Eleventh Session
June 17, 1999
TAPE XIX – part of
Side A and part of
Side B

JR    Well, good morning.
GW    Good morning.
JR    Here we are.
GW    We finally got here. [Laughter]
JR    [Laughter] When we last were together we were thinking a little bit about
individual staff members
GW    Umhu
JR    at Barclay and any other individuals who might have been important to you and to
Barclay at various points in your career there, and in your life. And as we’ve been
thinking – before we turned the tape on this morning – we came up with at least five
people that you wanted to say a little bit about,
GW    Right.
JR    beginning with Evelyn Wallace.
GW    Yes. Evelyn was the type of person who was always prepared every day and with
given a job she was gonna do it – well. And I used to pounce on her all the time for the
luncheons, when we had the appreciation luncheons. She’d get on people, but she was on
task. And she made sure that that luncheon was up to snuff. But above that, she was
willing to work with different teachers to improve the quality of that classroom. She
worked with Joyce, she worked with Jennifer, she worked with Trumelia, and then she
was willing to even move upstairs, to go and work with Chris, who was a new teacher
who needed to know everything from skill up, from zero up. And Evelyn made a
difference in that classroom. That classroom was just singing when she was there, 'cause
she knew how – she was quite artistic and she knew how to work with those children.
Work awhile and then do some activities. So it was – she was a plus the whole time that
she was there in the school.

JR One of the teachers that I know was every important to my son and to many
children who went through her classroom – though usually in the beginning they didn’t
believe that they would ever survive her –

GW [Chuckles]

JR was Mrs. Beneze, Mary Jane Beneze.

GW [Laughter] Mary Jane Beneze is a legend. Mary Jane Beneze was before her time
– and not before her time. But she had the secret of success. You’d get children in that
classroom who had difficulty from kindergarten up to third grade. And she worked on
them. And if they didn’t do their work they met her at 7:30 in the morning [Laughter]
there at the school. And sometimes the parents would get outraged. And a couple cases–
one time – what’s Peter’s mother’s name – Schultz?

JR Oh yes, Judy Schultz came down and she says “Ah! You have to do something to
that woman, with that woman. That Mary Jane Beneze!” So I said, “well, Ms. Beneze
does her job. Now would you like for me to take your son out of her classroom?” “No!
she’s a good teacher.” And then, of course, who is it Chip? He’s a lawyer—McCland.

They had this little girl.

JR Oh yes.

GW His name Chip? Yeh.
JR The whole McCloud family. There was Sarah McCloud and there was
GW Well, is that the brother? The one that had the little girl in there foreign girl?
She’s still downtown. He’s a lawyer. I have to think of his name. But he came up and
he wanted to direct Mrs. Beneze in how to teach. Well, I hit the second floor and he’s
going down the hall and Mary Jane Beneze is right behind him. [Laughter] But she
cared so much about those kids, children, and put thousands of dollars every year in
disadvantaged children in that school. She’s just a legend. She would have loved the
Calvert curriculum. Umhu.
JR Another stellar teacher – and my daughter would attest to her stellarness – was
Collette Crandall.
GW Yeh. Collette Crandall was gifted in working with gifted students and their
parents, because she was gifted herself. So she understood how they thought and
worked, and the kids just loved her. They learned. They were so excited to get to the
classroom. She had parent meetings, so parents were there to work and understand. We
just never had a GATE class that measured up to that afterwards. Collette really spoiled
you for other things. Super bright, with a little southern accent. But totally capable of
working with those students. Really was. Hated to lose her. Should not have lost her.
[Laughter]
JR And the two teachers who really pioneered the gifted program at Barclay and,
again, were very important to my Joe were Steve Alpern and Mary Ann Moxon.
GW That’s right. Mary Ann and Steve were teachers at that school, both very bright.
And when we got the gifted program we asked – I asked them – would they take the
gifted program, work with the children. Steve did – worked with science. And Mary
Ann with language and - language arts and foreign language. She taught French and Spanish to the children. But the two of them really made life great for those children who were gifted. The gifted children are children who really are denied their rights here in the system. But with those two, they really - the kids just loved them. It was so great to go in and watch them work with the children. And along with them we had another person to come in and work with the computers with -

JR    Mike Pitroff.

GW    Mike Pitroff. And Mike Pitroff really helped the children soar in computer education, 'cause they learned how to write pieces for the curriculum. Write curriculums for the computer. And so all of those children are extremely literate, and should be doing so well. Because by the time they got into seventh grade, was it eighth grade

JR    seventh

GW    seventh

JR    Yeh, I think it was seventh.

