotton....How did that kind of fit in? Was that something you all did seasonally, just...the whole family would pick up and go out and do that?

HARVEY MILLER: It was just a way of life. A lot of times it would just be my daddy may take us...and the oldest kids and drive up there...to out in west Texas to pick cotton.

BEN TROLLINGER: Where in west Texas? Do you remember?

HARVEY MILLER: I don't remember now exactly where it was out in west Texas.

BEN TROLLINGER: How did you all get there?

HARVEY MILLER: Daddy had an old T-model Ford and truck-like thing, like that, and back in those days they had the T-model Fords and he had them and he worked on 'em and stuff of that nature. So we'd ride out there and then we'd find...I'm trying to think where we'd stay when we stayed out there...find a place to stay...'cause I think they kinda had it set up where...you know white people had it set up where they expect people to come out there and pick cotton for 'em....

BEN TROLLINGER: Were a lot of families in the black community of Georgetown doing that? Where they were going out...

HARVEY MILLER: No, not a lot of them. Cause not everybody...most of them would pick cotton...doing a lot of cotton pickin' in around Round Rock, all that area of the country, part of it, but not a lot of them would go out travelin'. But I remember we used to go to west Texas for a while...my dad, and there may have been some other families...we'd go out there and pick cotton.

BEN TROLLINGER: Did you like it or not like it?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, I kind of like it out there because in...when you're pickin' cotton in the South, you had to look...stick your hand in the burr and pull the cotton out. And out there they didn't pick the cotton, they what you called "pull cotton", so you pulled the whole burr. And that was a lot easier, just pulling the burr and puttin' it in your sack bag and everything. And I got in trouble a lot of times because when I got back home, I'd be thinkin' my daddy'd see me and say, "Harvey, don't be pullin' that cotton like that, you pick that cotton." And he'd almost get on me because I'd be pullin' it and puttin' it in my sack. That's when I was pickin' cotton, you know.

BEN TROLLINGER: Well, what did you all do for fun? As a family or as a community?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, we still at that time had little picnics and things like that and the circus(?) came, so down on the Ridge have little picnics and get togethers and back in those days we was celebratin' the 19th of June, back then, before integration. The 19th of June was about one of the very few...only holiday...it wasn't an official holiday at that time...that we could celebrate. You know what the 19th of June was created from?

BEN TROLLINGER: Um huh.

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, so...

BEN TROLLINGER: Would you explain a little bit?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, ah...when they passed a law about all the people in America would be free, and then the 19th of June, down in the South, you know, that's when they celebrated. So on

that day, the 19th of June, a law was passed that all slaves was free. And they freed up all the slaves, so we started to celebratin' the 19th of June.

BEN TROLLINGER: Do you remember, as a kid, celebrating that?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, uh huh, I remember all the time what we was doin'. We'd be fishin' and my dad was a great fisherman also. Cause I even...when I got up and reorganized Juneteenth when I got along...and at my Miller reunion, when we have it now, we have a fishin' contest cause Daddy used to be a great fisherman and he would be fishin'...so the one who catch the biggest fish would win the prize, stuff like that. So, we used to have little picnics...it was just the way of life...we'd have our own picnic. We knew we couldn't go across where the white people were and all that...so, down on the Ridge and the San Gabriel River, down there. You know, it's a little more modern now but at that time we had to kind of stay on this part of town. Like I say, certain places when we go fishin' we could fish at cause it's like we could fish down in this corner and then white people could fish anywhere they wanted to. So, we just had fun... it was just a way of life...have all kind of gettogethers, and then later on as I started to grow we started havin' more ball games. We'd have some ball games and stuff like that, down on the Ridge, and I think one time we had it where the Ridge played the Grasshopper and Track and we could kind of play like that you know. And that was kind of later on, after I got to be a little older, cause then we could have white people helpin' us out. They'd give us the old leftover stuff. Then when I got in high school we used to play football. I remember I was a tackle. I was a quarterback at one time, then I was a halfback, I think that's what they call it. Quarterback and halfback and also ran in the track. Played football and we played black...all like Taylor and Granger and all them towns. But at that time we had to play black schools, you know. So we played football and all that. And I ran on the track, I was 440 yard dash and 220 yard dash. Can you hold for just a minute? I have something I was going to lay out and show you about that...played Taylor and Granger and Bartlett. I was quarterback one time and halfback.

