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Interview with
EULINE BROCK
October 27, 1987

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewers: Richard W. Byrd
Jane Harris
Mary Lohr

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Approved: Euline Brock
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Euline Brock

Interviewers: Jane Harris, Mary Lohr, and Richard Byrd Date of Interview: October 27, 1987

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Ms. Harris: This is Jane Harris, Richard Byrd, and Mary Lohr interviewing Dr. Euline Brock for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 27, 1987, in Denton, Texas. We are interviewing Dr. Brock in order to obtain her recollections concerning the Denton Christian Women's Interracial Fellowship and its role in desegregating Denton. Okay, could you tell me your birthdate?

Dr. Brock: The year, too (chuckle)? June 2, 1932.

Ms. Harris: Where were you born?

Dr. Brock: Out in a country community in Smith County, Texas, which is where Tyler is located.

Ms. Harris: Could you describe for me your educational background?

Dr. Brock: I went to public schools in Van, Texas, which I later realized was very fortunate because it was an oil town. Even though most of the people were real poor, the school was rich; and we had good libraries and good teachers. I was lucky.

Then I went to Tyler Junior College. I lived at home

in Van and rode the school bus back and forth every day for two years. I graduated from there in 1950.

I went to the University of Texas as a junior in 1950. I loved it and had a wonderful time. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. I got a B.A. in English with a minor in history in 1952.

There's interesting sidelight that I tell my students now. I was the only person in my dorm who worked, and now that's so common. Nobody understood why I was working (chuckle). Anyway, I worked thirty hours a week, but I learned a lot. I worked in the dean's offices. Then I went to graduate school there, and in 1954 I got a master's degree in English with a minor in history. I was a teaching fellow in the English Department there during my second year when I was doing my thesis. Maybe that was more information than you wanted (laughter).

Harris: Were any of these schools you attended segregated?

Brock: Well, of course, Van High School was segregated. The Van public schools were segregated, but there were really no blacks who lived in that community, even though it was very much in black East Texas. But Van Zandt County, which Van is in, has a history of...well, this goes back to the 1890s when there was considerable racial violence. Except for one town, Wills Point, there are no blacks living in Van Zandt County. That's not altogether true now. I think there are a couple

of black families who send their children to the Van public schools now. This was a consolidated school; all the rural districts came in. There were more people in the school than there were living in the town. But in spite of that, there was only one black family who lived in all of that consolidated school district, and the school paid the Lindale Public School System for that family to go there because they had a separate black school. There were no blacks in Tyler Junior College when I went there.

The University of Texas was in the process of desegregating, but it was only for programs that were not available at other state-supported schools. For instance, it included doctoral programs that didn't exist at all-black schools. They had just established Texas Southern as "the black state university." Prairie View A&M had been there as the counterpart of Texas A&M. They were both bad jokes, and they didn't have graduate programs.

I was in Dr. Walter Prescott Webb's class on the Great Plains, which was an experience I wasn't to appreciate until later; I mean, that was just a class I was taking, and I didn't know he was one of the gods. But I sat between a black guy who was a president of a small black college in Alabama, and he was there working on a doctorate in educational administration. A Catholic priest was on the other side, and we had great fun. But I don't remember being in

class with any other black students because they were in specialized graduate programs mostly.

Harris: How is it that you became interested in race relations?

Brock: I've wondered about that a lot because my attitude is so different from that of my older sister, who came up through the same environment. It may be the fact that I didn't know any black people growing up. That's one clue. I've wondered about that a lot. The thing is, I didn't form any of my ideas about race relations from what was going on around me because it just wasn't a subject.

I read an awful lot when I was in school. I wasn't a cheerleader or any of those things that are distractions, and so I just read down the rows of the library, which was a very good library. So I think that probably I was influenced by eighteenth century rationalism and some of the things that crept into it. I wouldn't have been aware of what that was, nor would I have recognized it; but later, when I reflected on it, I realized that my ideas came from books rather than from the surrounding society.

I do remember some racial discussions in our family home, I remember the only time my father ever sent me away from the table was for speaking back to my mother on this issue. She said something derogatory, and I said, "I don't think black people are worse than white people." And she was insulted. I was directly contradicting something that she

had just said. This was really old-fashioned, but, I mean, that wasn't done, and so my father told me I had to leave the table.

I remember his saying at one time, "It's born in a nigger to steal." I challenged him on that, and I said, "Well, does this apply to Henry, who lived with your uncle when you were living with him and who you were so fond of and everything?" He said, "Oh, no that was Henry." I was about fourteen or fifteen then, but I remember thinking that he was making a distinction between an individual that he knew and a category that he was dealing with. Henry didn't steal, but yet "it's born in niggers to steal."

I guess being interested in literature and history and liberal arts in general influenced my thinking. I remember being very thrilled at the Supreme Court decision in 1954. That occurred just before I left Austin, and I was in the process of finishing up my master's degree. I remember discussing this with a friend of mine who went to the same church I did. This, incidentally, was the Church of Christ, which is not known as being on the forefront of desegregation or enlightened race relations or anything. I didn't stay in that church. As I told you, Trinity Presbyterian Church was sort of the center of this and was considered real, real flaky by Presbyterians. But I remember that we discussed this until about three o'clock in the morning

sitting in a car out in front of my rooming house. It was wonderful. This guy was really brilliant. He was a physicist with the defense research lab there in Austin. He played the bassoon in the San Antonio Symphony. You get the picture. But it was wonderful that I had all the right on my side; I mean, it was easy to argue with him, even though he was a wonderful arguer, because he had such a weak case. He later told me that that conversation had changed his life, and he was forced to look at some things that he'd never been forced to before. Anyway, I felt like that was a profound turning point in American history or at least in my own perception of what was going on in society.

I was active in Democratic politics. The first presidential campaign that I ever was involved in was the Adlai Stevenson campaign in 1952. I was too young to vote then because the voting age was twenty-one. I passed out Stevenson pamphlets on the streets of Austin, and I was spat on and called a communist and stuff like that. And that was a part of it.

Even though I thought even at that time, despite the position being taken by the church I was attending at that time, I felt that it was a matter of Christianity and a matter of politics. That position was very much identified with the Democratic Party in spite of all the southern conservatives who were very much at the forefront of the

Democratic Party at that time. It seemed to be that there was no way you could be a Republican in Texas and have what I considered the "right" ideas about racial matters. So those were two very strong elements in my thinking.

I'm sure that a lot of it was born with Byron's poetry and all that stuff that I read and enjoyed a lot, the kind of early nineteenth century literature that was based very much on eighteenth century philosophical ideas.

Harris: What specifically were some of the ideas? Can you recall?

Brock: No (laughter). Unfortunately, my mind is kind of like a sieve. I've read an awful lot of good books, but not much of it lasted. No, I think the Romantic poets probably influenced my thinking as much as anything, and maybe some of the essayists from that same period. But I didn't do my thesis in the Romantic period; I did my thesis on Shakespeare's sonnets. But I think there are some of those things or ideas--rationality--in Shakespeare. The Romantic poets would be horrified to consider themselves based on rationality, and that's not what really I mean to imply; but I think they certainly grew out of that movement in their attitude toward human beings and their relationship to each other.

Harris: Okay, could you tell me when you moved to Denton?

Brock: In 1954. I had come here only once before to a journalism

meeting at TWU when I was in high school. I came to Denton for the meeting, and I didn't see the town or anything.

Harris: Thinking back, could you describe for me your perception of life in southeast Denton at that time?

Block: Well, none of the streets were paved; there was no decent housing. There were some small, oh, sort of bar-like places where bootleg whiskey was available. There was, of course, an all-black school, Fred Moore School, which seemed to be very poor.

During the early 1950s, I think that probably--I don't know this from statistics or anything--but I think there probably was quite an influx of black people into Denton as a result of building what's now Lake Lewisville, which was previously called Garza-Little Elm Reservoir. They built the big dam, and the black people here referred to the blacks who helped construct it as "those Mississippi dam people." They were people who were skilled dam builders and levee builders from Mississippi who came here because they were being replaced by the mechanization of agriculture. They were people who worked in the cotton fields as well as being dam people. There was no longer any place for them in Mississippi, so they stayed here. I think the black people who were born in Denton even today feel very strongly that there are "old" Denton black people and "new" Denton black people. And some of the "new" Denton black people now are,

more likely to be people who have graduate degrees and so forth, and there is conflict. Anyway, this was happening in the 1950s. I didn't really go into that part of town because I had no reason to in the 1950s.

Mr. Byrd: In the 1950s, after you moved here, was it totally black in terms of residential patterns? Were there whites that lived scattered among the blacks in that area of southeast Denton?

