

INTERVIEW OF CAROLYN I. WIMS CAMPBELL BY ERIC SEXTON, MARCH 25, 2022
KANSAS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, INC.

Eric Sexton: Today is March 25, 2022. I'm Eric Sexton, Government Affairs Consultant for Foulston Siefkin Law Firm and formerly with Wichita State University. With me is former Representative David Heinemann who is our videographer for today. We are in the State Capitol to conduct this video that is part of the Kansas Oral History Project. It's a collection of interviews examining the diversity of voices active in public policy making in the last quarter of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century. In these interviews, we learn about policy development through the eyes of those who are directly involved.

Today I will interview Mrs. Carolyn L. Campbell who has had a very special and important part of state history in our government that she has served countless numbers of elected officials, training them to become effective legislators, then taking that vast experience to become an elected official in her own right at the local and state school board positions. I will stop there and allow her to share her story. Thanks for agreeing to be with us today. Mrs. Campbell, can you introduce yourself and let us know why you want to do this interview?

Carolyn L. Wims Campbell: Well, my name is Carolyn Wims Campbell. I always am proud of my father and my parents, and I'm a proud product of segregation. I tell that because folks sometimes think, "Oh, that's too bad," but I want everybody to know that as a black child in Topeka with the four all-black elementary schools that we had, we got excellent education, and we were told that we could be whatever we wanted to be and to succeed, and we were valued every day.

So there is my foundation. It's an honor for me. I'm thankful that I'm being considered to even share some of my journey that the Lord has put me on the path I went through.

ES: That's awesome. Thank you very much, and we'll get back to that story in just a second.

The Kansas Oral History Project is a not-for-profit corporation created to collect oral histories of Kansans who were involved in shaping and implementing public policy. Recordings of these transcripts will be accessible through the Kansas Historical Society as well as the State Library of Kansas as well as on our website, <https://ksoralhistory.org>. Funding for this project is provided by volunteers, individual donors, and Humanities Kansas, a not-for-profit cultural organization connecting communities with history, traditions, ideas with the goal of strengthening civic life.

With that, let's just get started, Mrs. Campbell. Mrs. Campbell has known me for a long time. So this is going to be fun. I want to start with, what are a couple of things people should know about you?

CWC: Well, first of all, I again just want people to know that I am a fourth generation of historic St. Mark's African Methodist Episcopal Church. I am proud to be an "AME" because of our founder, Richard Allen, Bishop Richard Allen, and our church denomination has always been about education and politics, political. So a lot that I learned even working—I know a lot of politics, just parliamentary procedures and different things from church as a child and growing up.

ES: Again, you mentioned your education. Tell us a little bit about your educational background as well.

CWC: Well, I'm from North Topeka, and for some kids, they used to call us "The River Rats" because over in North Topeka, we're going across the river. But I am proud. Our community was mainly a Black neighborhood, so I knew the families on both sides of the street. But our school was McKinley. The one thing that I always like to share that for the state of Kansas with the four schools that they built for us Black kids, they were perfect. They were not substandard. There was marble floors. I remember I loved the principal, Mrs. Ethel Williams. She later married Barber [?] [00:05:06.23]. But I can hear her heels clicking down, coming down the hallway, not that I was doing anything bad, but it's just that that's the other thing, the foundation that we were valued every day.

At McKinley, we were like a family. We're still a family. If someone passes away, you go to the visitation, and we're going to see everybody that we grew up with. One of the ladies, I'll be eighty this year, and so she's about three years older. She still calls me "Baby." At that time, everybody was out on the playground at the same time. I remember her pushing me in the swings.

And the other thing I want to share about education is that we got an excellent education. A lot of our teachers had master's degrees. So when we went to Curtis Junior High, they knew, Mr. Charles Hadley was the principal. The teachers there were very—I would say "welcoming." Some of my friends at other schools when they went to junior high, the teachers were not that kind and welcoming, but at Curtis Junior High, they knew that, and they would say that these kids from McKinley, they know, they have their foundation. We had everything that we needed. It was a nurturing, I think, time.