BEN TROLLINGER: And this is when you were...at Carver School?

HARVEY MILLER: When I was at Carver, yes. I've still got these here...certificates that I was tellin' you about. This is my diploma. That's the way Carver School looked. And when I filed the suit that time, Barnes was the Superintendent, I think, later on, he'd been there a long time.

BEN TROLLINGER: What do you remember about...so I guess...did you go to Carver from elementary school up into high school?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah.

BEN TROLLINGER: Is that right? What do you remember about elementary school at Carver? I don't know if you remember the first day of school, but do you have any early memories of the elementary grades there?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, I just remember that we...I remember math and stuff like that, you know, and well, we called it 'rithmetic I think back in those days, we didn't call it math...'rithmetic and all of that and back in those days we didn't have no new school books or anything. What we did, we got all the used books from the white school. They'd bring them down to us and we'd have books and stuff like that as I was growin' up. Like I say, I graduated

in 1949. It was a unique thing. I'll slip this in here. I was already married and I don't know how they let me graduate when I was married. My oldest daughter...I married 194...I married July the 7, 1948.

BEN TROLLINGER: What was her name?

HARVEY MILLER: Ara Bell Miller. There she is up there (refers to a picture on the wall). She's passed on. That's the whole family, the Jeffersons in Georgetown. And she was the one on the end there. She was a baby girl out of...one, two, three, four, five kids. She was the first black nurse to ever graduate from...in Georgetown. She was the first black nurse and I remember one day she came home and told me, she said, "Harvey..." Now this was when we moved to San Marcos, she went to school...to work, they wouldn't let husband and wife work at the (unclear) Job Corps?? so she had to go to work as a nurse, here in San Marcos in 1967, I think, when she went to work. We moved here in '66. And I remember one day she went to work for the Hayes County Health Department and she was going all around and that was when they had a disease called TB--tuberculosis--and it was really bad and especially among black people, having tuberculosis. Matter of fact her second sister, right next to her, died with the TB.

And one day she came home and she said, "Harvey, you're going to have to put me in your black history collection." Because I was all into local black history, state black history, national black history. And I said, "What? What you gotta do? You gotta break the color line or something like that." She was a Libra and she was tough. Libras are tough. I usually ask people when I...before I talk about a Libra being tough...I ask, "Now are you a Libra?" "No." I say, "OK." One time one lady heard me talking about Libras and she said, "Uh, sir," she walked over to where I was chatting with a white lady and tapped me on the shoulder, "sir, don't be talking about us Libras like that." I said, "Oh, no, I was just talking about my Libra." So then, but, she came over and said, "Harvey, you're going to have to put me in the collection." I said, "Why?" She said, "They introduced me today at the Health Department...at Hayes County Health Department...and said Ms. Miller is from Georgetown, Texas, and she was the first black nurse in Georgetown and she's the first colored nurse San Marcos-Hayes County Health Department has ever had." So I had to end up putting it in my collection, as the first black Hayes County nurse, working for the Hayes County Health Department, because another lady challenged me about it later, she said, "Now she wasn't the first black nurse in Hayes County." I said, "No, I'm not talking about the first black nurse in Hayes County, I'm saying the first black nurse in Hayes County Health Department. But she was a nurse.

BEN TROLLINGER: So, she grew up in Georgetown, too?

HARVEY MILLER: She grew up in Georgetown.

BEN TROLLINGER: So she also went to Carver School.

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah. She graduated from Carver School and she was really smart and she graduated a year before I did.

BEN TROLLINGER: What was the...how many students were at the Carver School?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, back then I think it was around something like 250 or maybe 300, something like that. Wasn't a whole lot of students. And, like I say, we've got this old building

that I showed you on there. It had an upstairs and a downstairs. Senior class upstairs...some of the classes upstairs. And they finally tore it down when they integrated, that's when they decided to build Westside School.