GW    I think it was seventh, because that's when we wrote the program for them.

JR    Right.

GW    And then the children moved on to - in fact they were so good, I think you went to a meeting, and people just did not believe they had written those programs. So I hope they all still stay with it.

JR    [Laughter]

GW    [Laughter]
JR Were there any individuals beyond the school – in the system, in the city, in your family – that were really key in helping you move in the directions you wanted to move and keep going?

GW Yeh, there were people in the city who worked with me. And I should be saying them off the top of my head. Emma Bright was one who really was so supportive of whatever I did. Betty Williams who just would drop a note and then would call when things would come up. Jo Ann Robinson who would get in the battles. The parents of Barclay all deserve—especially at that time when we really started looking at the curriculum and working through and battling for the Calvert curriculum. The parents – the group of parents – Jo Ann Robinson, Meg – Meg-

JR Megan Shook

GW Megan Shook.

JR the Gizas

GW Gizas; the

JR the Leonards

GW Huh?

JR Leonards

GW the Leonards, that’s right. Oh--

JR Katie Allen and

GW Katie Allen. And then the young lady from Richmond. She’s gone back. She had a son.

JR Oh, that’s right.

GW You remember, Pat – can’t think of her name.
JR  She was very important when we were fighting the Calvert thing. [Inaudible]

GW  Fighting the Calvert, for Calvert. I can’t think of Pat’s last name. I’ll think. But she was very good. And along with that, a parent and a staff member was Tanya Jackson, who was willing to put her nose on that line and battle on both sides to help to get the curriculum.

JR  We had Sharon Scott and Darice Claude.

GW  That’s right. Darice Claude.

JR  Melba Barrett

GW  That’s right. [Laughter] I saw Melba Barrett. So at that time you – then you had the Charles Village Association, where you had Trudy and my friend

JR  Wally Orlinsky

GW  Wally Orlinsky, who really believed in that program and who really stood up for it. And he still stands up for it. So you have – if I started naming people who really worked for us – and finally – we really wouldn’t have gotten it without the Mayor. Mayor Schmoke, finally, after realizing that we wouldn’t be battling and taking so much crud unless there was something there, finally stepped up and said that we could have the program. So he really was a plus.

JR  Another person who was there and who’s been there for the long haul and is still there, bless her soul, is Esther Bonnett.

GW  Oh, yes. Esther Bonnett’s been there since I started. And she started out working with Jennifer Kenney as an assistant and has found one way or the other — bringing materials and supplies; getting the slips from Giant so that we got computers and microphones from the amount — she put thousands of dollars
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GW cont'd  Esther Bonnett really – she just loved Barclay. And guess who came back yesterday, when I was over there?  The St. George's Garden Club!

JR  Oh, Jan mentioned to me they might come back. Isn't that wonderful.

GW  Yeh! They came back and they're going to work. See Barclay's a green school now.

JR  Great, great. Yes.

GW  And the work that had been going on.

JR  Right.

GW  so they're named a green school. So they're back on board.

JR  That's good.

GW  Cause they kept things now – the St. George's Garden Club kept our lawn looking like we were out in the – out near the White House or something [small laugh]

JR  [Laugh]

GW  And, but they put a lot of money into -- and most of those trees they planted that's on the grounds.

JR  That's wonderful. I always had the impression – looking again beyond the school in the school system – that John Gist was a

GW  Oh, yes!

JR  good supporter of Barclay.
GW  You’re right. And he died before his time. It was sad that he was sick. But John
Gist was a friend, he really was. He would come over and he would talk. He would let
me know when the waters were kind of rough. [Laughter] But he really believed in that
school. And he would – he was just a nice person. And before Alice messed up she was a
nice person.

JR  Alice Pinderhughes.

GW  Yeh. But then she started fearing for her job, I guess. Because then she stopped
keeping promises. You know, she used to keep promises. Over the years, to think of –
there’s so many people in my – Vic Cord who was the area executive officer who really ,
well, she got me there and she stuck with me.

JR  Uhuh; Uhuh.

GW  She did until she retired. But

JR  What about your niece, Joan, and her husband, Harley.

GW  Harley. And, yeh, and they have – Joan and Harley have really been there. My
family has basically been supportive of me. My mother and dad were very proud of me,
you know, and they were – my mother thought the President of the United States had
come up here and given me a medal.