And then, of course, I went to Topeka High. I have a little negative experience, not a little. I have negative memories of Topeka High with our counseling department, Annabelle Pringle. She was not a nurturing counselor, and that's the only one we had. She told me, and I was taking courses to go to college. At that time, I wanted to be a teacher. She said that I was pretty, I was smart, and that I should be a waitress because they made good tips. That was the counseling I received.

ES: Oh, my.

CWC: So then when I became a member of the Topeka Public Schools Board, coming down now, I would get calls from some of the staff there about their concerns about the counseling department.

ES: Right.

CWC: I always do my investigative work before I do anything. So I went one day just to visit and just went to the counseling department and asked. Now this is a word, I know it's not very professional, but I'm going to say it anyway.

ES: Yes, ma'am.

CWC: But the lady, she lied to me. She actually lied. She knew I was on the local board. So I thought, “Okay.” I said, “Thank you,” and I went straight down the hall, and Patty Pressman, we graduated the same year, I talked to her about what I had come across. Even recently the counseling department is not as welcoming to our children of color as it should be. It’s sort of dissing [disrespecting.]

Anyway, I’m still upset and focusing my energy. When I know some kids that are smart that are at Topeka High to get them to—you try to get the parents to get more involved. That’s our problem a lot of times. We just expect that these educators, they know the best thing for them, and they trust, and I don’t trust nobody with my child.

ES: Right.

CWC: Then what happened was, my mother was a widow woman, and she’d been struggling. So, all of a sudden, it was really weird. I decided that I wanted to not go to college. I wanted to be able to get a job and get in the work force quick. So I went to Clarks School of Business. So then I got my little diploma. I shouldn’t say “little” because I’m proud of it. I still have it. But I got a diploma from Clarks School of Business.

At that time, about six or eight months into my course, I still had not earned the diploma, but Southwestern Bell Telephone Company was hiring. They had already hired one Black person, and they were looking for another Black person. So I’m the #2 Black person that was hired at Southwestern Bell in Topeka.

ES: That is perfect. What I wanted to follow up on though is again you talked about that life experience as a child, how it affected you and informed you when you became the local school board member. Who, back when you were a child, can you think back of who really did you see that was engaged in public life that you can look back and go, that may have driven you to thinking about doing all the things you’ve done since then.

CWC: Nobody.

ES: Nobody.

CWC: Nobody that was involved that I knew in politics. I’m going to share this. I’m glad you mentioned that because in 1954, was it the Brown v. Board [of Education] decision?

ES: Yes.

CWC: We had not a clue here in Topeka because there was no celebration because our wonderful Black teachers, the [USD 501] School Board, the superintendent had already written a letter that the Black teachers, their contracts would not be renewed, that they were all losing their jobs. We lost a lot of our wonderful teachers to Missouri.

My next-door neighbor, there was two teachers there as I grew up. Mama said that when I went to school, I was wanting to say Jerri, she said, “Carol, you can’t do that. You have to call her Miss Harmon.”

ES: Right.

CWC: But there was no celebration. I didn’t know. And my church, Reverend Brown¹, he was our pastor. There was nothing that I remember. So when the sixty-year anniversary folks were interviewing, I called several folks to ask them, “What do you remember?” “Nothing.” I asked Dr. Robert McFrazier from Oklahoma. He said when the decision was rendered, he said over the school intercom, there was jubilation and celebration. But here in Topeka because of the negative outcome for our educators, there was no celebration.

As a child because I’m one of those kids that went to Sunday school and church and I listened to sermons, and I don’t remember him saying anything. But when you stop and think about it, he was a man. He was the breadwinner of his family. He worked for Santa Fe. He had probably put his job on jeopardy. Maybe that’s why we didn’t have any celebration.

ES: I want you to tell the story. Again, we’re going to bounce around because I’m going to follow you on this, the fact that when you became the local school board president, didn’t you find an opportunity to celebrate that decision? I would like for you to share about again, even though you didn’t think that that life experience affected you, when you became the school board president, [Topeka Public Schools] what did you do to take advantage, to celebrate that decision?