BEN TROLLINGER: So, what do you remember about the school? Like what was the building like, what were the...who were your favorite teachers...what were your favorite classes?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, I'll tell you my favorite teacher was...at that time we had a teacher named Westbrook, but my favorite was Professor Banks. He was the principal at that time. We had Miss...I forget her name now...the teacher that taught math...rithmetic mainly what they called it then...wasn't math...they didn't use that word...they used arithmetic. And I was just...I was telling about when I was on the track team...back then, during certification days...now, you know, they have a track meet at the end of the year to make the run and see who's going to be the champion...then we had to go to a school in Prairie View University, down next to Houston, and that's where my wife went to school, in Prairie View, and she went there and she didn't get her degree there, she went to Prairie View and then she went to a black school...that was a black university, went to a black university in Austin called Huston Tillotson.

BEN TROLLINGER: And did you go with her? I mean, were you....

HARVEY MILLER: No, I never did go to college. I went down there one day with her. I remember her mama...she was coming home one day...and her mama paid my way to go all the way down there just to ride back with her cause she was so demandin'. So she wouldn't have to ride back on the train by herself. But we had to go to Prairie View for our track meets. When it was track meet time, we'd have to go to Prairie View. And here's two of the certificates that I won. "To certify that Harvey Miller, of the Carver High School in Georgetown, Texas, April 20, 1946, and won second place in the 220 yard dash." And back in those days we had 220 yard dash...100 yard dash...220 yard dash...440 yard dash and then we had the relays, you know, we had to run around. And then I had another certificate I got, "Harvey Miller, Carver High School, in 1948" this was just before I graduated. And I won the 440 yard dash—I won second place. I guess I never did win no first place...yeah, won second place in the 440 yard dash. But, like I say, it was just the way of life in school back those, you know, we had to go there, we knew we had to go there, and when we played football, we played Taylor, the black team in Taylor, and situations like that.

One thing that I admire about San Marcos: when the Brown vs. the Board of Education passed in 1954, that all schools in America was supposed to have been integrated, San Marcos integrated. Here's a picture of the girl that was on that school, when she was a little girl, that her daddy...listed here...I'm going to give you one of these books here about Carver integration, when my wife was president of Carver PTA. Back in those days it was just the way life was, you know...and this was the white school...and way of life. But as time begin to change...and like I say at that time we were having a lot of problems in the South, you know. But one thing I said about the Brown v. the Board of Education, when it passed, in 1954, it was in the middle of the term and San Marcos integrated the next year, voluntarily, no problem at all. They integrated the next year, in '55.

BEN TROLLINGER: When you read older newspaper clippings, people talk about Carver being kind of in bad condition in the '60s. Is that the way you remember it when you were growing up? When you were in elementary school? Were the conditions bad then or did...

HARVEY MILLER: No, it didn't get bad until later on.

BEN TROLLINGER: What was it like when you were there?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, when I was there, near my graduation time and at that time, you could see the cracks in the building. There was a big, ol' rock building here and you could see the cracks, sometimes, in the side of it. One of the things about it, the Carver School was settin' on the...kind of like on a bluff above Blue Hole. I don't think they call it the Blue Hole any more, but the river go across there, and so it was called Blue Hole, and it was sittin' on the cliff there and it's beginnin' to kind of lean. And that was one of the things that brought about integration in Georgetown is when my wife was the president of the Carver PTA...and I got all these articles: "Carver PTA School Petitions the Trustees for a New Building." Now, when they went and took a look at it and found out it was in bad shape, they decided...and it's in this article...they decided that rather than build a new school they called a meeting and they said, "Harvey, we need to meet with you all." Said, "We're not goin' pay our taxpayers' money" ...after the article comes out in the Williamson County Sun, "New Carver School \$142,000" ...said, "We're not goin' pay our taxpayer's money for no segregated school, it's time to integrate." Now when they said that I almost had a heart attack. I couldn't believe anybody's thinkin' like that. And the next thing you know...when this article came out...the next thing you know, that's when we started integrating. That's the article there about the Carver PTA...my wife was president of Carver PTA. So I got all these clippings about the integration and they built a new school.

BEN TROLLINGER: And you all had four kids, is that right? You and your wife?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, we had four girls, yeah.

