Today is Tuesday, June 8, 1999, and Gertrude Williams and Jo Ann Robinson continue their review of the history of Barclay.

Well, good morning.

Good morning.

Here we are again, up to the end of the spring of '96 and going into that next fall – the school year of '96-'97.

Right.

In that school year the state started out on a positive note as far as Barclay was concerned, and informed you that Barclay was one of the "most improved schools" as far as the state assessment test – the MSPAP –

Umhu.

was concerned. The scores for '94-'95 were the basis of that.

Right.

And you got to go to a ceremony and you got a cash award. And this, as I recall – tell me if I'm correct – was for the middle school scores, wasn't it?

Middle School and third grade.

Okay. So both.

Yeah.
JR    Alright. Were the middle school teachers doing more about MSPAP than the lower grades, where the Calvert program was the focus?

GW    I think so. I think they were being more consistent along that line. They hadn’t started in the Calvert curriculum. But they were more consistent. Plus, you have children who are more mature——

JR    Umhu

GW    and who could grasp and understand, because they’ve had those experiences, who are more mature than third and fifth grade children. So

JR    But even so our third grade children had done pretty well too.

GW    had done well. But what happened: the eighth grade students at Barclay had always been at the top of the city in all the tests. And so they continued with that, with the MSPAP. And I think that they discussed with other teachers in other schools some plans and things they were doing, but the kids – and that was a good crop of kids – who were in – “crop of kids”: I sound like my parents.

JR    [Laughter]

GW    But that was a good group who were going through then in there. Yeah.

JR    Okay. Now this is as good a point as any to kind of look at kind of the larger picture of what was going on. Walter Amrey was still superintendent.

GW    Right.

JR    But he was losing support steadily as far as the public was concerned. He had brought in a privatization program – the EIA firm——

GW    Right.
JR with its Tesseract Program. And it had promised the world, and it delivered very little. And a couple of city schools which had been highly praised for performing so well on MSPAP — it turned out there’d been cheating —

GW That’s true.

JR on the way that test had been — the way the students had been prepped for the test.

GW Prepped. Yeah.

JR So when we did have budget problems and some of the problems that are coming along here in the future that we’re going to talk about in a minute — we weren’t the only ones that were having trials and tribulations.

GW No. Right.

JR Was that fact any comfort to you [Laughter] when you were in the middle of —

GW Well, no. Because at that time we had really — we were still getting Abell Foundation money. And what was terrible was: they were taking the money that was due us — the regular amount; even the little amount that was due, they were taking it back in a manner of — one time it was like 200 children less than what we had in the school. So, no. I was angry about that. Because there was — where everyone was being cheated like that — we would be getting a double whammy.

JR When we — before we turned the tape recorder on this morning, we were laughing about a couple of snapshots I came across of you sweeping the floor.

GW [Laughter] Right.

JR And this was when they had cut the custodial budget, as I recall.

GW That’s right.
JR  And we couldn't keep the school clean unless you picked up the mop and went
after it. So, as I recall, we got that money back—

GW  Right.

JR  after pictures of you mopping the floor appeared in the newspaper. [Laughter]
But it was—

GW  [Laughter] Well, and then what happened at that time, when parents found out
what was happening, our parents would rear up and go after it, where some didn't.

JR  And again, as we were talking before we turned the tape recorder on, there was a
-- well, it's part of a long tradition of Barclay -- but if an administrator is honest with
parents and open and allows them to know what the problems are, then the parents will
rally around.

GW  That is so true!

JR  But if the administrator just keeps it all to himself and is fearful of rocking the
boat, then the parents don't know what to do.

GW  That's true. I think that there were two factors -- that administrators were afraid
for their jobs. And then administrators were afraid to give up some power to the parents.
So then you had two bad things. Because then the city took advantage of that. Because
they knew that the parents would not, would not come down there. And it was stupid.
It's still stupid. It's still going on. Because of some of the tactics that went on last year,
the principals this year are even afraid of telling that the air conditioners were cut off. So
it's sad.

JR  Well, when you got the enrollment projections for the '97-'98 school year, again
the system was projecting lower than we knew we were going to have. And again the
budget came through short. And again there was a need for the parents to protest. Do you think this kept happening at Barclay because the higher powers were trying to make a statement about Barclay or was this something that they were just doing to all the schools, and we were just part of the same thing?

GW  [Deep breath] Well, you know there was a consistent resentment toward Barclay because of the parents and the staff daring to go outside of the system to bring in a program, and the fact that parents always got into it. So there was fear down there. But there was still that kind of resentment. So whenever we would protest something, it was like “Trudy, you get so much more.” And it would come — “you can’t have everything you want.” I mean, that kind of sarcastic something, instead of saying “I just want my fair deal; I don’t want any more ; I don’t want any less. I want our fair share. And what you’re doing is so unfair.” Which was proven in two cases, with Mary Nicollson and Judson Porter, where they not only cut us back, but they gave us less per pupil, which was totally unfair. And then --

JR  They finally had to admit it.

GW  They finally had to admit it. But that was because of parents doing their homework, getting the things together and -- in fact they admitted more than we had presented [Laughter]. Which was a reason for Judson to be put back. You know, he never moved up. I think he’s out of the city now, isn’t he?

JR  I don’t know. I haven’t —

GW  I haven’t heard about him at all for awhile. I’ll find out. But he lost his—

JR  This is Judson Porter—

GW  Judson Porter
JR who was the head of the Finance division of the school system that we're talking about.

GW Right. And then Les was put out, and he did the same thing – Les Linder [Linnenberg??] did the exact same thing. And I think we -- a group of us met with him.

JR Yes

GW and Ellen

JR Yes

GW Gonzales, who was the area executive officer. And she was saying “this is wrong, Les; you know it. And every year we have to go back over this same thing.” And he wouldn’t budge. But then when we got money back, we were supposed to get a hundred and forty some thousand, and we got like forty seven thousand, which was like they never gave us what was due.

JR What we should have gotten back, yeah. Well, in the 1997-98 school year, after the previous year – your getting to go to the ceremony and be praised for doing so well on MSPAP --

GW Umhu

JR In the next year, the '97-'98 school year, Barclay was declared reconstitution-eligible.