Brock: I would say that it was almost completely black, and instead of being whites scattered among them, there might be little fingers, you know, little fingers of the black community coming out into the surrounding edges of the white community. There had been some black people living on Congress Street, near Congress Junior High, but by the time I got here, that was no longer possible, and they had been pushed into a pretty well-defined area. There were not many black people, so far as I know or could find out, living outside what was called southeast Denton, the official ghetto.

Mr. Byrd: Was that kind of housing pattern achieved by restrictive deeds or restricted covenants in deeds or by pricing?

Brock: Probably neither one. Probably it was just by informal pressure and the way things were done. I'm sure that some of you will be interviewing Linnie McAdams, who's on the city council now, and as I mentioned before, one of the few really bright people I've ever known. In the 1960s--1964, 1965 maybe-- Linnie and her husband were trying to upgrade their housing,

which could hardly have been any worse. They had a lot on Cook Street, which is just beyond the railroad tracks, you know, just beyond that overpass right beside Morrison Milling. If you go under that and turn to the right, you're right along Cook Street. It was not paved, but they had a lot that had belonged to his family. The Catholic church here was building a new rectory, and they had the old rectory, which was a very modest frame house, for sale to be moved. Linnie and Burk wanted to buy that house. They had to get money...I mean, with their combined income by that time...I don't know if she was still working at Moore Business Forms or if she had started working at the Federal Center. Anyway, they both had regular incomes, which were very modest but probably much better than most black couples who didn't even have steady employment for both of them. They were not able to get a loan to buy and move the house--really, it was just a total of about \$2,000--because they had to have a lot that could be accepted as collateral, and their lot wasn't satisfactory. The man at North Texas Savings and Loan kept saying to them, "If you can just find a decent lot...." By that time she was the sort of person that always called everybody by their first name, and she said, "Charlie, you find me a lot that I can buy."

I know that the McAdamses tried to buy the lot on Piping Rock that's next door to very good friends of ours, the Lukers,

considerably later. That area of Piping Rock is just next to Township II, and later it was developed by George Hopkins, who is a prominent attorney here. His wife is now in the city council. When they went to George to talk about that lot, he said, "That lot is not for sale." Later, the Lukers talked to him about it, and he said, "That lot is not for sale."

That's the way it worked. The bank wouldn't have lent Linnie money to move out into the white community, and yet they couldn't lend money on that lot in southeast Denton.

What happened is that she came to my husband and said, "You're the only person I know that probably has \$2,000." Actually, he had just bought into a business here using that \$2,000, and he didn't have a penny available right then. But he went to First State Bank and talked to Mr. Orr, the old Mr. Orr who's chairman of the board now, and told him the story. He said, "I'll put anything you want me to that I have down as collateral, but I want to borrow money, and it's for them." Mr. Orr said, "Sure." He just signed it, and he asked for no collateral. A little bit later, the bank examiner was coming, and because you weren't supposed to have more than a \$500-loan with no collateral at that point, he called Brock down, and he divided the loan up into four parts. This shows that he was sympathetic with the case. Whether he

would have been sympathetic if she had been moving out of southeast Denton is another matter.

Then they bought a lot on Kendolph from Dr. Sam Henderson in the English Department. The Hendersons had bought the lot across the street from them so that they could control what they had to look at, and they were going to sell it to some desirable person, and they considered the McAdamses as desirable people. Kendolph is right across the highway, you know, kind of in line with the University, one street over from Avenue C. So they were among the first black people to move into formerly an all-white neighborhood. That was happening in the 1960s, in the mid-1960s, as people got better jobs and were able to live outside the black area.

Recently, we had a case that was very much based on that. There was an attempt by the Denton Housing Authority, which seems to kind of run out on its own because whatever money it has is mostly from federal funding, and they think they don't have to consult people. Well, some people who have been involved have been consulted. Anyway, they decided they were going to build a public housing project just behind Park Lane. Park Lane was the first street built in southeast Denton that had decent, new, modest little houses for blacks, and it was the first street in that area to be paved and curbed and guttered. Catherine Bell, whose name I starred on your list, and her husband bought a house like that. They're

little houses that have been kept up pretty well. It represented so much--it was like Hamilton Park in Richardson --that black people used to drive through. That was a Sunday excursion for black people in all this area--to drive through Hamilton Park to see that black people lived in brick houses that had two bathrooms or something.

Anyway, these houses on Park Lane were more modest than that, but in the late 1950s housing began to improve over there. Some people built new houses because they got decent jobs, and this was because of pressure from the federal government. You know, it was not that there was some fantastic change of heart; it's just that people do what they have to do, and people were getting better jobs. Linnie McAdams's husband got a job at General Motors. He and three other guys were the first blacks that they had hired in the parts division of General Motors in Dallas.

Then eventually, more people now...I was entertaining a couple of years ago, taking around a woman whose husband was being interviewed here for a very prominent position; and he was given that position, even though I passed this information on to quite a few people. She was from Kansas. She asked me what the percentage of the black population was here. I had told her I was working with voter registration for the NAACP, but apparently she would have asked this question anyway. I told her. She had been looking at houses

in Forestridge and Southridge and Monticeto, and she wanted to know if blacks lived in those sections. I said, "I don't know about Forestridge, because I really don't have friends that live there." That's the newest subdivision of the three. But I said, "I do know that blacks do live in Monticeto and Southridge, and I would imagine that there is not any neighborhood in Denton that you could move in that there would not be some blacks in those houses." She said, "Well, that's one thing that I can't tolerate," and she started with a long string of anecdotes that I hadn't heard the likes of since the 1950s to justify her position.

Now there are pockets in other areas of town that are predominantly black, and they're in lower income areas. But, you know, there are black people living in quarter-of-a-million-dollar houses here in Denton now, and in all areas.

Byrd: Could you tell me a little bit more about this pressure from the federal government? Specifically, was it sought by Dentonites, or was it in response to civil rights legislation?

Brock: Oh, no, no. It would be in response to civil rights legislation and also the kind of indirect pressure that I was describing when I was here before about seeing what was happening as other people resisted federal court decisions, federal laws, and so forth. The power structure here did not want to have that kind of trouble in Denton because they

felt that it would set it back so much. So it was just sort of knowing that it was inevitable, that it was coming, and deciding to get out a little bit in front to kind of head off demonstrations or something like that, being able to control it rather than be controlled by the movement.

I talked to a couple of trustees, one that I'd known a long time, about desegregating the Denton schools before they decided to do it, and he said, "We have discussed that, of course. We decided that we would wait for a lawsuit because it would be more acceptable to the public if we appear to have had absolutely no choice." But, actually, as I remember, that was not the reason. They did not desegregate in response to a lawsuit, but they did desegregate because the Dallas public schools did in response to a lawsuit. We've always sort of followed along pretty much in the Dallas path.

So far as I know, none of those early hirings of black people in Denton for formerly white jobs was a direct result of demonstrations, suits, or anything like that. It was just sort of seeing what was going on.

Harris: Who would you say represented the white power structure in Denton at that time?

Brock: Well, I think at that time it would have been more retail merchants than now. I think our economy is now diversified a lot more. Then it was someone who owned a store such as Russell's. Russell's store was then on the southwest corner

of the square. Russell's has now been made into some law offices--the McClurkan Building. The McClurkan family owned several small businesses; the Tobins owned the big drugstore on the north side of the square, and they were an old Denton family; the Cravens were an old Denton family; the Orrs were the people in banking. The local business people were sort of like the Citizen's Council in Dallas, even though it was not that structured or that organized. It was more informal. Riley Cross, who was the owner of a newspaper, was part of the power structure. His daughters and his wife now own the Record-Chronicle. Patsy Patterson is Riley Cross's daughter. The Record-Chronicle has come a long way since Riley Cross's days. But those were the people who had to approve if any drastic changes were going to come about.

Byrd: Could you describe, though, whether this group was monolithic or whether it had various viewpoints?

Brock: Oh, my gosh, I'm speaking as an academic, as a woman, as somebody who didn't have any money and didn't go out in these social circles. These are just vague perceptions. I really wouldn't know. I would say that at that time it was a lot harder for an outsider to come in and become a part of that group than it would be currently simply because this was a smaller town. There was a lot less change, and people weren't accustomed to a lot of change, a lot of growth, at

that time. I'd really be interested to know if other people's perceptions would differ.

Byrd: You were talking about W.C. Orr, who was helpful in approving the loan. I was just wondering if that would be upsetting or cause a ripple even in the 1960s amongst the rest of this informal power structure.

Brock: I think that probably W.C. Orr would not have wanted that to be known; you know, it was not anything that he would talk about. Even though we might talk about it with the McAdamses and our mutual friends, there was no chance that that would get into the power structure because there was no overlap. Our friends were teachers and preachers (chuckle). We were strictly a non-power group. At that time, too, academic people made so much less money, not just in numerical terms but they made so much less in relation to other people. We lived much more modestly. We didn't have any idea that we would be going to black tie parties with these people and stuff, which we do routinely now. The academic life was really almost like taking a vow of poverty in the 1950s. You had to realize that you were giving up whatever the material life was going to be, so that meant very little overlap with the power structure.