JR  [Laughter]

GW  But they were very supportive of me. But Joan and Harley I could talk over
different situations, different problems. And the two of them being in education would
work through. And Saundra, my niece Saundra, [Laughter] she would call me

JR  [Laughter]
GW  but we would talk. Because there are several of them who have gone into – I have
another niece going into education now, who just graduated from the University of
Pennsylvania.
JR  The tradition goes on.
GW  Yeh. So they’ll still be working. But the family has been very supportive.
JR  And your friend, Clara?
GW  Clara Jones. [Laughter] Yeh. Clara’s been like a family away from the family.
When I’ve been sick and up there. But she’s been there. And I have a friend that we’ve
grown up – we’ve gone through the years from elementary school. I call her Cosy, but
her name is Eva Woodruff. But when you go down the line and think of the people who
have been very supportive, I’ve just been fortunate, you know. And as I say to people,
when they say, “how could you stay there that long?” And this community is as pro-
education community and that makes life better. You know, when you and some of the
parents would talk about certain things, you wouldn’t say, “I want you to do this or that.”
You’d say, “what can we do together.” And that made a difference. Where so often
people will sit on the back, sit back and say, and criticize and say, “well they didn’t do
this and this and that.” But they didn’t offer to do. And this community has been right at
any problem that we had at that school, they were right there. So we’ve really been
fortunate. And I’ve gotten along well. I fight with people.
GW  [Laughter] I do fight. Well basically when I’m in a fight, it’s for – it’s about
children. It usually is.
JR  Umhu
GW  It's about what they've done to or haven't done for—and I'm glad I'm out of the system now, because I'd be in another big fight.

JR  [Chuckle]

GW  Because I think what's happening now is atrocious. So I could run on and on about—

JR  Okay. We've touched the highlights.

GW  Highlights, yeh.

JR  Well, over all of the years that you were working there were times when you had personal losses.

GW  Right.

JR  the loss of your parents, your brothers, others that you were close to.

GW  Right.

JR  In your mother's final years you had increasing responsibilities to take care of her.

GW  Right.

JR  You underwent a couple of major surgeries, including brain surgery.

GW  Right.

JR  At times like that did your job—how did you feel about your job at times like that? Did it seem like something that was just one more damn thing that you didn't need, or

GW  That's true. I would get anxious. I would say, "Oh shucks, not now." You know. When something would come up, or I'd have to go in. And I've really been fortunate. I've been kind of free of—and when I go in the hospital it's a major surgery. [Laughter]

JR  [Laughter]
But you really—I worked up till the day before I—the day before I went in the hospital I was working over at the school, ‘cause something came up and I had to go over. Of course, my doctor said “You just compromise.” He said, “I know you were working, because,” he said, “I called you. [Laughter] So, but anyhow, but once, once I got into the hospital, then I wasn’t upset because I felt like everyone was going to carry on, you know. And when my mother died—which—and my father—I really didn’t think. I just thought of what I needed to do for them. And I knew that everyone back here would carry on.

JR: Umhu

GW: Well, I didn’t think it. I just knew it. You know, I think there’s something about that staff, where they may argue and fuss, but if something happens to someone, they’re there! And it’s

JR: So instead of being an extra burden at a time when you’re already burdened, having that connection to Barclay was

GW: It was wonderful!

JR: a resource?

GW: Right. Because there were times when I had to go up for my mother. And I couldn’t get back right away. Or I had to go up during the week. My mother’d call for something very important and I’d have to get on the road. I could call anyone and say, “Look, I’m going to be late getting back,” or “I have to stay. I’ll be back by the afternoon. Could you watch out?” And they would take care. And a lot of times I didn’t have assistants, but I knew that the—that it would go on. And then I would call you. And I’d know that you’d be there for them. And then when I didn’t have secretaries you
did my typing for me; and letters and things that I needed to get out, if I called you, you got it out. So it really— I think I was very lucky. [Laughter]

JR Well, this is the sixty-four thousand dollar question. If you could start over and write your own script for your life as an educator, would you make any major changes in it?

GW [Very long pause] I—— maybe somebody else would. I really—— No, I wouldn’t want to be in any other community. There’s some times wish that you pick your own staff and your own assistant and could really have — if you really had the right to educate the children the way that you chose, without interference. Well, with the Calvert we pretty well had some freedom. But you don’t get the money that you need. Outside of that — no, I wouldn’t want to be in any other community. I’ve said to my family and to other people, I would have gone if I hadn’t been in this community, because the community is so supportive and worked so well with me. And I feel so sorry about some people who really don’t have the community — well then they don’t work with the community, either. So many administrators are afraid to tell what’s happening — the truth of what’s happening. And that kind of frustrates parents and leaves them up the wall.