GW But I still got an award that year – the same – I got an award in November.

JR Okay.

GW I got it. It was up on the board. The same year.

JR A certificate.
GW  A certificate for being in a high performing – and then in the spring we were
declared. And that. We were declared constitutional—

JR  eligible

GW  eligible. Yeah. Now that came with a lot of things. The state superintendent – I
talked with her and her assistant. And she said that it should not have happened. That
Barclay should not – because we had been a high performing school

JR  So this was Nancy Grasmick telling you that

GW  Nancy Grasmick, yeah. Had said that—

JR  When she said it shouldn't have happened, did she mean--

GW  She means by talking --

JR  they shouldn't have put us on the list or we shouldn't have dropped down--

GW  No--

JR  the way we did?

GW  She said that by our school always being in the upper program. What do you call
that? I don't mean upper program.

JR  Quadrant?

GW  Yeah.

JR  Percentile?

GW  High performing, they call the schools. That with everything else being high, that
there had to be something wrong with that sudden drop. And she had spoken to the
superintendent, who was Dr.—

JR  Schiller
GW    Schiller, and he refused to. He had a window of three weeks. What’s his name?
Dr. ----can’t think of Dr. Grasmick’s assistant. I’ll think of his name. But he said there
are three weeks in between where the widow is open, and that some state superintendents
would – if there was a question of why a school would drop –

JR    [Sound of shuffling papers] Pfeiffer.

GW    Yeah, Pfeiffer. And he said that there was a reason why you check it. Because
for a school to drop suddenly like that.

GW    And when I was telling him, he said, “I would know.” He said, “You’d have to
know something was wrong.” That’s the year that all the middle school people were out.
And they dropped from high to down to like a [inaudible] point. Something like that.
Seriously dropped.

JR    Umhu. Serious drop.

GW    And the only one that didn’t drop. But it was so below. The fifth and the eighth
dropped. And the fifth – we had that – what was that teacher who was so sick and I
couldn’t get her out until the end of that year – you remember? Very thin. I had her on
the sixth grade, up in middle school. It was so horrible, I brought her down to fifth to try.

JR    I do remember. But I can’t remember her name.

GW    I’ll think of her name. But. And see, so Miss Harper came in like three weeks
before the MSPAP test was to be given. So here were these children – a whole class of
children – with someone who was not even teaching them. But it happened. And
everything happens for a reason.
JR  As you've mentioned, by this time Amprey is out and Dr. Schiller has been
brought in, and he did have the option -- as you just said -- to question Barclay's inclusion
on it and to talk to you and he chose not to do any of those things.

GW  Right. To see what happened.

JR  And even let you know that it was coming down the pike.

GW  Well, and he could have held it up.

JR  Umhu

GW  To wait for the next year's test, which went up.

JR  Right.

GW  Could have --

JR  Why do you think Schiller took that course of action rather than working with
you.

GW  Well, I don't know. Because later on he would talk to me. He was very proud of
Barclay. He met with Merrill Hall, the headmaster of Calvert, to try to get him to have
more schools to do that way. I -- I -- I guess he felt he was in there as in interim and he
wasn't going to make any adjustments. Although he did --

JR  Umhu

GW  Later on. I don't know whether [inaudible] or not. But he did, later on, make
adjustments for the school.

JR  Do you remember how you felt when you first got the notice from Ellen that you
were going on -- that the Barclay was going on -- the reconstitution eligible list.

GW  Oh, I - I felt -- it was awful! Well, Ellen called, and Ellen was upset. And she
said, "Trudy..." 'Cause she had said to me, "it's no way you would drop." She said --
when we had had our meeting — "it's no way you would have dropped," she said, "because your scores have been too high. It's no way." Because I had had my conference with her and all. But she called and she said, "Trudy, I want you to sit down." And she said, "I have some bad news." So I thought, "Oh, somebody's sick or something happened, or she's got a call." And she said, "you dropped by two points into reconstitution eligible." She said, "now I have to tell you," she said, "I have been down there fighting, because you — your school has kept us up in the" — you know. And she said, so I .... I said, [very soft voice] "well why?" So she said, "I don't know." She said, "I do know that I did see it, and your school fell two points underneath the cut-off point. And," she said, "a lot of schools fell." And I said [again the soft voice] "but this is the first time." And she says, "I know, but they did something differently this year. And they usually look to see whether or not a person fell below a line before." Which did happen. There were some others there who had fallen. But anyhow, I felt terrible, because I was leaving—

JR    Umhu

GW    you see. And I just hated to leave the school in a rut, you know, like that.

JR    A minute ago you said that everything happens for a purpose, or something like that. As you look at it from a little distance now, what are your thoughts about —

GW    Oh, I - I think that some of the staff had — because the elementary didn’t have to drop—the third graders, they didn’t drop, they really didn’t. But sometimes you can get so cocky, you know, and I think some of the staff just felt that they were just always going to be on the top because they were Barclay, you know? And I think — well they
picked themselves up and got busy and pulled the scores up. Like Dr. Grasmick said,

"Well that was the greatest jump that we've had," she said, [mimicking high voice] "see, it shouldn't a happened!" You know. [Chuckle] But it was a great jump, and she was so excited when –

JR So this is the next year now, that

GW This is the next year. And so if that – although I saw her, and David said that the lady who came to the school told him too that if they stay up this year that they're one of the schools that they would take off the list.

JR Would move off the list. That would be a great relief if that would happen.

GW Yeah.

JR Well you just mentioned this school year that we're talking about now, the '97-'98 school year, was the year that you announced that you would be retiring in July. How did you come to that decision at that time.

GW Well, everyone knows when it's time.

JR Umhu.

GW And I — I was — when I had the tumor the year before I had a lot of time to think about it, and I really was tired. So I was sorry I had — when I found out that the kids were — but I knew I had that year to bring them up, so that they would be able to come up. But I was tired, and I knew it was time. I knew it was time for someone to come and I had been working with people and hopefully that they would be on task.

JR Umhu. And the two people that you were working with were David

GW David Clapp

JR Clapp and Truemella Horne.
GW  Right.