Then being, of course, a liberal Democrat...of course, then we had a two-party system, but it was all in the Democratic Party, so (laughter) there were little lines there.

Most of those people are now Republicans, or would be. In every election back then, there were the factions, and it depended on who got nominated and pushing different people for precinct meetings or a county convention or a state convention. Power struggles were going on at every level between the two main factions, and then little groups within that. But I don't know any of those people who would be considered a liberal Democrat with the exception maybe of Alonzo Jamison, who was a little bit different. He was our state legislator for many, many years. Then, when he chose not to run, he became a government teacher at TWU and also sort of a liaison person between the legislature and administration over there. Then later he was head of the History and Government Department. They had a lot of money, but they didn't have a business here. They both had inherited money, and they were an old Denton name; but they were the only people who could even be halfway an overlap between those two groups. They were considered liberal Democrats. A liberal Democrat was anyone who actively supported Kennedy in 1960 (chuckle) in Texas.

Harris: Who would you view as being the most recalcitrant person in the white power structure with regard to the race issue?

Brock: Well, there's a man whose name I can't even remember, even though I can see him very well (chuckle), and he ran a... I told you all this story. He ran a restaurant, and they told him that he was going to have to desegregate. It was

just off the square. In fact, I think it was where the parking lot behind First State Bank is now. He was really kicking about that. He didn't like their decision. Linnie McAdams will be able to tell you a lot about this because she was experiencing it daily. But he published two menus, one for blacks and one for whites. For the black, the coffee was twenty-five cents, and for the white it was five cents. But then, as you probably know, by that time there was a pretty active group on campus, and they were getting ready to demonstrate in front of his establishment. Whoever it was who tells people told him, "You're not going to do that." So he sold his business pretty soon after that because he "wasn't going to serve no niggers."

Harris: Were there any other who were in this category?

Brock: I'm sure there were people who resisted, but I don't remember particular incidents. As I said, Linnie would. I remember her saying...did I tell you about the ice cream before? You know, when people say you can't legislate justice and you can't legislate righteousness and stuff like that, I certainly would agree with that as a general principle; but you can pass legislation, and you can issue court decisions that affect people's behavior. And sometimes that's all that's desired. I remember Linnie talking about a case involving her children, who were preschoolers still. She went into Tobin's drugstore on the north side of the square,

and they had one of these wonderful, long soda fountain bars and a little ice cream parlor dating from the turn of the century. It had these lovely little tables that you now see in cutesy ersatz places. They had wonderful ice cream, and she went in to get ice cream, which she could do. But she had to leave; she couldn't sit down and eat it there. Her little girl was crying and whining and saying, "Mama, let's sit down here and eat." She said, "No, no, we can't." Her little girl said, "Well, we can sit down to eat our ice cream because, look, other people are sitting there." She said, "Well, I know, but we have to go."

So Linnie was telling us this story, and she said, "What do you do when your children get to the age that you have to tell them that because you are their parent, this is going to be a really rough, unfair life for them? If Karen had been born to a white person, she could have sat down to eat her ice cream, and sooner or later I'm going to have to tell her that, and how can I tell her?"

Well, actually, she didn't have to tell her because it was right after that that a lot of things started breaking. But what Linnie said about that was...somebody was talking about, you know, that you can't legislate love or good feelings or any of these things, and she said, "I don't want Mr. Tobin to love me. I just want him to let me sit down to eat my ice cream." I said that in the presence of Bob LaForte

one time after he first came here. He said, "That's not true. Linnie really does want people to love her." He couldn't seem to get this point that all she was asking for was fair treatment. She didn't care if they hated letting her sit down. She still wanted to sit down to eat her ice cream.

So these were little things that were happening and that were changing in the early 1960s as a result of upheavals elsewhere and as a result of the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision and Martin Luther King's coming to the forefront and people began to look at things that had been going on for a long time.

Harris: How do you think the white power structure of Denton viewed your group after it was formed?

Brock: I don't think they knew about it. We were very much interested in keeping any word about the group from the newspaper. When I came back from Turkey in 1969, they were putting notices of the meetings in the newspaper, and I thought that was quite a measure of the changes that had come about. It was now a much more open group. But it was a clandestine group; there's no question about that. One reason that we white women were keeping it quiet, I think, was that there were so many white women who would have liked to participate in that group, and we wanted to keep the numbers roughly equal so that we could have some real interchange and get to know each other. There weren't enough

black people who were willing to let down their guard enough to participate in that or who were too suspicious of our motives to even come to see what was going on. So it was very much an underground group in the early years.

Harris: Could you describe your husband's attitude concerning your involvement in the group?

Brock: Well, he was very much in favor of it. He was very much interested in it. However you would define racial justice, he would be supporting any movement in that direction.

Harris: Did the other husbands support your group?

Brock: Well, let's face it. This is a bunch of women whose husbands were teachers and preachers. You know, we were an odd group, so, yes, I would think so—unequivocally—because a couple were Presbyterian ministers and the others were North Texas faculty people in the Government Department, a couple of them. Dorothy Adkins's husband was in the Government Department, and so was Carol Riddlesperger's husband. Trudy Foster's husband was in the Physics Department. They were all people who were very committed. This was only one aspect of their involvement. They were all people who were active liberal Democrats, for one thing, too.

Ms. Lohr: How did the group get formed?

Brock: Well, I think I mentioned before my interpretation of this. I have heard another story that I don't even recognize (chuckle) and that you'll probably get from somebody.

But my interpretation is that Dorothy Adkins and I decided that some kind of on-going group like this ought to be formed when we were asked at a women's Presbyterian meeting in Wichita Falls to have a one-day racial interaction, a day of reconciliation. We thought that was kind of pointless. It might have some slight symbolic value, but if there was no follow-up, it wouldn't be worth anything.

On the way back from that meeting in Wichita Falls, we began to talk about how we could go about forming an on-going group that would have more possibilities for really deeper relations. We didn't want it to be a community activist group at the first because we felt that the first thing that was needed was a forum for black women and white women to get together as equals and just get to be friends and get to know each other as human beings rather than as a black person or a white person. So that was our original aim, and I really do think it did grow out of that meeting in Wichita Falls.

Also, I had the Sunday school class that was already involved in the tutoring of black students, and that gave me a real entree. As I said before, there were three generations --Norvell Williams and her daughter, Gloria Denman and her mother, Othella Hill, who died several years ago. I was working a lot with Norvell's daughter, who was in that group of the first six black students who went to Denton High School.

So when I asked her, I didn't even get it out of my mouth, and she immediately accepted. So I had, and our church had, already established our credibility with her. We weren't just coming in from outside and, you know, calling her as strangers or something. Then she was able to get her daughter and her mother, and they were a prominent and influential family in the black community. Her brother now owns the Lone Star car wash, and he is a retired Air Force colonel. He owns a lot of other businesses, too. He was the first black to serve on the school board in Denton, so this is that long, established family, and the fact that they were in it gave it credibility in the eyes of some other black women. So it was really good that we had them in from the very first meeting.

Lohr: How long was it from the time you were talking about it with Dorothy Adkins until the first meeting?

Brock: Just a few weeks, as I remember--a very short time. We got on it right away. It could possibly have been as short as two or three weeks. It might have been six, but I don't think it was longer than six.

Harris: And you were saying that you went to this meeting in Wichita Falls?

Brock: Yes.

Harris: Can you describe in more detail what happened at that meeting?

Brock: Well, as you probably know, everybody used to be all divided

up by gender, and this was called presbyterial, which was the woman's counterpart of presbytery meeting because women didn't go to presbytery. You had to be a man to be elected a delegate to presbytery. So we had our own separate organization. We had "circles," and we mainly did studies. But we had national meetings, too. Anyway, this was the regular presbyterial meeting there. It must have been held...since I'm not a lifelong Presbyterian, these things are kind of vague for me because I just had that brief period that I was involved in that activity. Maybe they were held twice a year, but they were held at different churches in the presbytery, so it was time for the First Presbyterian Church in Wichita Falls to host this.

We had this theme of "reconciliation," which was a code word for "race relations," and everybody knew that. We had this little dialogue illustrating that theme; and someone had brought a woman who appeared to be her maid to read this dialogue, which had been sent to us by the National Presbyterian Church. At our second meeting, we had that to open up discussion, and it was very good.

But that woman didn't even read well; I mean, she reinforced all those stereotypes. You know, she was the mammy-type and all that. If Betty Kimble or Linnie McAdams had been doing that, people would have really been shook up, because they were so capable and so forceful and

everything.

Anyway, there had been kind of a little crisis--and I think I had mentioned it before--because as a courtesy, they had invited the wife of the pastor of the other Presbyterian church in Wichita Falls to give the devotional; and she refused to do it because she didn't want to be involved in the theme of reconciliation because she hated Martin Luther King and everything he stood for, and she told them very explicitly in those terms.