CWC: Well, I tell you, there was a lot of things, and not even when I was president, but when I was first elected to the school board. I don’t know that this is something. I’ll go ahead and share, and then if you all decide—but in 1995 is when I was elected. Topeka Public Schools had built the three new schools, and then there was a campaign on how to name them.

So Carolyn Campbell being a new school board member, and I’m not going to name the board members because we really—I can get along with anybody. That’s the way I am. If I don’t care for you, I’m going to be cold. You’re going to know that, too. You’re going to know.

But there were two board members that wanted to be elected president that year. So guess what? We get all of these letters about who to name the schools after, and one was a doctor who’s now deceased. He was a pediatrician. I’ve got everything but his name coming to me, but anyway a wonderful doctor and just different people. But we had names like, one of the schools was Kay Meadows. Of course, she had earned her doctorate degree. Then there was Mamie Williams. She was the lady that told her kids to be a miracle. I think that’s wonderful.

ES: Isn’t that wonderful? Yes.

¹ The Reverend Oliver Brown who was serving his first term as pastor at St. Mark’s was the lead plaintiff, on behalf of his daughter Linda, in the lawsuit against the segregated schools of Topeka, Kansas. That case eventually became the landmark 1954 case *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, in which the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in public schools as “inherently unequal.”

CWC: And then the Scott magnet is named after the Scott brothers² that did the Brown v. Board deal. Well, so to get back to how these were named, they were trying, these two men were trying to get me to vote for them to be president. It was a tie. They needed a fourth person. So they let Carolyn Campbell decide how we would name the three schools. A lot of people don't know that. Mamie Williams Fine Arts Magnet, I wanted that one named where it is because Miss Mamie's house was just a block away.

ES: Right.

CWC: Scott, I knew Charles Scott, but he was like a son to Elijah. I thought those attorneys had brought Thurgood Marshall here and all, and I thought one should be named after him. And then the third one, Kay Meadows, years ago, way before then, she called me. She did not want to run again for re-election. She's another McKinley child. We grew up together. She called me, and she wanted me to run for the local school board.

At the time, my child, so that's been almost fifty years ago, was still young, and I was taking care of my mother and grandmother and working. I said, "No, I just can't do it." Years later, what happened? I follow into the district of hers. But with Kay, I wanted it where it is, but I wanted a school named after all of the Black mothers that saw potential in their children that either didn't know how to go about getting them to be as successful as they were. So in my mind and heart, Meadows Elementary is named Mothers, but mainly my black "*chirrens*" [children, as we used to say] that could have maybe been more successful and reached their potential had people wanted.

After I retired, I volunteered, and I loved Avondale East. That's where my child was educated. I volunteered in the Media Center, library. I don't like Media Center. Library. But when I was at Curtis Junior High, I worked in the library. When I was at Topeka High, which is a beautiful library, I worked there. I read all the time. But, anyway, I love books.

So where was I going with this?

ES: You're doing great.

CWC: I was at Avondale East one day, and this little boy, he's a mischievous little boy. As I checked him out at the library, I liked that because I could go, if I see you acting up, I'd go and say, "Straighten up."

ES: Right.

CWC: So he got sent to the principal's office. He's sitting there. So I was in there. The secretary says, "I don't understand him. I just don't understand that boy." And I said, "Well, do you ever talk to him? Do you ever get to know him?" Because I knew his grandparents were raising him. I don't know. I think his father was incarcerated, and I never did understand. I didn't ask about his mother. So he's being raised by his grandparents. We never know what a child is struggling with. So maybe he "*showed out*". But I liked the little bad thing. I think about him a lot of times

² Elijah and Charles Scott, lawyers representing the plaintiffs in Brown v Board of Education.

because I wonder because his grandparents have now—I used to sort of keep up with him and his sister, but his grandparents are now deceased.

I wonder about—there was another little boy, Mr. Winifred Tidwell. I don't know if you ever got to know him.

ES: No, I did not.