JR  And what kinds of things were you doing to try to—

GW  They became administrative assistants. And they were trained in everything about running the school, in budget – well David took part of more. Both of them were asked to participate in it. But David learned how to do the budget. That’s why he does the budget so well. And we both learned great budgeting through Abell Foundation. Sita Culman brought in her accountant and showed us how we could really cut corners. And they did everything I did. And I would get on them when they didn’t do things as they should. So they were held accountable for everything – even going to meetings, going to Board meetings,

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START OF SIDE B- TAPE XVI

[A few words cut off ]

JR  basically were initiated into all of the administrative aspects of the school.

GW  Yes.

JR  And as it turned out then, both of them became candidates when the people were interviewed for your replacement.

GW  Right. Right.

JR  And David was appointed as—

GW  Well, you all interviewed and then sent to Dr. Schiller.

JR  Yes, yes.
GW And you chose three people.

JR Yes.

GW And the – what were they— who were they?

JR David, and Truemella and a third woman who was new to us—

GW new to us, yeah

JR but who had been an assistant principal in the system for a good while.

GW And all three names were sent to Dr. Schiller.

JR Yes. Yeah, we were told that we couldn’t prioritize. We could only select three and that we needed to be comfortable that any one of the three would - could do the job.

GW Could be principal.

JR Unhu.

GW And see, that’s the – and by them – Dr. Schiller knew David. Because David – when he came in the school to visit the Calvert program I had called for Truemella – well that needs to be stricken – but David was the only one who came and met him and talked to him about what he was doing. He went to Board meetings on a regular basis, whether I went or not, and he met with Ellen. He was at the meetings with Ellen. He would be at the – he would go to a number of the meetings where all three of us were supposed to go.

And so it – he knew David, see. And I think that’s why –

JR That’s why he appointed him over the other two.

GW ‘Cause, But I have to tell you he called me and when he said he was going to – I think I told you –

JR No, I’m not sure. Go ahead.
GW  He said that he thought that David would work hard to keep up the school. He had watched him and he felt that he would make an excellent principal and he'd work hard.

JR  Umhu. So

GW  And that's how he was selected.

JR  So, from that standpoint then, you could feel that you were leaving the school in the hands of someone who knew the school well and that you knew well and

GW  That's true

JR  that you had some trust in.

GW  That's right. And who would be open – who knew the Calvert curriculum. That was another point that Dr. Schiller – but who also would be open to the community and to whatever suggestions we might have that would keep the program going on.

JR  Well, as of this moment, what are the positives and are there any negatives so far in adjusting to retirement and being -- quote unquote—“retired”?  

GW  I enjoy retirement, because I can say “no,” sometimes. But then I stay busy, which I guess is a plus, because some people retire and become a recluse. But I work at the school sometimes when I'm called. I'm free to travel. You miss some things that you used to do. But you don't miss the regiment, like going to meetings that I hated, because most of them were -- even getting the car and burning the gas to get to the meetings.

JR  These were administrative meetings?

GW  Administrative meetings. Now you would go to meetings to be insulted, you know?
JR  Umhu.

GW  But I still think about how I can do things to help those children, because they
need it, and to boost up David, because it's a new year, and I told him I'd have his back.

JR  [Laughter]

GW  So - and David works very hard and he has passed the state wide test, you know.

JR  Good. Because now he's named interim principal, isn't he?

GW  He's now interim. And that would be until the test was taken, so this year coming
in he would be named full

JR  principal.

GW  And he was named full principal in the beginning, but because the young lady
became angry

JR  the third person that was recommended

GW  third person and been recommended. And while Dr. Schiller was here she could
not. Because he stated, it was his choice. He had all three. She had received the same
consideration but when Dr. Schiller left then she put in a suit with Dr. Booker, who did
deny her. And then the union sent David a letter. And -- which I said, "well David, I'll
go down with you if you have to go." And he said, "No, I'll handle it," he said, "because
I really didn't do anything wrong. I was selected. I asked for it."

JR  I guess the technical problem had to do with the fact that he hadn't come up
through the ranks the way a person usually does.

GW  Right. But then a lot of other administrators who came in hadn't come up through
the ranks--

JR  Right.
Including the superintendent of schools. So, you know, that's another tech.

Right.

You have to look at the whole spectrum. But anyhow Dr. Schiller, I mean Dr. Booker, one night at Board meeting had said, "how's the young man doing?" I said, "fine" and so he said, "there's some people growling." And then he called and wanted - at first they wanted - first they wanted for him to accept "assistant principal in charge."

Right.

And he said, "No, I will not accept that." And Dr. Booker said, "good."

[Laughter]

And so named him interim principal.

Well, a lot of the publications about education these days - *Education Week* and other journals - keep noting that there's a real shortage developing for principals in public schools in the United States. It appears that the job of principal now is rarely attracting really talented and dedicated people such as you have been. Do you agree that that's probably so and if so, why do you think that's so?

Yes, it's true, and you're having teachers leave large cities, too. First thing - the first - first of all, you're not treated as a professional. You are treated as a dim wit who must be preached to and talked down. The second, there's not that room for creativity. If you are creative you have to battle, and you have to battle for years. But the third thing, you're not being paid the salary that is comparable to other professionals. And that's
something that educators are going to have to battle for and make people see. And that's a battle I'd like to take on – to deal with that. Because it's *so totally* unfair.

**JR** We talk a good talk about how important our children are.

**GW** Right!

**JR** But when it comes to paying the people who spend the most time working with them

**GW** Right!

**JR** we don't-

**GW** We don't. And they get what they pay for, you know. They don't want to pay the teachers anything. And they never say anything nicely about them. They bring in the new teachers and wine and dine them [small laugh] to get them there. But they leave afterwards because of the stress in the city. And the other thing – there are a lot of other things that come up that could be handled better. Children who have serious, serious difficulty staying in the classroom, who are so destructive that the teacher gives one-tenth of the time in teaching. And there needs to be something done about the disruptive child. Not meaning to be thrown in the street. But another type of education. I remember in Philadelphia, they used to come in the evening, starting from two to something. And it was mandatory. Not two – five to something. I think it was like five to seven or five to eight. And the parents we accountable for picking them up and bringing them there. And if the parents didn't do it, then the parents were locked up.