I'm not sure what the connection was, but somebody from Sherman called me and asked me if I would do that. This showed how desperate they were because it was sort of an honorary job, and it really should have been somebody who was somebody, and I had absolutely no status in those terms or any other either, I guess. But, you know, they had to find somebody who was "safe," somebody who would be willing to do that and willing to speak out on that subject. What I wound up doing, on the advice of my pastor, was throwing away the scriptures that they had sent me that were supposed to be the center of the devotional and using the story of David and Uriah and the question of recognizing that before we start attacking a sin or trying to make changes, we ought to find out who the sinner is and who needs to be changed. The answer is, of course, that we are and that we are the ones that need to be changed. I could tell how people reacted

to that. Some people came up and said, "That was wonderful. That's just what we needed to hear." Other people said, "Honey, you look so pretty in that red hat." They knew they should say something nice, and so that's what they said, because they didn't want to comment on the content of what it was.

Anyway, Dorothy and I started off talking about that and the dialogue and the recommendation, and after about an hour we were moving in the direction of doing something that we thought might be meaningful and lasting.

Byrd: Were there others traveling with you in the automobile?

Brock: Yes, there were four of us. The two women in the front seat were talking about, you know, recipes or something, as I remember (laughter). That's probably unjust. I mean, here Dorothy and I were, having one of these really earth-shaking conversations that are so gratifying and that you don't often get involved in.

Harris: How did you go about choosing members for the group--asking people?

Brock: Well, it really was just people in our church who we knew felt very intensely on this subject. As I remember, the only white woman at that first meeting who was not a member of Trinity Church was Carol Riddlesperger, and she was Dorothy Adkins's best friend. She later was on the school board many years, and she was the first woman who was actually

an active member of the school board. Before they'd had a token who was a doctor's wife and who never said anything. Anyway, Carol Riddlesperger was a member of the First Methodist Church, and she was aware that there were many people in her church that would like to be a member of this. But we said, "No, we want to keep it quiet; we want to keep it small; we want to keep the numbers pretty much even." There wasn't anything secret about it in our church, and I guess it really was open to anybody in our church who really was interested and wanted to make that commitment. But since we were so tiny, anyway, that was not a problem (laughter). There were people in the church who wouldn't have been interested in groups like that at all, so that helped to limit it.

Harris: How did you go about making contact with blacks?

Brock: Jean Kooker knew Betty Kimble through Girl Scouts. We knew Linnie McAdams because my husband and I had gotten acquainted with them in the 1960 presidential campaign, and we were both members of the Denton County Young Democrats. One of the reasons that we remained members of that was that it was a desegregated group; I mean, there were at least some black people in it. Then I had this connection through the tutoring of the students who had gone to Denton High School. So far as I know, those were our three contacts.

Now for the second meeting, Ann Barnett urged and

insisted that Catherine Bell come. Catherine Bell was her cleaning woman, which kind of gave us pause, you know. We weren't sure...Ann is a very forthright...not aggressive, but she just charges right on ahead. I didn't want Catherine to think that she had to come because Ann was her employer. Actually, I think she just came once a week; I don't want to make it sound like Ann had a full-time maid or something.

Anyway, in recent years Catherine and I have gotten to be very, very good friends and close associates through working in NAACP. She's a very quiet person. She's from up near Clarksville, which...I mean, I'm just trying to imagine what kind of life she and her husband must have had growing up. She has become very, very much an activist in the black community. If you want to get something done, get Catherine behind it. She was the one who really organized that meeting with the Dallas Housing Authority. Somebody else got an award for it. A man presided, but the women did the organizing. Still in the black community, you have this very, very traditional gender role thing, but, as always, women were doing a lot of the background work, the organizational work.

But at that time, Catherine was not as well known in the black community as she is now. I don't know whether our organization had anything to do with her blossoming as a community leader, but she did start to take a role in

that and surprised everybody because she was much more withdrawn before that.

Harris: Could you describe the reaction of blacks when you were forming the group?

Brock: Well, Linnie was urging some black women to join, and she told us that they said, "What do those women want?" There was suspicion and distrust, unless they knew us personally and had some confidence in our motives or something. I think that Betty Kimble didn't hesitate when Jean asked her because Jean had established herself through the Girl Scout work and had helped to organize some of the first joint meetings between the black Girl Scout troop and her troop. And because of our work with the students and because the junior high group at our church was beginning to meet with some junior high students from Mount Pilgrim Methodist Church, our church had begun to make friends. But I think for black people who had those contacts, they probably were pretty willing to get involved because they accepted what we said: "We want to have a fellowship group where we'll get acquainted as people." Other people were quite suspicious, wanting to know what we were up to at this time.

Harris: Do you know of any who refused to join?

Brock: I don't know personally because I wouldn't have had contact with the people. I'm sure that Linnie will be able to tell you of people who didn't want to be interested at all.

Harris: Where was the first meeting held?

Brock: It was at Jean Kooker's house on Greenwood or one of those "woods" over there in northeast Denton. It was very tense because none of us had ever, ever been in an integrated meeting of that sort. There was much bustling about, serving refreshments and so forth, and the whole conversation was just as if race didn't exist and there were no problems. It was just strictly very minor, social chit-chat. We were all kind of floundering about for what we would talk about, but we discovered the very first thing that would last through many meetings--our children. We all had children, and so we fell to talking about our children--how many children do you have, how old are they, where do they go to school. We didn't ask the black women where their children went to school because we knew. They went to Fred Moore School. But, you know, when you have small children especially, you find that you have something in common. Then when they get older, maybe people that you felt really close to when they were small, you don't really have much in common with anymore. But that was our first bond, I think--our first topic of conversation.

Then the second meeting we had was a little more structured. We had this dialogue that was read, that we had brought home from presbytery. We'd gotten the material from our national organization. That opened up some general

discussion on racial issues and problems that black people had in the Denton Community. I remember Betty Kimble saying that she was waiting her turn in the Singer Sewing Shop, and a woman came in and started, as white southern women traditionally did, you know, just to shove on ahead because there was nobody waiting if there was only a black woman waiting. Betty said she stepped right up and said, "I believe I was here first," or, "It's my turn, " or something. I remember everyone's marveling and thinking that that took quite a lot of courage for her to do that. But that's the sort of of conversation we were having by the second meeting. But in the first meeting, that wouldn't have been possible; there was too much tension.

Harris: Who participated or who was at the first meeting?

Brock: I can't be sure. I know that Carol Riddlesperger was there. I remember the dress she had on (laughter). Isn't that wonderful? You don't remember these great monstrously important things, but you remember other minor things. Anyway, Carol Riddlesperger was there, and Dorothy Adkins, and I'm pretty sure Ann Barnett (maybe she didn't come until the second meeting, which was at her house) was there. Alice Kjer was there. Alice hadn't lived here for many years. She was driving the car back from Wichita Falls that day.

At Jean Kooker's house, Linnie McAdams was there, Betty

Kimble, and the three women I brought (Othella Hill, Norvell Williams, Gloria Denman). Then there was the wife of the pastor of Mount Pilgrim Methodist Church, but I don't remember her name because they weren't here very long. Her husband had gotten to be a friend of our pastor in the Denton Ministerial Alliance. He was the first black graduate of Perkins Seminary at SMU. Paul, our pastor, told her husband about the meeting and about some of the people who were coming. Then we called her, and so she had already had that connection. We had sort of established our ties with her.

Byrd: Was there a balance of blacks and whites? You stipulated that you were seeking this.

Brock: Pretty balanced, yes. I think there was maybe one more white woman, or maybe it was just completely balanced.

Bryd: Were any of these women mothers of the children that your children that your church group was tutoring prior to school integration?

Brock: Yes. Norvell Williams's daughter, Irene Williams, was a senior, and she went into Denton High School as a senior. None of the others were children of these women. One of the girls that I tutored a lot--and this is a little bit off to the edge, but I think it's an interesting story--her father, Willie Alexander, was a notorious bootlegger, and he had been in prison two or three times. He had been in gun fights and

had lost a leg--had had a leg amputated--as a result of that. Miss Alice Alexander in Denton today is one of the old matriarchs of the Denton community. Her father was Fred Moore, whom the school was named after, so they had been sort of an elite. She got her master's degree from Columbia University, which not too many people in the Denton black community did (chuckle).

But Willie Alexander's daughter was among these first six people. She was a junior when she went into Denton High School. She had had a baby two weeks before. She was working as some kind of nurse's aid or something--some kind of very lowly job--after school because she would come with a white uniform. Maybe she was working in a kitchen somewhere. Then she would go home, and this baby would cry all night. She didn't tell me this; the other girls told me. I knew it already, but they told me that she didn't want me to know. I said, "Well, that's all right. She's okay with me, anyway."

