

Stella Nieman Interview
with Lem Huntington
Carrie Glasby

I. Introductions

- Permission slip
- Time period covered in project

II. Activity in Williamsburg (pre-integration)

- Williamsburg Interracial Study Group (non-political)
 - *History of group: emphasis on education
- Meeting of candidates for City Council (issues)
 - *Assessment of situation
 - *Atmosphere in Williamsburg

III. Education

- History of integration in public schools with effectiveness
 - *State pupil placement, Freedom of choice, 100% integration
- Berkeley H.S. anecdote
 - *Shows reluctance of community to face issue completely
- Matthew Whaley 7th grade problem
 - *Separate class for home economics
 - *Refusal to show records
 - *Pronunciation of "Negra"
- Decision to integrate
 - *attitudes & problems
- Basketball Game Knifing Episode
 - *Police/Parent/School reactions
 - *Stella's daughter & kid on bus
 - *Discussion groups
- Exodus to private schools
- Gun-pulling Episode
 - *Event
 - *Public hearing
 - *Aftermath
- Naming schools in 1980's
- Opinions of superintendents
 - *pre-integration
 - *during integration

IV. Politics (local)

- Black School Board member dispute
 - *poor handling
 - *not an open issue
- Council on human relations
 - *Summer camp for disadvantaged
- Voter registration drives
- 1966 City Council elections

Q: How would you characterize the community's role in all this?

V. Passive resistance

- "Redneck" influence

- 1954: women on Williamsburg School Board proposed integration
- Blacks not pushing for integration
- Myrtle Engs: an exceptional teacher
- Discipline in schools-- different tactics
 - *Bruton: whipping; Matthew Whaley: no whipping

VI. Berkeley Junior High

- Different schools, the differences between them after integration
- Berkeley shift from H.S. to Jr. High
 - *quote: relates to earlier debate

VII. Teacher/ Parent reactions to integration?

- Unsure-- they never verbalized feelings
- Dave Collins (minister of 1st baptist) pushed

VIII. KKK?

- Difficulty remembering
- School Board/Jamestown Academy anecdote

Stella Neman interview

Lern Huntington
Carrie Glasby
10/11/95

Basketball Game Knifing Episode

. . .and then, there was a really unfortunate incident in November, --actually, I guess it was early December, um, '68, ...there was a basketball game, and, a white kid knifed two blacks in the boys' room. None of-- none of the three (they were all 18 or 19 years old) none of them were students at the school. But-- they-- had come to the basketball game and the issue-- uh-- which prompted it, was, that, um, there had-- there was visible some interracial dating. Now I don't even know-- I don't think I knew at the time, but I certainly don't remember, that-- the boys, the black boys who were stabbed were the ones involved in the dating, or whether it just got to be a-- you know-- big melee, but it was clearly-- started-- by some of these white kids, um, and the and the knife was-- held by the white kid, y'know, against the blacks, so you, but as I say none of them were students so of course the police were called, and... um, the next day, the police were at the school all day. I then decided that--um--I-- this was-- not gonna be the way I thought it oughtta be handled, to have the police out there and so forth, so I called the Principal and, uh, said d'you d'you have any objection if I get some parents and other community people to come. And, we'll take the place of the police, s'ydon't, have any police in there. So-- he-- was beside himself I mean he actually didn't have any idea what he ought to be doing, all--all I could think of was and that morning, the next morning, on Wednesday morning when school opened, it wasn't til Thursday that we went, because a lot of people didn't know about it, since it was a basketball game, but the next morning when school opened the police were there and there was some scuffling among the black and white childr'n who had heard about it or whatever, um, so the next so then I did call, um a representative-- a clergyman who was really a great leader in all this and he had been in the in-- the council, on human relations, I think maybe he wasn't here when the interracial group started, but uh was the rector of St. Martin's, who has long since gone from the community, and so he came, I came . . . [Junius Moody] came, and um a woman named Beulah Radcliffe, who was the *mother* of if she still didn't have any kids or she didn't at that point in highschool she had had and would have again and she was a strong member of the democratic party, and she lives in Grove, and she came, well she knew, a bunch of these black kids, so the first thing that happened that morning we got Junius Moody got on the-- horn and gave an opening speech and how we're--you know-- we're gonna behave ourselves and all this kind of thing and the rest of us were out in the halls the whole time, and Beulah was there, just, she saw a kid step out of line a half-inch, she would just take hold of him, and say we're (*audible thump*) gonna have absolute order here, and this is a new experience, and so on and so forth, and it was really-- the people who came, it was a very remarkable I thought kind of situation, and by the end of the day and the next day, there were a lot of parents there. Um, ...from both races, I don't remember the proportions anymore. And sometimes people would just drop in and see that everything was sort of under control, and-- uh-- they'd go on. But what happened after the after the Wednesday which is when the police were here,

the next day there were very few white kids in school. The-- kids just stayed home, and my daughter was-- um-- I think she was a sophomore that year, she always went on the school bus, my son al- ha-was in the band, so he always went early, with, my-- father took him, but, she got on the school bus that morning, and--um-- there were all black kids on the bus. So it didn't have a lot of kids on it, but, you know, five or six, and Chrissy, and-- one of the boys said to Chrissy, "What are you doing here," and she said "Uh, well I'm going to school." He said, "Aren't you scared of us?" and she said, "No, I'm not scared. SHOULD I be scared of you?" And he said, "No."

Williamsburg Grassroots Theatre Project

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SIGNATURE: Stella Neuman DATE: 10/11/95

Please print name here: STELLA NEUMAN