CWC: He was a wonderful principal. He was assigned to Avondale East, and again, I was in the library. I loved that room, and he brings this little boy in. He sits him there. It was just the two of us. I'm so silly, the old grandma church lady in me, because he was a cute little old thing. I decide—Mr. Tidwell has said, "Carolyn, don't, just leave him alone. Just sit him right there." Well, Carolyn—

ES: There was no chance for that to happen.

CWC: I guess not. So I'm going to make friends. I don't know. I still today can't remember exactly what he said to me, and I thought, "Oh, you're going to be that way again." "Okay, sit down," I went stern on him. Later, Mr. Tidwell said he had called some teacher everything but a child of God, but he didn't go that far with me. But it's just a matter that I try to see in every child and even in some adults, there's got to be a good something in that person.

ES: Well, your life experience led you to that. The thing I want to follow up on now and again switch gears a little bit is that you were with Southwestern Bell. What year brought you to what I called the legislative training job, and the number of people that you trained and supported?

CWC: I'll tell you what happened. In 1991, sometime in the middle of the year, there was five—Southwestern Bell is made up of five states. I served all of my career in the benefit office with different assignments. I retired as a manager of employee benefits where I handled all of the death cases.

I'd have to travel the state. Do you know where Geneseo is? I drove out there one day because the family wanted me to come. I ate lunch and came right back.

Anyway, I would go wherever I needed to go. I did that, and then I had the pre-retirement meetings. I conducted them. And then we had a contact program.

Anyway, in about the middle of 1991, Kansas was the most productive of the five states. Jokingly, I would say we're the ones that are going to close. Guess who the first state was that they closed?

ES: Kansas.

CWC: Kansas Benefit. So St. Louis, they came to us, and we could either transfer or we could retire. A Mr. Emil Lutz, do you remember him?

ES: I know the name.

CWC: I loved him. He was the legislative service director, and he was my contact, he said, “Now, Carolyn, I know it’s going to many a year before you retire, but when you retire, I want you to consider coming and working over here at the legislature.”

So with that, oh, lordy, I was like forty-nine. I thought, “Oh, my goodness. I’ve got to do something. I’ve got a kid going to college.” So that’s how I got to the legislature.

I was talking to someone recently. I think they changed the guidelines. When I started, you had to have an interview with the senator you were going to work for. So the senator, my first senator—

ES: That’s what I was going to, thank you.

CWC: My first love was Senator Bill Brady, Southeast Kansas, the 13th District. I know I made a lot of friends down in Parsons. So luckily I guess I made a good impression. He hired me. So we’re family now. He has a granddaughter that he’s doting over, he and Nancy. But we’re family.

I learned a lot. At that time, the offices were, the senator’s desk would be in this corner, and I was right there. You listen; you learn.

ES: You listen and learn. Okay.

CWC: And he valued my opinion on things. He would ask and that helps you to grow, too. And then some things he’d say, I guess I’ll say that, and that’s the one thing I’m proud of, the Kansas African American Affairs Commission, it started at historic St. Mark’s African Methodist Episcopal Church.

ES: Tell us more about that.

CWC: I don’t know if you were fortunate, Clyde Howard—

ES: I know the name.

CWC: He was the Direction of Administration with the state. He was reading something, I don’t know if he told it was Iowa or Ohio had a commission, and he thought, “Why not Kansas?”

So he started doing—we’ve had at least—I remember the first two meetings of organizing things was at our church. So then, of course, I don’t remember who wrote, I’m sure Clyde did most of the reading of that bill, House Bill 24 something. I’ve got it at home.

But, anyway, so he asked me to testify. When you work for the state of Kansas, which is another thing, they try to “psych you”. I was told that I could not testify because I was an employee for the legislature. So Senator Bill Brady, I told him, and he said, “You go ahead and testify. If

anyone says anything to you, you're on your lunch hour." And I said, "Thank you. I didn't think I should have to give up my rights as a citizen." So again there was Bill Brady, helping me and teaching me. [laughs]

It was very difficult. I can't remember who the House chair was, maybe somebody else might know back there, but the chairman, he was anti the bill. The other thing I want to say is, I remember that we already had a Hispanic Commission. So at the time, Senator Bill Brady, he said to me, he said, when I was talking about this, he said, "Well, you have the Hispanic? Why can't you two just merge?" And I said, "No, we have different issues."