Her brother is now the pastor of Mount Pilgrim Church, and he said in a sermon not long ago--a friend of mine told me--that no matter what kind of conditions you come from, you can make it if you want to. All you have to do is work hard and keep your eye on the goal. This was the theme of his sermon, and he used himself as an example. He said, "Look at me. My father was a bootlegger, and he was in prison

several times." Well, Miss Alice Alexander really got upset because she said, "You're really disgracing our family!" As if that were a secret (laughter)! I mean, the first thing anybody ever says when they meet him, they say, "Oh, yes, you're Willie's boy!" (laughter) Even if he does have several graduate degrees and so forth!

But this young woman...the first night I asked them to write me a paragraph telling me something about themselves, and they said, "What's a paragraph?" Then she wrote a paragraph that did not have a capital letter or a verb or a punctuation mark in it. But it had some good stuff in it, and I could understand it. She made such wonderful improvement. I was helping her particularly with history. She got real excited about history, and she just loved Thomas Jefferson. She got real tangled up with what his attitude toward slavery was. She started reading about it on her own. On the first exam that she had, she made an F; and on the next exam she made a D+; and then she was making a C+. I was sort of drilling her and preparing her for exams, you know, going along, and I said, "Listen, you don't need any help. You know all this stuff!" She was making A's by the end of the semester in history because that's what she liked. She did fine despite the fact that she had a lot of problems.

The father of her child was one of those "Nike" guys, as we said. We had the Nike missile base up here north of

town, and so there were servicemen who came in temporarily. I understand this guy left several bits of evidence of his presence around (chuckle). He left several pregnant girls when he left town. Anyway, there was no chance of her getting any help, not that that's very much the thing in the teenage pregnancies, anyway. But she really did it all on her own, and she was a remarkable girl.

Anyway, this is not a completely separate story because I think that tutoring project is what made the other project go as much as anything, because, you know, a lot of people in the black community knew about it. They knew that it came out of this church and that this women's group was being formed by this church. So there was some carry-over there, I think.

Harris: How long did the school tutoring program last?

Brock: It lasted all year. Then after that, they just closed Fred Moore School down. I'm sure there was a lot of need for tutoring, but they had some structured programs, too, in the school, and it would have been way beyond our capacity to deal with that. Two of the students didn't stay in the program very much. They were the two sophomores, and they really didn't need much help. Once they got accustomed to the new demands that were being made on them, they adjusted pretty well. But Irene Williams, particularly, we worked with sometimes five days a week. She was very shy, painfully

shy, and terrified of what was happening. A lot of what we were doing was just going over and over and over material with her so that she would feel secure enough and have the confidence to go ahead and take the tests or make the recitation or whatever it was that she was going to be required to do. But we worked with her right up until graduation.

Lohr: Did all of the black students graduate?

Brock: Jimmy James was killed in an attempted holdup of a liquor store out near Lake Dallas. He was a sophomore, and he was very bright. His mother's name, Jewell James, is on that list. Two or three seniors graduated that year. It was very, very important--I mean, it was critical--that they graduate because not only was the whole white community looking at them, but the black community was saying, "Are they going to make it?" It really took a lot of nerve for them to be in the volunteer group to go at that stage and to be so different and to be stared at.

Byrd: When you start talking about the volunteers, does that have to do with the transfer policies to integrate the public schools in Denton?

Brock: I'm not sure what the structure was for that first year. I'm not sure. The school board decided that black people could go to Denton High School, but it wasn't going to be any lower than that. I don't know whether there was an

organized group to urge students or if that just kind of spontaneously grew out of the community. But at that point, anybody who wanted to could transfer, and six students chose to do that. They weren't selected by the school board or authorities, or anything like that. They may have been self-selected in some way in the black community. I'm sure that some of the black women would be able to tell you that, especially Norvell, whose daughter was one of the first people.

Lohr: How many of the black teachers at Fred Moore transferred after that into the public schools?

Brock: I think almost all of them went into the formerly all-white system. I think that was almost definitely required. I know that "Miss Alice," as we call her, did teach. She's getting pretty old now. I know she taught. Coach Collins, who's still at Denton High School, had a fantastic record among black high school football teams, and, in fact, Fred Moore School won state championships several times--you know, among the black high schools. He was made an assistant coach and has been a counselor, too, over there. He has really done a lot of work with black students particularly. But I think he's respected by everybody.

Byrd: Did the same apply to administrators?

Brock: Yes. Mr. Redd (Charles Redd) was a real...I don't know if he was a bad person, but I just know that all the students

just absolutely hated and despised him. At these tutoring sessions, they would tell stories among themselves--horror stories--about him. He was the principal, but when he registered to vote, he put "school superintendent." I remember seeing that on the voter registration. He was the principal of Fred Moore School, and he was given some kind of administrative job. A lot of jobs like that were created for black people when the schools desegregated. Students said he would go around saying, "Who's the big boss around here?" And the students would say, "Coach Collins" because they just loved Coach Collins. Redd would get so mad, and he would try to whip them, or they'd run away. These are some of the kinds of stories they told. They always had some kind of really hate-filled stories to tell (chuckle).

Byrd: We had another question we wanted some clarification for. At the time of the school desegregation in Denton, there were 157 students from outside the district, and we were wondering whatever became of those folks. Were you cognizant of that or anything?

Brock: No, I didn't know anything about it. Everybody was keeping their cards real close to their chest to keep from stirring up anything. Every little bit of information that came out stirred up some group. you know, so I have no idea. Carol Riddlesperger might know that.

Harris: Can you describe the white reaction to the desegregation?

Brock: Well, again here's this limited perspective, concerning preachers and teachers. Everybody was glad. I think probably there were people who didn't like it at all. I think a lot of people by that time probably thought, "It's inevitable." There were black people who resisted very strongly to the closing down of Fred Moore School, because they said, "Now we're not going to have a band; our girls won't ever be cheerleaders; our girls won't ever be twirlers." There wasn't any problems about the boys playing football, and that happened immediately. As you know, that was one of the great integrating forces in American life. There were a lot of people...for a long time, there wasn't much bus transportation available, and those kids had to walk a long way to get home because there wasn't anybody to pick them up; their families didn't have cars, or they were working. You still see little kids going under that railroad, kids that I worry about because they're too little to be out on those busy streets walking home. So I would imagine that there probably was quite a bit of black resistance.

I think the people in our group would have been in favor of desegregation because they were looking at the bigger picture; I mean, it was sort of a self-selected group thinking more in terms of a better education for their children and justice. Remember that this is

before Black Power, when separatism got to be romanticized and glorified and everything. I'm having some real interesting reverberations from that era in my class in Afro-American history at TWU. There are some people who don't want to hear the latest scholarship because they've already gotten the word that slaves were complete victims, that there was no way that they could do things on their own. We're kind of stuck back at about 1960.

Harris: Do you know if there were any attempts to bring court action against the board to force desegregation?

Brock: I don't know the answer to that specifically. I think that there probably was something along that line in the background, but I don't have any first-hand knowledge.

Harris: After the first meeting that you mentioned, were any officers selected?

Brock: No, I don't think so. Later on, we got to have a white chair and a black chair after we got that long list of people that I showed you. Then, we had a white chair and a black chair. No, we didn't have any structure at first. It was very informal. At each meeting we decided when and where we'd meet again, and then we'd talk about getting other people to come. The black women especially would say, "Well, I'm going to talk to So-and-so. Maybe she'll come." And we whites would sort of take that as a cue for maybe gradually increasing numbers.

Harris: You've mentioned that blacks did not have various forms of transportation. Not many had cars. How did blacks get to the meetings?

Brock: Well, that first time, I picked up Norvell Williams. I knew where her house was because I'd been going over there and working with Irene, her daughter. She said, "Well, I have two more people, my mother and my daughter, and my mother's house is right up the street." Well, her daughter's house is right up the street, too, but her daughter was at her mother's house. I think there were some cars available. When we met in the black community, I'm not sure how the women got there. If we were meeting other places, usually we would go pick them up simply because there was so little familiarity as much as it was furnishing a car. They knew so little about the Denton residential areas outside their own neighborhood, and we knew nothing about the black community, too.

Byrd: When you decided from meeting to meeting where to meet again, was that done by vote or just informally?

Brock: Informally. I don't believe this was spoken explicitly, but we kind of made an effort after the first couple of meetings to alternate between a white house and a black house. I think the second meeting was at Ann Barnett's, which was on Maid Marian. Then after that, we met at Betty Kimble's house and then, I think--I don't know--maybe back at mine and then

a black house. I know we met at Norvel Williams's house once, and I know we met at Othella Hill's house. They lived on south Wood Street, where Pleasant Grove Baptist Church is, and that was one of the few areas that had pretty decent houses, where they felt we could have a meeting like that. We weren't into conspicuous consumption or anything like that, so it really didn't matter.