So there had to be some type of structure that would say, "they're going to learn." But not at the cost of the children who come in and work and do the best that they can. So
it's really -- there are a lot of serious problems. But that's one of the greatest problems in education.

JR  It sometimes seemed to me as I volunteered at Barclay over the years that your position as principal could become extremely lonely. You had sounding boards. Sometimes I played that role.

GW  Umhu.

JR  You had assistant principals.

GW  Umhu

JR  You had good friends. You had a supporting family. And you used all of those resources.

GW  Right.

JR  And you turned to those people. But there were times when it seemed like you felt you couldn't turn to any of 'em, and that you really were alone. Is that an accurate observation?

GW  Right. Administrators -- you know, David already has seen that -- you know, that you really on some decisions that you have to make -- you really are lonely. You know, it becomes lonely at the top. It's true. And you're really not at the top, because you're really not the final decision-maker, and in some places the superintendent is wise enough to free the hands of the principals, but also give them room to -- you know -- but also monitor them. But free them to make decisions, you know? I used to make decisions and I'd fight for it. But the point of it is, you shouldn't have to battle for a decision that would help the children, you know? But it is lonely at the top. And, it's not bad, because
you can go on, but for some people, they can’t handle it, you know. And it got on me sometimes, you know.

JR What kind of strategies would you recommend to somebody like David or somebody coming in at this point, to deal with that aspect of the job?

GW Well, he – which is true – he has said to me, “you lose a lot of your other buddies that you used to [inaudible].” Because they don’t think on the same realm. He’s had a double whammy. Because there’s been resentment built up in the city, you know, about him. He’s a little charm boy that was selected personally by me – which is not true.

Trueemella—I made her go to the same amount of meetings, administrative meetings, as he went to. But she would sit over with Verna and that little group, and giggle. And he would be always there taking notes, being involved in, and dealing with. And Ellen got to know him. Ellen has – but he still needs other friends. And I told him – you know, at one time he had just started not going out at all – just going home. And he needs, you need another life, if you’re in charge. You need another life that cuts you away from all that, you know, and just free your mind up. So, he’s trying, but it’s hard when you

JR It isn’t easy.

GW It isn’t easy. You have so much work.

JR Well, over the years that you were at Barclay there were somewhere in the vicinity of 13 assistant principals. Made a list of the ones that I can trace: Kavanaugh, Nolert, Ozzie Jones, Bernie Smith, Sasadek, Cothorne, Husted, Chase, Johnson, Carr, Pearson, Mitchell. And then there were periods when you didn’t have an assistant principal at all.

GW Right.
JR  Why did there appear to be such a revolving door where the assistant principal was concerned?

GW  Well, over half of those were promoted to principal. And several of those were not qualified to be principals, and I recommended that they not be principals.

JR  Were they qualified to be assistant principals?

GW  No. They weren’t qualified to be administrators at all. I recommended that. But the system would move them to other places, you know. You remember I kept the documentation on Carr. I never knew she was that ill. ‘Cause she was odd and strange but then they moved her to some -- I forgot what other school – up to Pimlico, out in the portables. And the principal there called me and asked what to do. I said I have all this documentation, if you want it. But they wouldn’t let me use it. But she died while she was up there with them. If a person is -- with the number of years I’ve been there, you know, in there -- But if a person – I was assistant principal for four years, right. But if a person – some people come in who are outstanding and who are ready to go on. And some need a longer time, you know?

JR  How key a position – how important a position—is the assistant principal?

GW  It’s very important.

JR  In what way?

GW  Because they really are in charge when the principal is not there. And they need to know everything that the principals know, because they couldn’t operate. You know, they need to be willing to learn, creative themselves, come up with different plans, be able to relate to children and adults, relate to parents, to [pause] just have backbone, to have professional [inaudible]. You know, you can’t gossip about staff; you can’t say
ugly things to people, and it's extremely important. Because they really are a co-worker with the principal. And those are the people who become principals, you know? And it's — even though David did not, and Truemella, did not have a year in another school or go through — and that had been cut out, the system that they went through. They still went through all of that there at the school. And so — and were rated on that, just like they would be rated somewhere else.

JR Can an assistant principal undermine a principal?

GW Oh, very much. And that happens. And a principal has to be very attuned to that. You need to free a person up to be creative, but not to do some of the things I see being done now. They can easily do that. So a principal has to monitor and be careful, and also be able to relate to others.

JR It sounds like a really egg shell kind of situation for the principal, because on the one hand, you have to have a partner and you want that kind of partner relationship; on the other hand, this is the closest way to getting stabbed in the back [inaudible]

GW Well, that's true. But I've had — like Joyce and some others — Joyce was like a partner. You worked together. You had Bill Nolert — taught me how, a lot. Because he had been in there as the acting principal when the principal had been moved out of his school. So he taught me — so when he was brought over there, he helped me a lot. And — but you have to have a person who is professional; who want to learn everything you know, plus. And yet not try to belittle you. And that happens with some assistants. And it's sad.

JR Well, when I was, quote unquote, what the Sun would call the "public school activist" —
GW  [Laughter] Right.

JR  one of the things – one of the hobby horses I rode was this notion of “school based management” and “shared management”, as some people called it.

GW  Right.

JR  When Mrs. Pinderhughes was superintendent she set up a task force and I co-chaired it on school based management. Under Hunter the union and the BUILD organization pushed their version of a school based management plan through the school board. Dr. Amprey talked as though he were promoting something like school based management in some of the things he said. To begin with, what do you think that phrase means? And secondly, to what degree have we ever had it in the Baltimore system?

GW  We really never really had in the Baltimore school system. Because school based management means that – to me – would mean that the principal would be freed up to manage her school; would be given a certain budget – and that’s it – but a fair budget based on – not the number of children you would have in your school. Because if you had half of those children you’d still do the same thing. But to be given a budget and to be able to deal with that budget. So you get the most for every child in that school. And to be able just to run the school. ‘Course you would have to report to the superintendent. You would have to keep your documents and things to document—which you have to do anyhow, without the freedom to do. If you have school based management, you should be able to set up a scheme of how [inaudible], along with your assistant, and your staff and parents. [dog barks; interruption while JR deals with the dog]. Right now, you decide that – take example, Rescheduled Week—

JR  Okay.
GW --which they messed up. Children get more time than when they go into a regular week.