BEN TROLLINGER: And they were all going to Carver?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, just my last two. My oldest two girls...Tricia wasn't born until later...and then before we moved down here in '66, right after integration...they were going and...Kathy had just started going, but by the time Kathy (Mittie) got ready to go we'd already started to build a new school, called Westside, over there, you know, that building there. So she got a chance to attend there but as far as Chris and them attended the Carver School and then when I filed the suit to integrate, they attended the white school for a short period of time.

BEN TROLLINGER: So around the time your two daughters were going to Carver, that's when your wife was president of the PTA?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, uh huh.

BEN TROLLINGER: Was she a teacher there or was she...

HARVEY MILLER: No, she was just president. They organized the Carver PTA and everything and it was kinda unique, when I graduated, like I say, I was already married when I graduated. When I graduated, my oldest daughter, Chris, that I was tellin' you about, she was my li'l ol'

bitty girl and during graduation...she was sitting behind me...and at graduation time she kept reachin' up and pullin' on...you know that little thing you have on your graduation cap? She kept reachin' and pullin' on that, pulled my cap off my head, so my wife had to get her set up to stop doin' it during graduation.

BEN TROLLINGER: Who were your friends at Carver? Every high school has different groups that form that you can have a certain group that you kind of socialize with...

HARVEY MILLER: I don't guess it was a certain group, I just think it was...we pretty well got along with everybody...

BEN TROLLINGER: Is it just a smaller school, so everybody...

HARVEY MILLER: Being a small school, just everybody got along, you know...we had our different events and things like that but...

BEN TROLLINGER: Did it have a family feel to it? Just...the school being so small?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, it did, really. It really was touchin'...really close related...course, like I say, all schools always have some little ol' bad boys...gettin' into things they wasn't supposed to and and stuff like that, you know. But, Carver School...and some people there...some people there in Georgetown didn't want to integrate because they thought they'd lose their touch of the black community. When I filed the suit to integrate, they didn't want to integrate.

BEN TROLLINGER: Did you agree with that?

HARVEY MILLER: No, I didn't...I thought...I called a meetin' one time and we talked about it and I got some articles on that...that we can still be friends and be together, but the only thing we're going to be going to school together. We'll just all be goin' to the white school. And I said, it's not going to separate us. But, what they did say, then, kind of affected it, and I think I have an article on that because I was always going to the paper, you know, black teachers are going to lose their jobs. And so, some of them did when they integrated fully, a few of them did, but then it wasn't long after that, I mean we had a PTA meeting and a community relations meeting, and we talked about that and then they started hiring some black teachers, too. But a lot of them had moved out and went somewhere else. I could understand that, but we didn't talk about it at first, then I could understand it.

BEN TROLLINGER: Do you have any negative memories of going to school, I mean, I don't know how...you were talking earlier about about how things were separate. You had separate drinking fountains, separate places to sit in movie theaters. Were you all aware how things were at the white schools compared to Carver, or was that not something you really thought about?

HARVEY MILLER: No, it's something we never thought about. It's just the way of life. You know, we just never thought about it. When I started gettin' older and some of the others started gettin' older, and time started bringing about change and all, but it was just the way of life. Just livin' on the Ridge and Grasshopper, just what it was. Nobody ever thought about it. Like sayin' I was one of that was kind of sensitive to things like that and that's when I started to

doing...pulling little tricks like that, you know. And there was a few others was doin' the same thing, you know. It was just the way of life when we was growin' up.