ES: Right.

CWC: I said, "I understand we're both minorities, but we have different issues." I said, "No, we need our own." He said, "Oh." So I sort of educated him, and we talked about things.

I've been so fortunate that I worked for him, and then he left, and then I worked for Senator Don Biggs of Leavenworth. I love him. He represented Leavenworth, the 3rd District. So I got to know people there.

Then I worked in the House for two years.

ES: Oh, wow!

CWC: That was interesting. I loved—I say I worked for a lady and a clown. I worked for Representative Ruby Gilbert who I dearly love and Representative Eber Phelps. That's the one I would call the clown. He was such a hardworking representative. He served Hays well and everything.

Carolyn and Representative Phelps sometimes didn't get along because he wasn't used to someone—my opinion had always been valued with others. So I forget something, and I'd either write him out a note, especially about education, write out things, and I wouldn't waste his time. I'd just put it in his stack with his other things, and I found out he did not appreciate that. He came out one day and made fun of me that "She sneaks her thoughts in with my other messages."

Then one day I forgot again. You know, you forget when you get old. He came out. He was standing at my desk, and I said something, and he said, "Carolyn, I don't want a debate. I just want you to do it." And I thought, the light came on. I thought, "Oh, that's our problem."

So I started keeping my mouth shut. So then what does he do? He tells somebody, "She won't talk to me."

ES: Right.

CWC: But we were friends. We were okay. Up until when he was still in the thing, he'd still come over to my office and mess with me. I don't throw the coffee out early, and where his coffee would throw it out, he'd come over, "Do you got any coffee left?" "Yes, sir."

Then, of course, I worked with Senator [Rip] Gooch. I loved him. I love him. I still love him. Then, [Sen.] Donald Betts messed up a little bit, and I had to leave. I was working. I was on my third day of working, and Senator [Anthony] Hensley and Tim Graham come down to the office, and they say, “Carolyn, Don has hired someone in Wichita. You have to leave.” So I had to leave.

And I did not like that lady. I had to, and I won’t say her name. Afterwards, I’ll tell you. I did not like that lady. I was just stunned. I loved my job. I loved working there. I am so happy. I could do it forever. And I’m getting tired of people saying, “You still here? Are you going to retire?” I’ll retire when I have to.

So she comes in, and she comes in like—because I was stunned. So I’m trying to get my stuff and everything and get out of the way. And she comes in like, “You’re not gone yet?” So I struggled for a long time to be cordial to her. And then in the end, we talked, and then I realized her personality was so abrasive. But, anyway, I sort of felt sorry for her because she would share things with me about her family and all. But anyway I went off track a little bit, but you all can take that out.

ES: No, it’s all good.

CWC: So then since 2004, I have worked with Senator Hensley, and I really, you talk about me training. Well, they say that I’m an asset to the office, but I have learned so much being in the leadership’s office.

And now Senator [Dinah] Sykes. Now I’ve got a new district, District 21, I’m learning the people there.

ES: If I may jump in real quick, what of all those experiences, what were the key things that you picked up for yourself when you then moved to being one of them, an elected official, both at the local school board, and then when you transitioned to becoming part of the state school board.

CWC: Well, one thing I think I learned is I’m going to always try to do my best being dedicated, and I’m going to work hard and just whatever I can for the citizens and for the community and for the children. I’m just always going to do whatever is necessary.

That was the one thing, and I don’t know if this is the time to say it, but I’m going to say this.

ES: Please.

CWC: That I enjoyed, I loved the twelve years that I served on the local board because I could get in there. I’d go to the, I was more connected. When I was the eight years on the state board, I did not enjoy that as much because of the politics.

ES: Right.

CWC: You've got the infractions there and to try to make sure that you're doing the right thing for the kids. One thing I'll say, I'm a Christian. I believe in God. But I'm not going to let my religious beliefs come over and overshadow what is constitutionally right or what is best for our children and our state of Kansas as far as education. That was very interesting. I'll put it that way.