JR This was a thing that we devised years ago

GW ago

JR where you shorten the periods and the lunch period a little bit

GW Right.

JR in order to free up the afternoon once a week—

GW once a week

JR Wednesday afternoon

GW Right. And where children would leave at 12 and that students – that teachers and the administrators then could work together. And there would be times when you would work together with the administrator. But there would be times when you would have workshops, parent visitation – everything, instead of keeping teachers til midnight. Some teachers get out six and seven o’clock.

JR So this would be the kind of decision that under school based management the principal should be free to –

GW And that’s right. And the other thing is—when something is designed that works well, before it becomes a mass–something, then the people at the top should find out exactly how it works. Instead of— they made a rescheduled day and didn’t take into consideration the time that the children were missing. When we had a rescheduled week, there were different little things like that, that would help the school and move it better.

JR Are you implying that the BTU plan and all of the hullabaloo about having shared management – that the school system said it did try – never really –
GW  No! It never worked, and we met and we talked about it. We even met with Amprey, who made it worse than what [chuckle] had started out. And we met with him. And he just resented it. Just like our gifted and talented program. He just — well he had torn it down for most schools, but nine of us kept it. Mt. Washington, Mt. Royal, Roland Park — I can’t think of the others right now. But nine of us were called in. And told us we were trying to be — made elitist. Well, when the superintendent in a school does not understand the role of the gifted program in every school, then there’s a problem. So you don’t have — you know. So we get three quarters of a position. So it’s rather sad, you know?

JR  But you think that if — if by some waving of some magic wand a system could put into place a genuine school based management model, that that would be a positive step —

GW  Oh sure! You could see such an improvement in the schools. Because, number one, you then make the principals the accountable for what they do. Right now we’re accountable for carrying out what they tell us to do. But then, you make them professionals, and they’re held accountable for that. You cannot — they do it, but legally they’re wrong — because you hold administrators, school-based administrators, accountable for the mistakes that they make at the top. And rain it down on these children. And having every kid in the same book, no matter what their level of reading, on the same page — that is criminal. But that’s what’s happening now. And so, there’s no school-based management. In fact there’s no educational management, you know, in a lot of these systems. You have people who — now I give Dr. Schiller credit for knowing education and started pulling down those class sizes and giving additional money to help.
And that’s how we helped them pull up, too, last year. The additional money that was
given for people helped to get that transition class going again and having those children
who come in new to get this additional help that they needed. And I don’t know whether
they have it in the budget or not this year. I need to ask David. But those are the things
that were positive.

JR    It sounds like we’re in kind of a vicious cycle. You talked about how the salary
and the professional benefits of being an educator are very minimal and becoming more
minimal, which means that the people who end up managing schools and educating in
schools—

GW    Umhu

JR    aren’t probably the most talented people any more.

GW    Thank you.

JR    And that then takes away from any hope that something like a school-based
management system, that relies very much on a creative, responsible, reliable staff in the
school, could work

GW    Right.

JR    And so the legislators and the others say, “well we can’t trust the principal and the
teachers to make their own decisions. We have to make sure that at 12 o’clock
everybody’s doing the same thing and that at one o’clock they move to the next thing.”

END OF TAPE XVI- SIDE B

START OF TAPE XVII- SIDE A

JR    [beginning of sentence not recorded] vicious cycle.
GW That's true. And then where you have the wealthy counties, where their children do better, you have administrators paid closely to where you would – the salary where you would get other professionals. And so, it's rather, it's rather sad.

JR Well, there are – the public schools – are constantly under scrutiny and the cause of all kinds of discussions all the time. And there are issues that keep coming up all the time. And I made a list of things to just kind of pick your brain about.

GW Okay.

JR One of the things that is on everybody's mind, particularly in the last few weeks after that horrible tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado——

GW Right.

JR is safety and discipline in public schools.

GW Right.

JR From your experience, what are your broad thoughts on that? [unexplained background noise: high pitched, like a whistle]

GW I think that some of the things happen in some of the schools because principals sit in their office and aren't aware of what's going on around in the school. I remember when we started the middle school. And I wasn't as aware of that age group as I should be. And that's when I used to have the rap sessions and learned about children, learned the way they thought, and – But once you become partners – and I don't mean at the level of them— but talk with them, get—they know that you're there for them. I used to have a box on my door where they could drop notes if they needed to come and talk to me. And I always kept their discussion confidential, unless it meant that it was life-threatening. So when things would come up, children would find a way to come to me and say, 'you
know so and so has such and such up in his locker.” Or “so and so has this in the back pocket.” So you really – so I was able to get—catch on to things like that. But then there were children who were what you’d call odd balls—who did not relate with other children. And I made it my business to get the counselor to work with – or the social worker to work with that child. Because those are the children who usually in the end explode. But children should be free to talk about – should be given time – I said to David it would be good if he started some of those rap sessions because then he would learn. He has a good relation—reppart, rapport, rapport with those middle school students and the lower school. ‘Cause he does. He started that early on, talking with them. And they do come to him and talk. But as the principal now, his time is shortened. So I think each principal has to find a way to get to know his or her children.

JR Did you find, over the years, that the whole issue of discipline and safety became more complicated and more pressing.

GW I think it became – now when I started—[unexplained background noise ends]

When I started at Barclay it wasn’t the children, it was that the families, the parents, were alienated from the school. So I went out into the community and just met the parents, had different workshops, talked about things, set up workshops where they would know certain things, if their children were handling things this way or that, that you needed help. Had, from – Oh, I’ll think of the hospital, where they came and talked about how your stresses—

JR Shepherd Pratt?

GW Shepherd Pratt. And things like that. So you had – that’s how I got the parents in and who would be willing— ‘Cause parents would call me, too, when there were
problems. The children would come and when they had their problems or get into things I would sit down and let each talk it out and work out a way where it could be straightened out and not happen again - to the point where they used to mimic me, because they would sit down [Chuckles] and by the time I got to them: "that's alright, Miss Williams, we've settled it." "How did you settle it?" And they'd talk about it and they'd go through the same procedures [Chuckle]. So I became Johny-one-note. But - and I'm off the task. You asked me -

JR Has it become more complicated?