BEN TROLLINGER: I was kind of thinking, you know, while maybe a lot of people in the community, in the black community in Georgetown, supported integration, you decided to take a prominent role in that effort. When did you think to yourself, I've got to take the lead on this? When did it strike you that you were going to have to lead the charge?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, what happened was...I was...when these people called me...like I say, I was kind of involved in a lot of things and when I organized the first black Boy Scouts and I even got an article where I organized the first black park in that area. We had a little park down there that I organized and set it up. And I got an article in the paper...there was an article in the paper way back there in 1959, somewhere like that...and so what happened was, when they got ready to do this and that article came out in the paper at Southwestern University...came out in the paper that...as I was tellin' you earlier...there was goin' be \$142,000 to build a new school...when they called me, they said, "Harvey, I know you're involved in the community a lot, but we need to meet with you." That's when I was tellin' you about they said: "integrate." Well, that's when I kind of ended up being at the head of the course when I met with them. And they told about integration and I was just shocked. They was sayin', "We're not goin' pay our taxpayers' money for no segregated school. It's time to integrate." And everything, so that's how I ended up...when they got ready to file the lawsuit, my girls, my three girls, was on the lawsuit along with my brother. And that's when they called...and I got that all in this book...and the lawyer called me, and at the same time they integrated the University here (San Marcos), that case was in 1963 I think it was. They said, "Harvey, we goin' to court next week. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever tried to go to school up there?" I said, "No, I haven't. Why?" He said, "Well, if I get Mr. Barnes on the stand and start drillin' him about integration, the first thing he goin' say, "How they know? They ain't never tried to come up here." So the next day, me and Rev. Givens, the pastor there, gets together and we take 29 kids up there. And we get up there and they say..."Harvey," this was in...after my wife had put in for the new Carver school in '58...I think 1960 or '61...and we took 29 kids up there. And my oldest daughter was about 12 years old...I showed all of them in that picture a little while ago...when we got up there they said, "Harvey, why you bring these colored kids up here? We can't take these colored kids up here? Why you wanna bring 'em up here?" And I'm tellin' my story, you know, and I lie, I guess I may use that term. I said, "Well,"...my oldest daughter was about 12 years old and she was among that group...I said, "My daughter here wants to be a doctor and down at the Carver School they have no science, no chemistry, and nothin' of that nature and you need that in your background if you're goin' grow up to be a doctor when you go to college. Now what happened when I said she wanted to be a doctor, Chris looks up at me like this, and I pat her on the head. And then they go ahead and say, "I'm sorry, Harvey, we can't take these colored kids." And the next few days an article comes out...I don't think I have it in this...comes out in the paper, "29 Negroes Turned Down at Georgetown High." And I sent that copy to the lawyer and he said that's all we need, Harvey. But the unique thing about it, when I got outside and asked Chris, why were you lookin' at me like that? She said, "I was goin' ask you, who said I wanted to be a doctor?" I said, "You goin' mess up my story!" Well, but later on when she got older and I told

her, she said, "I wasn't going to mess up your story, I was goin' mess up your life!" I said, "Okay." So the next day was that article and he said, "that's all we need." And like we got all these articles tellin' "Plans to integrate told in Georgetown" and all that kind of stuff.

BEN TROLLINGER: Since you mentioned that, I was going to ask you about that...what you were describing...let me see if I can find it. So that was in '62 when you took those kids to Georgetown High to enroll. Right?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, I believe it was in '62.

BEN TROLLINGER: And that was your idea?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, well, we got together...I brought it up to the rest of the PTA...Carver PTA. They called a meeting.

BEN TROLLINGER: Were you nervous when you all went down there?

HARVEY MILLER: No I wasn't. I was always...like I say, pullin' those tricks and it was just a way of life for me...I mean ME...but I wasn't nervous, you know. Cause, like I say, when I took those Boy Scouts down there and stuff like that, so I just took 'em up to the high school.

BEN TROLLINGER: Were the kids nervous?

HARVEY MILLER: I don't know if they were or not. It was 29 of 'em and I don't know if they was nervous or not.

BEN TROLLINGER: I'm just trying to imagine...so, how did you all get 29 kids together? And how did you all get there? Did you walk, or did you drive...

HARVEY MILLER: Down on the Ridge, and the high school was kinda up on this side of town. We had to get some parents...I went through the Carver PTA...and that's when we discussed it.

BEN TROLLINGER: So the Carver PTA ...they said...here's what we're goin' do...so they were goin' round up some kids from the Carver School and march over to Georgetown High School and demand to be enrolled in school. And you were there? Were you the only adult with them, or...

HARVEY MILLER: No, we took a minister by the name of Rev. Givens, he was pastor of one of the churches there.

BEN TROLLINGER: Was he the pastor at...

HARVEY MILLER: One of the churches...I forgot which one now, whether it was Macedonia or Wesley Chapel. I think it was Macedonia.

BEN TROLLINGER: So he was with you?

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, I have a picture of him in my collection...but he was doin' somethin' else...he was walkin' ...Rev. Givens...but that was years ago, he's passed on.

BEN TROLLINGER: So you all walked down and...who did you speak with?