Byrd: When was the decision made from meeting to meeting as to what the agenda might be or programatic goals?

Brock: Well, I think maybe after about the third meeting, it may be that that's when that very organized meeting occurred after Ann Barnett got involved. Her husband was at the Presbyterian Synod office, and he had a lot of educational materials. The national Presbyterian Church, of course, was pushing desegregation and improved race relations and so forth, and I have a feeling that probably Ann rounded up materials for us that would be the basis of discussion and program suggestions. I'm not sure about that, but I seem to remember things surfacing. I think it was several meetings before there'd be anything like a committee or anybody who was going to be a chair of a meeting. I remember it being pretty free-form right at first—pretty unstructured.

Harris: Was there anyone who dominated the first meetings?

Brock: Well, there was Linnie, who was very vocal and very articulate-- Linnie McAdams. Jean Kooker, at whose house we were meeting...

I remember Jean doing a lot of bustling and talking. I think by the time we had that program, that little dialogue and then and an actual discussions, I remember Betty Kimble really coming to the forefront. I gave the example of her at the Singer Sewing Center. I remember a very quiet Mrs. Hill, that older lady, speaking up quite a bit at both the first meetings. She was more experienced and more at ease than some of the younger black women, I think.

Lohr: You've mentioned that at the second meeting you began talking about issues?

Brock: Yes.

Lohr: What issues did you start talking about?

Brock: Well, we started talking about race relations and difficulties that blacks had living in Denton and even maybe moving in a direction of what could be done about it, not as our being an activist group but maybe working through our churches or through pressuring the school board as individuals to make some changes. We always had that in mind. Not that we would be an activist group, but we would share concerns and think of ways that problems could be solved without thinking of our group as being specifically the instrument for finding those solutions and maybe using other groups that we had connections with to bring about change. For instance, this would involve maybe stepping up the desegregation efforts in Girl Scouts or having more joint meetings between young people's

church groups. These would be examples of steps that could grow out of our group without being officially a project of the group.

Byrd: How does one achieve putting pressure upon the school board?

Brock: Actually, at that time, so few people...nobody ever attended school board meetings, and to have three people to go and sit and watch them just shook them up terribly. I mean, it was really easier than you might think. Now you'd have to drop a bomb to get their attention because they're so contemptuous now. They have a lot of public attention now. But it was all cut and dried; it was strictly a rubber stamp for the administration, and has continued to be that way until recently. There have been some upheavals. If you read the Record-Chronicle, you're aware of those.

Every one of us knew somebody personally who was on the school board, and they would come up and say, "What do you want? Is there something on the agenda that you're particularly interested in?" We said, "No, we just want to see what the school board is doing." We weren't supposed to be watching the school board. Then we would speak up. I mean, there would be times that you'd still have to get on the agenda way ahead of time before you can speak about anything at a Denton school board meeting. But we would get in touch with school board members individually and say, "Well, you were having this discussion about so-and-so, and we think quite a few people in Denton...." It was more

personal. I don't know that our group--this group that we're talking about--had any particular program there. I think that after I left in 1967, they did do more of that. They organized it, and it was a larger group. It was publicly known. There were more black women coming into the group who were professionals because black professionals were beginning to appear in Denton, and that was a part of the changing job picture. It became more of an activist group after 1967, and it would be organized groups that would go before the school board and make requests. Nowadays, of course, you can get a story in the paper and get results. But at that time, Riley Cross was still in the saddle then, and he was very selective about what he considered to be news, as when I told you about the black-bordered story when he didn't want to report on the shooting incident because there were rabble-rousers standing in line there who were causing trouble.

Byrd: At that point you weren't fielding candidates for the board itself?

Brock: No, no. Later, there was some of that. You'd have to ask Ann Barnett or Pat Cheek or somebody if they ever actively ran a candidate or endorsed a candidate. I think that they might have done that. If something like that happened, it would more likely to be informal, indirect. Ann Barnett ran for the school board one time. Carol Riddlesperger ran

and was elected.

Harris: Who was at the second meeting? Were there any additions?

Brock: Yes. I remember Catherine Bell being an addition. I don't remember who the additions were, but I do know that there were probably three or four more people than at the first meeting and that there were more black people than there were white people. But we were still pretty much evenly divided.

Harris: Had anyone dropped out after that first meeting?

Brock: No, we really maintained a lot of interest with that group for a long time. Then later, it just got to be one of many groups. We had all sorts of opportunities for knowing people of different races or being involved in projects of mutual interest. There were a lot of different organizations that would serve some of the purposes for which our group was formed. At first, I think there was a very real commitment to that as the only way to do some of these things, and I don't remember any immediate falling away or anything.

Byrd: Would you describe some of the other activities beyond attending the school board meetings?

Brock: Well, we were primarily a social group at first. We had picnics for all our families; we started having an annual

Christmas dinner, and it was sort of a covered dish dinner. So those were two annual, big things. In those early years, we didn't do much except meet and discuss and visit. As I said, things were coming out of the meeting, but they weren't through some structured group from the organization itself.

We began, after a while, to have much more structured programs, and we had speakers come in and speak on items that would be of particular interest to particularly the black community. For instance, in the late 1960s, we had a whole year's project on jobs. I mentioned that before. Elneita Dever was the chair then. We had people from different businesses in town come in and talk about job opportunities in their businesses--how many employees they had; whether they frequently had openings; if they did, what were the qualifications for those kinds of jobs; how could people best go about applying for a job; what kind of people were most likely going to be hired. Elneita became a sort of an informal clearinghouse for information about jobs, and people in the community who were looking for jobs called Elneita and said, "Well, where can I look?" So the group sort of acted as a catalyst there for employment.

We also learned a great deal about the community. By the late 1960s, by the time I came back from Turkey--this may have happened even before I went away in 1967--we were having programs. We were having speakers; we had topics. We were getting more like a ladies club. You all don't know about ladies clubs anymore, but they used to be people who sat around and had a program. We did a lot of that. But they were all aimed at things that would be of particular interest or use in improving race relations or improving the lot of blacks in the Denton community. Those were kind of pretty constant themes. So they weren't like programs like the Ariel Club, which is a study club here, would be having, you know, items of general interest. They all had some kind of focus that never lost sight of the fact that we were a desegregation-type group, that we had social interests that we were promoting. I hate so much to use that expression "racial justice" because I don't know anything that sounds so vainglorious (chuckle). I don't know anything else to say.

Byrd: In your earlier description, you seem to indicate that group was somewhat politicized. Were there any evangelical-types that went over the remnants of maybe the Old Guard?

Brock: In political campaigns, this group was very much a nucleus for campaigning in the black community. I think of particularly...let me be sure I get my chronology here before I

can say this. But I'm sure that our group was very much on the ground and working by the 1964 election campaign--the fall of 1964. We worked very hard in the Democratic campaign.

In 1964 the issues were so clear-cut. There were no ambiguities in that election. There wasn't any problem with our asking, "Are you going to support So-and-so?" in our group; I mean, our group was totally Democratic. It might have been in other years, but that year was one of those...you know, the Goldwater campaign: "A choice, not an echo." And it really was. If you were interested in racial issues, if you were interested in better opportunities for blacks, there was just no way that you could have been supporting the Goldwater campaign.

Alonzo Jamison, this legislator that I was telling you about, asked me for suggestions of some black person to be on the committee, and it couldn't be a man because he would have lost his job. There wasn't any man whose job was secure enough to take a job like that. He was thinking about Jewel James, who's on your list, because she had cleaned for them, you know (chuckle). She was very outspoken and very much interested in everything, but she wasn't the right person to be selected. Anyway, I suggested Othella Hill, and she did a wonderful job. She was very quiet but still didn't mind speaking up in those county steering committee meetings for the Johnson campaign. I was on that committee. For the first

time I had taken a role like that. I was very much working in the background. I actually ran a couple of county campaigns for a gubernatorial candidate who was running against Allan Shivers once. But somebody else was the front for the campaign. For all sorts of reasons, we did it that way. The 1964 campaign was the first time the two wings of the Democratic Party had been really unified, and we had a lot of financial support for that campaign. Mrs. Hill gave a Democratic tea in her house. It was very well attended, and our group sort of formed the nucleus. I mean, white people from our group attended, and then the rest of the people were black women in the community. That was an opportunity for some of us to get to know some new people from the black community.

Later, the group got very much involved in the street repaving project, and Trudy Foster, who had no been involved in the early days, became sort of a spokesperson for that.

We had quite a controversy over urban renewal; it was a very divisive issue. We decided to drop it as an official topic with our group because we felt that there were two strongly opposed ways of thinking on that subject. The urban renewal referendum was defeated, and then I believe it must have been after that that Trudy Foster became very much involved in different kinds of pressure activities. I think I wasn't here, so you'll have to ask other people about this--how they actually did manage to get some of the streets paved.