GW It has and it's become more complicated now because you have more problems from the home, where drugs and alcohol—kids are more accessible to guns. And they've become really desensitized to killing, you know? They see in the movie you kill somebody and they're in the next movie. They're not realizing when they kill their own friends that they're not coming back, you know? Example, the little boy that shot - the last little boy in Georgia. And he was just crying; he was just so afraid. He was afraid because he had done an act. But he - evidently - I know he hadn't thought it through.

So it is more complicated, and it requires more counselors and social workers in school. And yet the systems take them out, especially in the cities. When I started we had a full time counselor and a full time social worker. When I was counselor at Mordecai Gist I - I - we had a team. I was full time as a counselor. We had a full time social worker and a full time nurse. And we caught any case. So you really needed to set out a team - any principal needs to set out a team, to be able to [inaudible] children.

JR Did you ever have to deal with a child actually having a deadly weapon in a school.
GW Yes! Yes. And we had company in the school. I won’t call the child’s name.

JR How old was the child? What grade--

GW He was in the sixth grade, ‘cause he was on the third floor. And Gloria Hartley and it was another person.

JR Gloria was the social worker?

GW Yeah. And Gloria and another person were on the third floor, and they were walking around ‘cause they knew I was occupied with these guests in the school. As they walked past the child out dropped [Laughter] a gun! A large gun. Of course they took it, took him down, went in a room. By this time he’s screaming and crying: he didn’t know it was in there. So then after the guests left, they came to me and they said, you know, that he had this gun. Well, when I went in to talk to him he said he was holding it for another friend. It was a huge gun—like that. “So why did you bring it?” And he said, “Well, I just had it in my jacket, so I took it out of my jacket.” I said, “are you angry with --?” Which he wasn’t. But he—

JR Was it loaded?

GW No. No, it wasn’t loaded. And the other thing is that children live in homes where other adults will -- just like the girl who brought in the narcotics, down to 39 [Dallas Nicholas Elementary School]. She didn’t know it was in her book bag. Someone hid it in there. But this little boy knew. So I called his mother, and his mother said — the first thing she said, “Didn’t I tell you to throw that away?”

JR Ah! Ah!

GW Instead of [Laughter] her destroying it, she had said “I told you to throw it away.”’’ Then she said it was his cousin’s or somebody else’s. ‘Course he was expelled.
And he was out of school for the rest of the year. He was expelled. And I don’t know where he ended up going. But that’s the only child. I’ve had them bring in toy guns. But I won’t put a kid out for a toy gun. I’ll threaten him, scare them to death. Because a lot of kids—toy guns look real.

JR Yes they do.

GW And a lot of kids have gotten killed behind toy guns. So they go through this whole mess and would have the suspension officer meet with the parents and me and give them the whole spiel. By this time they’re shaking near to death about this gun. But then in the end they say, “Well, Miss Williams has said that if you promise never to touch, bring, or have in school anything that slightly resembles it — goes [mimics a weepy voice] “No!” So then they’ll come back in. And usually it scares them. I only had one child it didn’t scare, who finally — and that was because his mother didn’t understand: “it’s just a toy gun, and I bought it for him for Christmas; it’s just a toy gun.”

JR She was reinforcing it.

GW That’s right. So he finally went out on expulsion. But, you know, I read about and hear about some of the serious, serious problems going on in middle school. Barclay is the only middle school in the city that does not have police patrol in there. But we never had that kind of — And basically it’s because probably the openness of the school, but openness of the parents to talk with them and deal with them. I remember Brandon — oh I shouldn’t have called his name.

JR We don’t have a last name.

GW He’s in Gilman. Who was just a super bright kid. Had brought a pair of scissors to school. But he brought them to do his work. Well, they’re not allowed to bring
scissors to school. And that had gone in. Well, Peg was teaching him then. So Peg brought him down and she said [inaudible]. "I'm not putting this little boy out but I have to scare him up. So his dad came up. [Laughter] And we talked and Brandon's outside crying his eyeballs out. And I said to him, "you know he really should, but I'm not. But I'm going to talk to him and you talk to him at home. Don't want you to beat him because then that'll make him angry. But just talk to him, why. So he said, "Okay," and he came in. And Brandon said "I am never going to"— [Laughter]

JR [Laughter]

GW But he was such a bright kid, and that could have ruined his life.

He's doing so well at Gilman. He really is. Call me, like, every two weeks.

JR Oh, well, that's good; that's nice.

GW Yeah.

JR Do you think the size of Barclay had something to do with

GW Sure.

JR the fact that we haven't experienced some of these

GW Of course

JR drastic things that other schools have experienced?

GW And that's true. I think that they're building schools too big now. And just have these kinds of things going on. And not enough people to manage them. And they want to add some—what do you call those things in the back of—on the play--

JR portables?

GW portables. But David turned that down. And he said they haven't come back to him but he'll let me know if they do. And anyway [inaudible] But you can't—some of
these schools are big as a city—look at Lake Clifton. And it’s sad, because—And you don’t have a control over—you should have a control over children coming in your community. But what they do is, take a child off suspension and send that child to you. Remind me—just say Jason—

JR Oh, okay. I remember when we fought the good fight to get the middle school, that one of the things we had in mind was keeping the kids near home.

GW And that’s what it was supposed to be.

JR And the other part was that these kids would be in the same building where their elementary teachers would know them—so everybody in the building knows them.

GW Right.

JR So they’re not just allowed to go off and become totally wacked out and not have anybody notice what’s going on.

GW But see, what happened: the notoriety brought the problem.

JR Yeah.

GW And everyone thought that their child could become brilliant there, and so they went from making and selling—people were selling rent receipts—to just lying, outright lying. Grandparents taking—don’t know where the mother is. Just lying. So that has caused a lot—people moving in with their sisters and brothers, and knowing they’re not living there but getting these letters written up. Saundra and I worked out a scheme last year so we’ve been able to pick up— they’ve been able to pick up a lot of those. ‘Cause once they get in, you’re really supposed to check on them within three months. If they don’t have documentation then, goodbye.