ES: Didn't you have an election? Was it your first run at the state school board or was it your second that that was sort of a central issue? How did you deal with that? Was that all about religion? Was there a racial component?

CWC: My first campaign, my opponent was a Christian conservative person. I tried, now it's coming back.

ES: I knew you'd get there.

CWC: I noticed in campaigning and going especially in Douglas County and everything how, what I want to say interesting and how that would come up. I had a response for that. The funny thing is, I don't know how funny it is, but I'm frugal. My family says I'm cheap, but first you've got to get a campaign photo. I liked this photo of mine, but it was taken at church, and it was in front of one of our beautiful stained glass windows. So that's the one I wanted.

That was my first campaign. I had a wonderful campaign manager. I wonder if you might think who it was? Bill Brady.

ES: That's awesome.

CWC: He didn't, but someone came into the office and said or had told him, "She doesn't know what she's doing. She's not going to get elected." He didn't say anything. Someone came into my office and said that to me and I thought, "That's okay. They don't know who I have helping me. I'm learning a whole lot how to work this and call time." I hated that.

ES: Right.

CWC: Asking for money. I think I got off track. Was there something I wanted to say? Oh, about the religion. So, anyway, [Jim] Deines, he was the one that was helping with our hand-out cards. He said, "I have another picture, but if you like this picture, go ahead and use it." And you could have been standing in a library.

But it was very interesting in Lawrence, especially with the young college students, I remember one time a young couple, and I handed him my card, and he looked at her. They looked at each other because they thought, "Church lady." I knew what they were saying. Then they started drilling me, and I answered. But that was the first campaign with the religion.

ES: Again, when I was doing a little bit of homework, where again knowing how devout your faith is, the notion of how you brought a balance to that conversation, and it was about the children as you said. It wasn't about your belief.

CWC: I remember there was a nice man from Osage County. There was something over at the Great Overland Train Station, and he had a booth. And so we were sort of next to each other, and we were talking. I told him, and he was saying that he, and I said I am too, but he wasn't running for the same office. We had a discussion. I said, "I'm never going to let my faith be a problem with how I'm going to serve as an elected official."

ES: I want to ask again as we're getting close, again we could talk all day, but what advice do you have for others who may be interested in serving their state, their local governments, and serving Kansans?

CWC: My first thing that I would always say to someone that you need to be involved, volunteering, whatever that case may be, going to school board meetings and just sitting there. I remember I was on the DCAC, the District Citizens Advisory Council, and I would have to be assigned to go and just observing, seeing what all it would take to be an elected official in any capacity. And going to NIAs, [neighborhood improvement associations] not thinking all of a sudden, "I don't like this." A whole lot of folks unfortunately have had a bad experience with their district, and they're just out to get rid of someone on the local boards, and to really, I'd say, what I'd want to say study, understand.

It was very interesting when the local board at first, some of my fellow board members, they didn't have a clue about parliamentary procedure. Well, I knew all that. Even in Sunday school, we did things. At church, we did things.

But being knowledgeable in how to run a meeting and volunteer whenever you can. That was the one thing, and I had forgotten our past Shawnee County treasurer, Mr. [Lawrence] Wilson, one day he says, "Carolyn, do you remember we served?" and he talked about this. I thought, "Oh, my goodness. It's not even in my resume" because I had forgotten all about it.

But this is the joke. I say, "When people would ask me to do something, I said yes." That helped me to get a broad knowledge about how things or what was needed in our community, and that just always being silly. I remember crying the first time that I applied for an expired term of one of the members at Topeka public schools, and it came down to another person and me. We were there until it was about 11:00, and here was politics playing into it. They tricked, and I won't say his name, but they were going to vote this way, and on the third time, they were going to switch and vote for me, and they didn't do that. They flipped and left him out. I remember standing in the parking lot just boo hooing, boo hooing. But I guess it just wasn't time for me.