Byrd: You said this urban renewal thing was divisive within the group?

Brock: Yes.

Byrd: My understanding is that it was defeated by the electorate at-large. Who was for it, and who was against it? Was there a balance of opponents and proponents of it within the group itself, or was it evenly split as blacks and whites for and blacks and whites against?

Brock: It was not evenly split that way. It was more likely to be whites for and blacks against, but not totally. A man that most of us had never heard of before got very much involved in this, and at that time he established a paper called the Denton County Enterprise. His name is Jerry Stout. He became very active in the black community, spreading the word that urban renewal was really a plot to destroy their homes and see that they didn't have a place to live in Denton.

Maybe urban renewal wasn't a good way to solve some of the problems, but money wasn't available through tax sources, and it didn't seem to be available anyplace else. Some of us felt that this would be an expedient way to get the streets paved. We certainly didn't think of it in terms of destroying housing and so forth, but some people were fearful that, while it might not be passed for that purpose, it might be possible once it was in place. They

were afraid of some of the things that were happening in other cities, where complete neighborhoods or communities were just wiped out under urban renewal. That did happen in some areas, generally in much, much larger cities, of course, than Denton. But there was a lot of misinformation spread and a lot of misapprehension, and it got to be a very emotional issue, and we just decided that we couldn't discuss it in our group.

Byrd: How did the property ownership map of southeast Denton look? Were these mostly individually-owned plots, or was there, say, an absentee landlord who owned large tracts?

Brock: My impression was that there was a lot of absentee landlordism at that time, and still is. Now some of the rental property was owned by blacks, and still is. I don't know this for sure, but I get the impression that the Logans, who are an old Denton black family, probably owned quite a bit of property. The Logans run a shoe repair shop that is just this side of the Campus Theatre, just before you get to the square. That shop was in the 1950s on the north side of the square, and that was the only black-owned downtown business. The Logans have made a lot of money in that business, and they've made other investments, and their family in general is pretty prosperous, I think. They work very, very hard, and they do excellent work. I've always thought that they probably owned rental property. I know that the Fred Moore family owned rental property. People who had been in

some position to have a regular income tended not only to own their own homes but maybe own some rental property, too. But that was not necessarily the exploitive absentee landlord. It would maybe involve a family that was moderately prosperous, which would just simply mean that you had had a regular income coming in. These terms are relative. That family might own a rent house, and a relative would live in it for a very small sum. But I think that there no doubt was some white ownership that was guilty of a great deal of neglect --you know, the typical absentee landlord syndrome--but I wouldn't have any way of saying percentages or anything like that.

Harris: I have read that there was a banker involved--Mark Hanna-- and he was a proponent of urban renewal. Do you know anything about his role in this?

Brock: I don't remember that. I guess he would have been at what was then First National Bank. I remember that Tom Harpool was asked to be the chairman of the urban renewal campaign after it was really already going, because he was very highly respected in the community and was from an old Denton family. But it was too much out of control by that time for him to have much impact, I would think. It could be that there were banking interests who were promoting it with the idea that, you know, they'd be able to make quite a bit of money through urban development. But I don't know. I was doing dishes and

washing diapers and all sorts of stuff, so I couldn't be plugged in to everything that was going on.

Byrd: I have one question. In addition to the fact that the streets weren't paved, I was interested in whether the city supplied water and sewage services out there to that end of town... storm sewers or anything like that. Was that a separate district?

Brock: I would doubt very seriously that there was a system of storm sewers. Linnie and Burk lived in in a little shack--there's no other way to describe it--and I had a couple of tutoring sessions at their house, which was right across the street from Fred Moore school, just to the west on a street called Cross Timbers, which is still there. They had running water in their house, but I doubt very seriously that they were hooked onto a sewer line. Right next door to them was one of those horrible absentee landlord sort of things. It could have been transplanted from the slave quarters on a plantation or from a sharecropper's cabin. Well, in sharecropping it's more scattered out. But it was sort of an "L"-shaped complex. Maybe they weren't connected at the corner, but there was a row of one-room shanties or two-room shanties down on this side (gesture) and another row on the west. Their only source of water was a faucet out there, and I would see the kids come out and get it. I got interested in a family that was just...you know, they'd been cut off of public

assistance--aid to dependent children--because the mother had had a baby, and this, of course, means that there was a man somewhere around; and if there was a man anywhere, they couldn't get public assistance. So at least I got them some food on a regular basis, so they had some food regularly and a few things like that. But I went over there. They lived in one of these places, and it was unbelievable. And the flies... I mean, even at Thanksgiving the flies around that place were terrible. They had outdoor toilets--privies.

Betty Kimble would be able to tell you this because her street, Lakey Street, was a main street that goes down in front of the American Legion Hall, and she has a very nice house up there. Even now...I parked my car in front of her house because at the last minute I had to work in an election last fall at the Lakey Street American Legion Hall. I parked my car up in front of Betty's house, thinking that there'd be a lot of traffic and that they'd need parking places and so on. It was windy that day, and when I went back up there, my car was covered--covered--with dust. The wind comes across areas that are not developed, not paved, and so forth; so, really, having the paving there can be sort of considered a gesture because it is just covered over with so many layers of dust and dirt. I think the maintenance is not very good, and also it is in the proximity of some really bad places. But I know in the 1960s there was no regular sewer system at

all. Water would be just hit and miss.

Byrd: The reason why I asked that question is because I didn't understand that, in terms of urban renewal, were they going to have to completely start from the ground up or maybe beneath the ground up or whether to replace or refurbish the system already there.

Brock: I really don't know, but I think that probably anything that was done would have had to have been from scratch.

One of the things that really is hard for my younger students to understand is that in the early 1960s, everything was very clear-cut. I've thought about this a lot during the Bork confirmation hearings. When I look at positions that he took in the early 1960s, his reaction to different Supreme Court decisions and the writings that he's done, I thought, "How could he have been so totally out of step?" I mean, there were people like Senator Eastland and Strom Thurmond and people like that, but they were just mindless --total reactionaries. I think that today younger people, particularly, don't realize that that was one time in our history when it was very easy to determine between right and wrong. Now very rarely in your life do you have those clear-cut choices. Usually, everything is so muddled grey that you can't even recognize the grey. But there was no question about what the right thing was so many times, and for him to be so totally wrong in the context of those times was terrifying to me.

I know there could be worse nominees, and we're probably going to see them in these next few weeks (chuckle). But it scares me that a man of his education and his obvious intelligence and the kind of associations that he had had would be so out of step with his times and with what was considered the best thinking. I'm saying that because theirs happened to agree with my thinking.

But those were good times, in a way, because we knew what was right, and maybe there were some ways to do something about it. I don't think anything is that simple these days. It's sort of like people who look back so nostalgically to World War II, because it was strictly good guys and bad guys, you know. That really wasn't true, either, but very few people had any difficulties with that at the time.

Harris: What brought about the demise of the group?

Brock: I think irrelevance.

Harris: Why do you think it had become irrelevant?

Brock: It had outlived its usefulness as a unique group, as a forum, as a place that people could exchange ideas and get to know each other as individual human beings. There were a lot better opportunities for interaction between the races. Also, black power helped to kill it off, because some of the younger women who were coming in, professional women, had some of the ideas of black power. It would be easy, I think, from that perspective to look at that group as maybe a reactionary

group, that we weren't being militant enough, we weren't being activist enough, we weren't sinking our teeth into the real problems in the community.

Harris: When did the group stop meeting?

Brock: It was sometime in the early 1970s, and I think it would probably be maybe late 1971 or early 1972. Pat Cheek is really the authority on that period. I don't know if you'll be interviewing her or not. You'll certainly get a lot of lively comments if you do. She was the white president at sort of a crucial time, and I think that was in either 1969, 1970, or 1970-1971.

Harris: Would you like to take a short break? We've been here awhile.

Brock: Aren't you all through (chuckle)? I'm not tired, but what else can you ask (laughter)? [Tape recorder turned off.]

Harris: What feelings and perceptions do you have of the group in looking back now?

Brock: Well, I feel very sentimental, and I feel like those were special associations. The friendships that were formed then somehow seemed more special than friendships that grew out of some other associations. Really, there is some self-righteousness involved in that attitude, but we felt like we were a special group; and we felt like that the friendships that grew out of there had some special qualities. There have been other spin-offs. When I became active in the NAACP in recent years, again I could fall back on friendships

from that organization. Maybe some people in the NAACP don't welcome a white member, but because of those earlier associations, I have ties with different people who are very active--Catherine Bell and her husband, for example. I think that without this organization, I wouldn't have that base, and it would be much harder for me to have a role in that group.

Harris: What impacts do you think the group had?

