

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Freddie Pitcher

COLLECTION: 4700.1607

IDENTIFICATION: McKinley High graduate; Baton Rouge attorney

INTERVIEWERS: Nita Clark, Courtney Grimes, Nicholas Ng-A-Fook

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project – Social Organizations

INTERVIEW DATE: June 25, 2002

FOCUS DATES: 1950s-1960s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 3190, Side A

Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; April 28, 1945; grew up in Valley Park neighborhood of Baton Rouge; all the African American kids in his neighborhood attended McKinley; currently a partner at Phelps Dunbar law firm; in 1983, Pitcher was the first African American to be elected to a judgeship in Baton Rouge; served on district court; served on Louisiana First Circuit Court of Appeals; B.A. in Political Science and law degree both from Southern University; details of his continuing education; played football at McKinley; black-owned businesses that used to be on East Boulevard; “South Baton Rouge embraced the total gamut of the socioeconomic arena”; benefits of having people of diverse economic circumstances living together; Pitcher is involved with the Old McKinley Alumni Association, trying to raise funds to renovate old McKinley building; plans for a fundraising banquet; first African American public high school graduates came from McKinley; integration allowed wealthier African Americans to move out of South Baton Rouge community, leaving the poor behind; dissipation of African American businesses in area; hopes for revitalization through Local Initiatives Support Corporation(LISC); after taking IQ exam, Pitcher moved into higher achieving classroom in the tenth grade, vastly improving his academic performance; was an athlete and honor roll student; started college as architecture major, changed to political science; first integrated education experience at a summer program at Yale University; realized he could compete with anybody; drafted into Army; began master’s program at LSU; switched to law school at Southern; worked as federal aid coordinator for the city parish government; as assistant attorney general, prosecuted capital cases; set up law practice Pitcher, Tyson, Avery, and Cunningham; Tyson also became a judge; Pitcher was the first African American lawyer in the Baton Rouge office of Phelps Dunbar; Pitcher’s social, religious, cultural and professional affiliations; goals of McKinley High School Alumni Association; Alumni Association bought old school building, which was slated for demolition; barber and beauty college might move into remodeled building; plans to house a theater and museum in building; taking typing in high school proved useful in later life; Pitcher was the attorney who drafted the charter for alumni association; more on upcoming fundraising banquet; having to use back door of Piccadilly Cafeteria; two students shot at Southern while Pitcher was in law school;

describes perimeters of South Baton Rouge.

Tape 3190, Side B

Baton Rouge Bus Boycott; escorted off campus by security guards when attempting to register as undergraduate at LSU in 1962; now is on LSU law faculty; too many mediocre lawyers, but lots of room at the top for good ones; discrimination while working as a caddy; as a successful lawyer, satisfaction of buying golf clubs from a man who had discriminated against him when he was a caddy; living with everyday discrimination; but if you let it get to you, you will never achieve; relations between African Americans and police.

TAPES: 1 (T3190)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 57 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 22 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: None