So what happened was, don't make me mad. My mama used to say, she never, I can't remember how she said it just now, but the Scorpio in her, she'd get even. But what happened was I just, I said when Craig Grant came to the office, and that was like in '07 after I had left Topeka Public Schools, and he said, "Carolyn, you've been identified as someone that we want to run for State Board." I had never thought of that. So I said, "Well, I have to think about it."

So the first thing, two of the first people, I guess you know who I called.

ES: Bill Brady.

CWC: And of course, I asked Senator Hensley what did he think. Of course, he's always going to be supportive. But that's how I've just always, I didn't have sense. Now what I do if you call me now and if it's something I'm not interested in, I don't just say no. I'll say, "I can maybe help you find someone" if I have someone in mind that would be good to do it.

ES: But it was that permission. It was that asking and permission that kind of pushed you to that next level.

CWC: Yes.

ES: I wanted to finish with, and again I remember what you said before, that Topeka High was not as positive an experience as it could have been for you as a child. Think back and share with us as we wrap up what things were you able to bring to Topeka High as well as to Topeka public schools that you can look back and go, "I made a difference from the experiences that I had to try and leave it better than what I felt."

CWC: Hmm. I would say what I brought to Topeka High was I think maybe I would say a love of education and wanting to, when they looked at me, they knew that I was there to learn, and our friends who I associated with, I was in the orchestra. So I played the violin. I was in the Media Center. I loved that. And then to go all these years and then when I went to work for the legislature, my homeroom teacher, he was the doorman in the Senate. So he sort of remembered me, or he faked it. No, I'm sure he did.

I would just say that, that's an interesting question, I never thought about what did I give to Topeka High, but I'll say that in the end, just with you all interviewing me, I showed a positive lifestyle, a positive way of living and treating others, and the second floor was the floor for our black kids. That's where we ate lunch in the cafeteria, and then you went to the second floor just to have, to be with your friends. I have been a court-appointed special advocate, and my supervisor, a good friend, her name is Carol Wright.

One time we discovered that we graduated in 1960, that we were classmates. I've got to do it like she did because I just love it, "Well, Carolyn, I don't remember you." And I said, "Well, Carol, I don't remember you. Could it be because you're White and I'm Black, and we did not associate?" And she just said, "I guess so."

Just recently, I can't remember now, it was somebody White, and we were talking, but it was funny because they were faking it, but I thought, "Uh huh, you were afraid to come to the second floor with all of us," and we were just as innocent and harmless and just having fun.

ES: But to think that you had that experience, and then you became the member of the school board, ending up being the president of the board, to really make a difference for those students and that life and then being part of the State Board of Education as well.

CWC: And I'm so thankful because I've run into young people, "Miss Campbell, you don't remember me," and I thank God for what he's allowed me to do. I'm now the past, I was the first and I'm the past president of the National Federation of Urban Suburban School Districts, and I know that when they probably—I'm one that believes in always going to any kind of workshop, seminars, conferences because you learn. You can't just say, "Hey, I'm here. I know it all."

I was one of the few people in our USD 501 district, and at that time, the budget, we each had a budget. So I couldn't, I didn't have much money that I could go to these things. So I guess they'd always seen me there. So they asked me to serve as vice president and then to move up to president, and then I was on the CASA board, someone that don't know anything about sports. But I learned. I was appreciative of that. I learned a lot.

I would get in, I won't say I got in trouble. A lot of times when we had to vote on things, and there were hearings and appeals, quite often, Carolyn Campbell would—and I got the rulebook. I read. I studied. I know what the rule is. I know how I'm supposed to vote. I voted for the family, for that child. And I would explain it, I said, "Now you all know me." I knew I was going to be outnumbered. I think the child should have that chance, that opportunity.

So they got used to me. There was about three times when I should have voted one way, and I didn't. And they knew how I was going to do it. I'm proud that I knew that I always worked for the children, the family, and the staff. And I'm talking about the custodians, everybody. They loved the kids hopefully.

ES: And I think that's a great place for us to stop.

CWC: Okay.

ES: Thank you so much.

CWC: Thank you.

[End of File]