But no, if I went back piece by piece I would change some things.

JR Uhuh A little [inaudible]

GW ‘Cause you know, when I get mad I do crazy things.

JR [Laughter]

GW So piece by piece [Chuckle] I might make adjustments. But as far as
a whole matter—a whole life span—I've enjoyed my life: education, in the classroom, out of the classroom. The counseling—which helped me—counseling helped me as an administrator. So, it's, it's okay.

JR A while back when we were talking about the discrepancies between city-wide and local public high schools, you said that the main problem with the local schools that "we do not have a child-centered education system." What would be the key pieces of a child-centered education system?

GW In Baltimore City, from primary through? At the primary grades—Number one, you'd have a superintendent who would understand that you're—that the role of the principal, number one, is the educational leader. And so that superintendent would not bog people down with ten thousand papers and reports that they could pull up on their own computer—'cause they're right there in the computer. Number two, the selection of principals and supervisors and all would be different. It wouldn't be because you'd been in so many years or you knew someone. It would have to be because you knew what you were doing and would understand how, if a teacher really did not know how to teach reading, how to help that teacher develop reading. So you would have those supervisors and coordinators. At one time you used to have a whole team who would go to the schools if the school called. And that whole team would come in and work with that group of children—teachers. That's something that has been thrown away. The other thing is that through middle school, it would be middle school. Not renamed—junior high school renamed middle school. And they would have to change the way these schools are set up. They're still set up like junior high school. So it would mean that there'd have to be some tearing down of some buildings or rearranging something of
unless you can get the cooperation from the parents and get help from the system they’re not going to change.

JR  The school by itself can’t do everything.

GW  No it can’t. And that’s the – you need a counselor and a social work on board in every school. And one that works. Not a Miss P. [reference to a former Barclay counselor]. [Laughter] She’s still working you know.

JR  Yeh.

GW  which is sad.

JR  What haven’t we talked about that you might still want to say.

GW  I think being in education is one of the finest things you can – one of the finest professions that you can be in. And you can either have a rich life from it or you can become, you can be upset by it. I have had a rich life in education. I’ve battled.

[Laughter] I’ve gotten on people’s nerves. But most of all I’ve enjoyed every – from the time I started teaching to – I loved my counseling. But I think it all came together at Barclay. And I have a sense of ease now. That I left Barclay because I felt that I left with them with the secret of success, you know, with the ability to continue to succeed. And I miss the children. You know, I miss being around them. But most of all – what should I say – I still have an unrest for Baltimore City. I think it’s going in the wrong direction. And unless something happens – earthquake or something.

JR  [Laughter]

GW  [Laughter] They’re not going to see it. The leaders who can make a change, won’t. They keep bringing in people. I think Dr. Schiller would have, because he knows education. He has his ways. He had his ways, though. But he had to bite – you have to
bite the system and I think he had to. But he really knew quality education. So I don’t
know. I’ve enjoyed it. I met the comptroller—not the comptroller, the auditor—the
young man [chuckle] who came down to school when I was at a meeting. You remember
that day?
JR    Oh yeah.
GW    And I met him, and he said to me, “well I hope they will keep the school up.”
And that’s my hope—that it will continue to stay up. I see the little girl that’s coming in
for Jan. I hope she’s better than what she [inaudible] [Small laugh]
JR    They’ve already
GW    David has gotten the little girl. I think that’s the one who came in. ‘Cause he said
she was coming in that day. I think she’s the one. I just hope they keep it up. Because
the community deserves a school. And whether the parents send their children to Barclay
or not, it should be of the quality where they could if they wanted to. And that’s always
been the goal. And see some parents are always going to go to private school. And then
some are going to—But if they chose to go to their public school, it should be of that
quality.
JR    Well, we have about 19 hours worth of tape that over the next little while I will
transcribe.
GW    Okay.
JR    And as I transcribe it I will feed it to you, and we can start to highlight the parts
that we think that we want
GW    to include. Umhu

405
JR to include. And be thinking of things to scam it together and things we may want
to add

GW add to it. Right. 'Cause I have all of the papers. As you go through.

JR It'll take a while to transcribe.

GW I know.

JR But over time we will get it done.

GW We will get it done.

JR So on that note, with that promise, we'll turn this thing off.

GW All right.

END OF SESSION ELEVEN