HARVEY MILLER: We started out speakin' with the...one of the...wasn't a teacher, kind of like somebody in charge there at the front desk. And then when we asked that question, then that's

when they had to go and get the superintendent...Joe Barnes was the superintendent...and they had to go get him and bring him in. And then they started talkin' and that's when we got into it. (not clear) the Committee for Better Schools and that's when we decided to go ahead and..

BEN TROLLINGER: Did you all have an argument, or was it just...

HARVEY MILLER: No, it was fine. They just said we couldn't do it, you know, and could have been some time when I could've tried to get smart about it and started some trouble, but I was always usin' this word "diplomatic" and I always think about now about Martin Luther King and how he was and all the things he was involved in, he was very diplomatic, so he never did start any trouble or stuff like that because he always approached things in a diplomatic way.

BEN TROLLINGER: Had anybody done anything like that before in Georgetown?

HARVEY MILLER: I don't know of any other things. I like I say, I only did the Boy Scouts before that, but I don't remember anybody else doin' anything else of that nature.

BEN TROLLINGER: Did it cause kind of a stir?

HARVEY MILLER: Not really, not really. When it came out in the paper, there, you know, some of the black people in the community was kind of concerned because they was...like I say...a lot of things going on in the South...and they called another PTA meeting and they said, now Harvey, you think this is goin' create some problems? I said I don't think so...everybody's, you know...when it come out in the papers...everybody just feel kind of calm. When we left up there, white kids was lookin' at us when we was comin' out, cause they was at school and it was about time to turn out. They was in school, enrollin' you know, and they was kinda lookin', sayin', "What those colored kids doin' up here?" Cause, you know, they'd just never seen 'em like that.

BEN TROLLINGER: Did your kids *want* to go to Georgetown High School? Did they really want to do that, or...what do you remember their feelings being?

HARVEY MILLER: Well, I think when we called a meeting about it...most of 'em, when they finally decided to go...course when we went to court and ruled on it it was a little different...but when they decided to make that trip up there for that, it was just, you know, kind of a unique thing for them. They just kinda figured, you know, I don't think any of 'em had any objection to it. And they were all kinda young at that time, but now when they got big enough to when they filed a suit and actually went to the school up there, it was just unique that even when they enrolled...and I got an article in here that say "39 Negroes Enrolled at Georgetown High." And they didn't have any problem up there even then...when they enrolled up there. The only problem we had that was very serious...and you said you knew Bruce...and that was when we played some other towns...I don't remember what city it was we played and integration had just started and they hadn't been used to playing against white...ah, blacks...and there was a few blacks on all the teams cause integration was comin' ...and when we played this...I don't remember whether it was Bartlett or Granger or somewhere over there...when we played them, after integration, my brother Bruce...and that what caused him to have...he got sick...a condition with his kidneys...and what happened was, one of the white kids tackled him and then after he tackled him he deliberately kneed him in the side. And it was a long time before they realized

that's what happened. When he got older and started having kidney problems then the doctor realized that's what happened...and when they talked about that...it caused his kidneys to start havin' problems so he ended up bein' on the dialysis for about 30 years.

BEN TROLLINGER: I think he was on dialysis longer than anybody in the...

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, an article came out in the paper...

BEN TROLLINGER: Was it in the state, or the country, or something like that...

HARVEY MILLER: Yeah, somethin' like that.

BEN TROLLINGER: And you're saying that his kidney troubles started as a result of...

HARVEY MILLER: Well, that's what the doctor said after they told that and they started doin' a check back and everything and this kid...after he'd deliberately tackled him and deliberately just kneed him...

BEN TROLLINGER: Was this an opponent or was this someone on his own team?

HARVEY MILLER: An opponent...from the other town we was playin' and I don't remember what town it was. I think that it was because that town...I don't...maybe they hadn't played a team...a white team that had somebody black on it cause it was just a few, you know, when we integrated we integrated 36 kids...were the first ones to integrate the different grades, you know, and so...and that's when he played football and he started practicin'. And he done...I think it went pretty good...it was about four or five of 'em on the team...and practicin'... cause they got used to it and they had some meetings and things like that about integration. So it wasn't no problem with...I don't remember any problems in high school itself.

(Unidentified person entered the conversation at this point and interview was ended.)