JR Then they can be transferred out.
But you get busy. So Saundra and I worked out—the first summer she worked with me—worked out a form and had the—where it was just automatically sent to the parents who brought that, put on the front of the cum[cumulative record] and in three months they were called to come in with the documentation. If they didn’t have it by then, then they were to go. Carl said, “give them three weeks.” He says, “Trudy, I know they lie so much,” he says. [Small laugh]

[Small laugh] Umhu

“But give them three weeks.” So it’s rather sad.

Well, in addition to school size, one of the big issues that people have been debating about for as long as I can remember is class size. How important do you think that is?

It’s very important. Because when we started the Calvert curriculum and you could have no more than 25, it just—it was like heaven had come and just set up—set up housing right in the middle of that school. It was so peaceful! And the kids weren’t—you know, if you’re in something that you’re just jammed and you can’t breathe and you can’t move and you have so many tables and chairs in a classroom—they bump each other, ready to fight, you know. But this—they have space, they’re free to move around. And, of course, the program is set up to meet the individual children’s needs. But when you have too many children, you can’t deal with that.

Well, what about the people who argue, you know, “Well, when I was in school I was always in classes of 40 and I learned and it’s a waste of money. If you put all this money into teachers so you can have that small a class size then you don’t have money to spend on books and”-- What about those kinds of arguments?
GW They just don’t know! When I started teaching I had 45 children in my classroom right here in Baltimore City. And I was teaching third grade. But you didn’t have all -- you had a few people drinking too much. But you didn’t have the drugs and the babies from alcoholic mothers-- You know, the ADHV and the children who are so destroyed by their parents and so forth and what they see at home. We didn’t have that! You -- you went in and you taught the children! The Principals, they walked around and so forth. And you had too many meetings. But you could handle—children were different then. You know, I remember my mother used to say, “kids were different then. We had -- we went to school where all the classes were in one room,” you know. But it’s true.

Children today are more anxious, more frustrated, are so abused physically and mentally and emotionally that they bring that to school. Some kids you have to work with them, work with until they are able to live through that. One little girl last year said to me, “my father died.” And I said, “Oh.” And I said, “was he sick?” “No, died from the same thing my mother did—those drugs; he died of AIDS, too.” Now here was a little girl—mother and father both died of AIDS. But she’s seen so many fights. But that’s why, because you know the kids in the street knew. And they would say things to her. And she’d beat ‘em up.

JR So for a little girl like that, what’s the difference between sitting in a classroom of 25 and sitting in a classroom of 40?

GW Because with 25 the teacher can notice different things. And then be able to tune in to. Can give the extra help. You know, the extra hug, the extra pat. Be able to write a note to the counselor and after, you know, before you go to counseling or whatever, you have to have enough anecdotal notes to say, “wait a minute, this kid is having problems.
So to keep those anecdotal cards and so forth – you can’t do it with forty children and one over here pinching the other, and the other one’s fussing about a wedding where you had no cake and I did. [Chuckle] Or you took this or that. From something two weeks ago. So Mondays are the worst days in teaching. Because all of the horrors that went through on the weekend with these children are brought back into the classroom. And so it got to the point where Mondays I would say, “If there’s anyone who’s still angry from what happened this weekend, will you raise your hand and let the teacher take your name. I will get to you before the day’s out. But you can put that aside, so that your teacher can go on and teach.” And I would get to them and they would talk to me about it, and it may take two or three days to get it settled, but at least it gave—it freed the teacher up from having to deal with those issues, you know.

JR  This isn’t on the list, but it’s on my mind because I watched something on television last night, which was a public broadcasting film about dealing with issues of homosexuality.

GW  Okay.

JR  And the thesis of the film was

GW  Umhu

JR  that the school is a very important place to begin at a very young age to talk with students, to get over this – to try to avoid—this terrible antagonism

GW  toward

JR  that homosexuals are the object of.

GW  Right.

JR  Do you— you’re nodding your head, “yes”, so do you agree that the school
GW: That should be.
JR: is the place to deal with these kinds of issues?
GW: Yeah.
JR: What do you say to parents who say, “I don’t want anybody talking to my child about that film or, you know, that kind of [inaudible]
GW: Well, you know, a couple of parents I’ve had to convince. Because, you know, those are the same children who degrade other children and make their lives hell. And even some kids who are not homosexual but are a little timid. They get on those kids’ backs. They treat them – they’re terrible. And so, what happens, I talk with some of those parents sometimes. [Inaudible] part of education. So I really have been very fortunate with the parents in this community. And so I was blessed, because I know – even with AIDS—when we dealt with AIDS, and I would deal with care of your body as you were growing and so forth. I know the nurse was talking to ‘em one time. And the kids start asking questions. Well, see, [chuckle] you have to be prepared when you go into city schools, because the children are knowledgeable about the world around them. You have to be prepared for any question. And they were asking so many questions that she got upset. And the question that was asked is “how can you tell who’s the father of the child if the girl is having sex [chuckle] with two men at the same time?” She got so upset. I had to go up and finish talking with the children and then I said, “well ther’re blood tests you can take,” and so forth. But she said, “those children asking those questions!” I said, “they live those questions! And those are questions in their mind. They can hear their father saying, ‘that’s not my child’ and things like that.” She went off, so you really need people even in schools where children have a lot of difficulties,
you have to have sensitive teachers, administrators, and workers in that school. Because those children – will ask anything.

JR Whether you bring it up or not, hu?

GW That’s right.

JR Well, that goes right to the next issue, which there’s so much debate about. And that is teacher preparation, teacher training. From your experience how good is it, how could it be better, and –

GW Well, it’s very poor now, because they really don’t have-- once -- You see it is assumed that once a teacher has tenure that that teacher’s always going to stay at the peak. And it’s not true. It’s not good. And so where, when I was a teacher you always had different workshops to go to and things that really kept you current. There are some teachers who are teaching like they were in the stone age. I know of a history teacher who is not current. Even the map has to be changed to be current with what is happening in the world. So a school can be no better than the teachers. You know?