Brock: It would be easy to exaggerate the impact that we had. I think the least that I can say is that the group had some impact on individual lives, perceptions, friendships, and so forth. It's possible that our group showed some people in the black community that there were people who were interested in friendship and associations of equals and who didn't have any particular axe to grind, which was something that was not easy to accept by a lot of blacks. I think that knowledge of our group probably existed well outside of the group itself, certainly in the black community, less so in the white community because in the white community it would have been merely irrelevant. I don't know that we had any lasting effect on school desegregation or paved streets or open housing or better race relations. I wish I could look at all those areas and say, "Well, yes, we really had a central role in that." But I really think that probably a lot of changes in those areas came because of general social

forces. Our group was maybe some small part of that.

Lohr: What was your life like after the group formed?

Brock: This is something that we discussed in answer to the question about feminism, as you know. We were very much the women of the 1950s and early 1960s, following the prescribed role. The white women who were involved were. The black women were trying to be that if they could financially, since most of them worked because they had to. They maybe thought they should be doing what some of us were doing. The white women all had a lot of children. The Riddlespergers had four; the Adkinses had five; the Barnetts had five; we had three; the Kookers had four. The black women were not having so many children, which I think is significant. But we were very much into serving homemade dessert every day, putting three elaborate meals on the table, keeping the floors scrubbed and polished, making curtains, making our own clothes, making our children's clothes, teaching Sunday School, not being too forward, not trying to take leadership roles in anything where the men were involved--doing that whole white, miserable 1950's domesticity cult bit.

Two of the women in our group, Dorothy Adkins and Jean Kooker, and Linnie McAdams, too, got real involved in a non-inclusive language issue in the church a few years ago. This involved changing the wording of hymns and so forth. You may have heard of this controversy. It's been more in the

open in the Methodist Church. I kept asking those people, when we'd have these discussions...in the meantime I'd come back to school and gotten my doctorate, and at the time these big discussions were going on, I was teaching at Tarrant County Junior College and commuting. I didn't know what they were talking about. I said, "Where were you people ten years ago? I know where you were. You were wallowing in domesticity. What's all this latter-day feminism? You're a little late with this symbolic thing." Linnie, who had been to a couple of general assemblies...she's very articulate; she's very attractive; she's very, very bright; she's stayed on top of the issues. She had gone to general assembly, which is the big thing in the Presbyterian Church, you know, and she said, "Well, as you get closer to the center of power there, they show more and more contempt for women." I said, "Well, you don't remove that contempt by changing the wording in hymns. Is that likely to increase the contempt or decrease it? You remove it by getting into positions of power yourself and then telling those guys to go to hell." I said, "I never hear any sexist talk on my particular campus at TCJC because our dean is a woman. They wouldn't dare!" The answer is to get into positions of power, not to sit around doing all these little things.

So we were probably in the same place in 1964 in our thinking about issues of that sort, and we probably moved

in a lot of different directions after 1970, 1975. We would find ourselves much less agreeable. I think most of us would have agreed on major issues at that time. Most of the white women would have, and I really don't know that we got enough below the surface to know for sure how black women...their lives were different. Their husbands were in a much more insecure place financially because there just weren't opportunities for black men. We were very much the suburbia or small town, conventional wives and mothers--the white women were. The black women were that way, too, as much as they could be under the circumstances. I'm sure that we wouldn't have fit any demographic model; I mean, we were certainly all better educated than the norm. There would be nobody in our group that wasn't a college graduate, and I don't think you'd find any sampling of women like that in a model. Certainly, if you took a sampling in our neighborhood, that wouldn't be true. We were academics. We were all college graduates; all of us had graduate degrees.

Harris: Do you feel that the group was more for the black women or white women?

Brock: It's hard to say. At first I think it was more for white women. I think that we few white women felt that it was very, very important to us, that we had to make some kind of a stand. We weren't making a stand in the open, symbolic sense because we were actually trying to keep it quiet.

But we felt we had to do something, and that was something we could do. That wasn't going to change the world, but in this certain small circle, it was going to affect our lives. We felt the benefit very, very strongly. Whether the black women felt a comparable benefit, I really wouldn't be able to say.

Harris: How was the name of your group decided on?

Brock: Well, it's kind of an unwieldy name, and I don't know that we discussed it exclusively. I don't remember the mechanics of how it was, but I do remember that we had to get all of the elements in there--Denton and women and fellowship and Christian. That's just a description of what our group was. We were a fellowship group, and that was very important. We weren't an activist group; we weren't a study group. We were primarily a fellowship.

Lohr: Was the word "Christian" taken off?

Brock: Yes, it was dropped, but I don't know exactly when or why. I know later there were people who were involved in the group--and I think this would be particularly true of some of the black women who were active in the later years--who didn't particularly come out of any church background or affiliation. But at the beginning, this was something that all of us had in common. We were all very active in the churches, and also we felt that what we were trying to do--our general aim and our specific aims--very much had Christian motivation.

Also, including that word helped to kind of give it a little respectability for black women that we were trying to attract because church organizations and church-related organizations were very much at the center of black community life. I don't think there was much calculation in it, but maybe a little bit.

Lohr: Was there a feeling that this name lent respectability?

Brock: Perhaps not consciously, but I think that was very much there. We were all respectable people. We were very nicely dressed when we went to our meetings. Of course, this was before the hippie days. I remember going to a civil rights meeting (before Martin Luther King came too much to the forefront) at Pleasant Grove Baptist church on Wood Street, and until Linnie McAdams came in, I was the only woman there without a hat on. I think that black women have tended through the years to dress up more for meetings and for ceremonial things and to generally be better dressed or pay more attention to dress. That was just an outward sign. But we were very much ladies getting dressed up to go to a ladies' meeting when we went. Even though it was never articulated, we were respectable people, and that was a part of the Christian element, and that was a part of our having that in our name. We didn't want any question about what kind of a group we were. None of us would see that as a goal now (laughter). I don't think a single one of us would

care a bean about whether we were respectable or not or whether people thought we were respectable.

Lohr: Why do you think it was more important then?

Brock: Well, women had a much more restricted role. We had to do things a certain way, or we'd lose credibility completely. Also, what we were doing was maybe a little more pioneering. I know this sounds so bizarre to say that going to somebody's house and sitting around having pie and coffee was pioneering, but it was. It really was. So we had to be very much in the mainstream; we weren't to be radical, even though there were certain implications of radicalism in what we were doing.

Later, at the height of the student protest movement, one of the major points of contention between activists and non-activiists was dress and hairstyle and that sort of thing. I think now that Linnie McAdams would be concerned with whether she could get a certain measure through the city council rather than whether somebody thinks she is respectable. I'm on the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the only concern I would have for respectability is whether I was able to influence somebody's vote, and I think more in terms of how to do that. At our meeting last week, I got 7-0 votes on two little pieces of sidewalk. I know this sounds very strange, but they were major issues that in the past have been voted down, and it's going to be something important

in the future. But I have to sit around thinking, "Now how can I bring this result about?" I think that's not really a question of image now, but I think image had to be important to us in 1964.

Lohr: Were the black husbands in favor of this group? Did any of them have any doubts or questions about whether their wives should join?

Brock: I don't really know, but I would rather imagine so simply because of the insecurity of the job situation. Did I tell you the story about Burk McAdams before? Linnie and her husband have been estranged for many years. We had invited Linnie and Burk to different meetings or different events at church, and they had refused. He was a very quiet and reserved sort of person. Then all of a sudden we had some kind of meeting--it was some little program run by the Church in Society Committee; it wasn't anything very important--and we invited them, and they came. I said to Burk, "Why do you come to this when we've invited you to so many interesting things that you wouldn't come to?" He had on a suit, of course, as always, and he had a little, tiny pin on his lapel, and it was a UAW pin. He said, "I had to go through my probation period to become a full-fledged member of the union. If I attended a meeting at a white church and I wasn't a union member, I could lose my job." What a revelation! I don't know if that's true, but he had lived in an

environment where he had to be that cautious.

I think a lot of men were in that sort of position, and they had somehow survived by not rocking the boat, by not doing gratuitous things that might turn out to be real troublemakers. So I would imagine that there were some.

The women seemed to have more social skills. When we had our joint things with our husbands, it was harder for some of the black husbands to participate fully. At first there was quite a bit of shyness and lack of interaction.

Lohr: How about the children? Did any of the white children form lasting relationships with any of the black children?

Brock: Well, our group didn't involve the children very much. My children got to be very good friends with the McAdams children, but it's possible that they would have without this group, so I wouldn't want to base it on that. Of course, the McAdamses eventually became members of our church and became very, very prominent and active, and so our kids also had that association. Before that, we did some visiting back and forth, some playing. Probably the group solidified that or maybe added some extra element, but that wasn't the sole explanation for it.

Byrd: Any other questions? Well, I think we've covered pretty much the questions that we, of course, had predetermined. I'd like to thank you for taking your time to visit with us.

Brock: Well, it's been fun for me because, as you can tell, it's

something that I think is important, and certainly those times are important, and that's part of the total picture.