JR What should we be doing to – to get good training and good [inaudible]

GW Well, first of all, teachers now come with a handicapping condition, because you have no more teacher colleges. When I came out I came from a teacher college, and you had training, you had work plans, even, you just – it’s just so much you need you get in teachers’ college—and how to teach. You taught after Sophomore year, you start in Junior year, teaching, observation, teaching, preparing lessons and so forth. Even then, the first class I had, I looked at those children and they looked at me. And I said, “Oh my God!”

JR [Laughter]
GW Everything I had learned went out of my head. But then, at that time, you had George Sims, you had Mable Booker, who were outstanding. And he had assigned her to me. And I mean you learned! You know, every little thing, how you question the children; how you responded to questions; how you listened; what you did – all those things new teachers don’t get. And there is no plan for them. They are leaving in droves. Then older teachers need to be refreshed. They need to be brought up to current events and how to handle different things and how to meet the needs of today’s children, you know? And –

END OF SIDE A – TAPE XVII

START OF SIDE B – TAPE XVII

GW So there is a continuous need for training – and I mean not to go and talk to themself but to keep teachers abreast of new things and different things and there are places where they send teachers on conferences to learn different things, so – yeah.

JR Well, let’s take one more before we call it a day. It kind of relates already to teaching. And I know this is a field where you’ve had some special training yourself. And that’s in methods of teaching reading. There’s this great big debate: do we do phonics; do we do whole language; do we do ‘em both? Is there only one way? Why don’t we have students reading at the level that they should be reading anymore? So on and so forth.

GW Well, the average person – so many teachers teach reading as a subject, instead of a process which should be carried on all day long throughout every subject, including math. And math becomes a language as you use the problems and so forth. Every child
I remember Mrs. Hall, who was our student teacher at Cheyney, who said, “when you go in that classroom, you learn how to use all of the techniques. Because there’s some children who learn by seeing and hearing. There’s some who learn by seeing and touching. So that you - some children do not learn by the phonetic method, which is very strong. And eventually pick it up. And some don’t. But some learn through visual and auditory. And so whole language is a different story. Whole language comes into being after the children have learned their basic skills - however you deal with the basic skills-- whether it’s through phonics or visual or all three. When your children who are dyslexic must touch the letters in order to get that sense of—and they have to hear it and say it and touch it and see it. You know, all of the above. Many people don’t know how to teach reading. And so that becomes a problem. If the children don’t start in the beginning with being taught in a way that they can use their own way of learning, then they have handicapping conditions until someone picks it up. Phonetically, some children don’t hear the sounds. But if they would see it, and touch it, and write it and - that’s how the Calvert curriculum picks up all of it. Because you write everyday. And you write everything you see, you know. And you hear it. And you write it. So they pick that up. But the children really need at least two - if they have heavy skill development, starting in Kindergarten, First and Second, they should be reading by nine. And see, most of those children - that’s how the children do—did so well, and do so well with the Calvert curriculum. Because they have those heavy, heavy skill development, starting now with Pre-K. But it’s not -- They learn their shapes, sounds, their names, the colors. They walk out in the street and see the different shapes of the building, so it becomes a living thing with them. So they use all their senses. And it starts in Pre-K, and
children become aware of shapes and sounds and so forth. And they’ll close their eyes and hear what goes by when teacher play a record. And what is it? It’s a truck. Is somebody banging on some— So all of these are part of learning how to read. We didn’t do that when I was young. I think I learned more visually, because we had sight words, but then they we did have phonetics – I don’t remember! I don’t remember! I just know we learned. But it has to be – once it’s learned, then each of the teachers who work with that child, and the teacher who has him in the elementary grade has him all day long, then it should be reinforced all day long. Keeping the list – with the Calvert curriculum they keep the list of all the new words they hear and learn through the day, and that adds to their vocabulary. So reading is serious today. And I – I know here in the system, they have lost the boat. And you just -- teachers just have to be taught how to teach the methods – all of – to using all the skills. And that’s what it is. You don’t need all – to say I’m going to do this and that. You need to learn how to teach – to taking all of the senses – and then a child will learn.

JR  How important is reading to a child?

GW  Very important. And I told my niece before the twins were born – and I said to Sheryl, “you know you should read to them.” I don’t know whether it’s true but there’s a school that says that – and sing, you know. [Laughter] But both those boys are gifted, and one is autistic. But they can read anything. But parents should read, and that’s part of the component there. They should start reading to children as soon as they say “Amen.” So that they know that there’s something wonderful on that printed page. And then kids pick up stuff, pick up words that way.

JR  Umhu
And instead of seeing all this junk on t.v., there's so many precious films that you can buy. I gave a group to Miss Richards [Barclay's Pre-K teacher] on the — it's you know, the sounds—Dr. Seuss's ABC's, lot of the different little things that bring out the colors, the shapes and so forth, shapes and things. And she uses those, and she enjoys them. But if children don't learn how to read, they're lost. And if reading doesn't become a process then we've lost our greatest tool, you know. And —

I hadn't really thought about it before, and I don't know why. But you making this link between -- in the Calvert curriculum -- between the reading and the writing. And how the one -- and so that very early -- we're always so amazed at how early the children start to write essays.

Right.

But you're saying that that's really a

a linkage

a mutual reinforcement between the reading and the writing.

That's right. It's a linkage.

They're reading their own words--

words. That's right; it's a linkage.

that they've written.

Umhu. Dictation. You know. In first grade. We never had dictation. But then they write that whole little simple sentence, you know: "I see a blue wagon." And they're used from the words they've had. So it's good. And it has made them literate. You know. And it's -- it's really nice. I looked at the kids yesterday, [Barclay middle school commencement] who really are going to do extremely well, when they get away.
There are a few who not, but the bulk of them are going to do extremely well where they go.

JR Are there a lot of them going to the city-wide schools?

GW Yeah, city-wide schools. Yeah. I don’t know how many. I’ll check with the counselor and see how many. I know it was 81% last year, so we’ll see how many.

JR Talking about yesterday, we’re talking about graduation at Barclay--

GW Graduation at Barclay.

JR and eighth graders going on, going on to the next step. Okay, well, maybe this is a good place to stop this step.

END OF SESSION NINE.