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Interview with

DOROTHY ADKINS

November 17, 1987

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Richard Byrd

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Approved:

Dorothy Adkins
(Signature)

Date:

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Oral History Collection

Dorothy Adkins

Interviewer: Richard Byrd

Date of Interview: November 17, 1987

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Mr. Byrd: This is Richard Byrd interviewing Dorothy Adkins for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 17, 1987, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mrs. Adkins in order to obtain her recollections concerning the Denton Christian Women's Interracial Fellowship.

Okay, Mrs. Adkins, could I get a little background information concerning where you were born, when, and where you went to school and things of that nature?

Mrs. Adkins: I'm a native Texan. I was born in Lubbock, Texas. I spent most of my young years in the Rio Grande Valley. My family moved there when I was quite young. I lived in several of the small towns in the Rio Grande Valley. I finished high school in Falfurrias, which is just north of the Rio Grande Valley. I went to college in San Marcos at Southwest Texas State Teachers College (so-called at that time). Then I took my master's degree in Greeley, Colorado, at Colorado State College. I spent seven years teaching before I married. I raised a family for twenty years and then went back to

teaching and taught another seventeen years. Now I'm retired.
All of my teaching was in elementary grades.

Byrd: How long have you been in Denton?

Adkins: Since 1950, thirty-seven years.

Byrd: And you taught in the Denton public schools?

Adkins: Yes. I taught at the North Texas Laboratory School for three years before it closed and then fifteen years in the Denton Independent School District.

Byrd: So you were teaching, then, when the Brown decision came down in 1954.

Adkins: No, I was not teaching at that time. The schools were not integrated in Denton in 1954. I did not go back to teaching until 1968.

Byrd: When the decision was made, can you describe what your reactions were to the Supreme Court decision?

Adkins: Well, I think I was raised to be relatively non-prejudiced, and I was in favor of integrating as quickly and as smoothly as possible. I think that that belief is what led up to the formation of the Interracial Fellowship--a desire to see that the integration of the schools went through as smoothly as possible.

Byrd: When you were growing up, had you lived in, say, an "open" neighborhood or an integrated neighborhood?

Adkins: Well, in the Valley, of course, it was mostly the Hispanics--Mexicans, as we called them then--who were there. They were

very much segregated at that time. In fact, in the schools I went to, the Mexican group of young people or children were kept in their own separate schools until they became proficient in English, and it was not until they got into high school that there were both groups together in school. Although I was not as aware at the time as I am now, there was a great deal of prejudice, and there were things that kept the group apart. I think that as I matured, I realized that this went on, and, again, I didn't want my children to go through that when the schools integrated with the blacks in Denton.

Bryd: How about when you were going to college?

Adkins: Well, one of the things that happened when I was going to college was when...I taught school one year in Greeley, Colorado, after I'd gone to school up there. One of the things that some of my fellow teachers said to me when I went up there was, "Oh, you might have to teach black children up there!" My reaction was, "So what!" (chuckle) I didn't see that that would make any difference. So I think that I was raised to accept people as people regardless of their race.

Byrd: Speaking of the formation of the group of women here in Denton, were you one of the original participants?

Adkins: Yes. Yes, I was one of the original group that met together. Let me give you a little bit of background on that to tie it into the integration of the schools. Really, my children

were involved before I was because one of the things that we tried to do in our church was to get some of the children together--the young people together--that would be brought in an integrated high school. So our youth group at the church met with a couple of the black groups from the black churches in southeast Denton and had meetings together and attended church together.

We met with quite a bit of resistance in the neighborhood, incidentally. When they had some socials together in a white neighborhood, this caused quite a furor in that neighborhood by doing that. When we saw what was happening there, we decided that what we needed to do is get some adults together, too. So it was a group of four or five of each group that met together in a home and discussed the fact that we really didn't know each other very well, didn't understand each other very well; and we felt that this kind of fellowship and understanding each other would be another step toward helping our children get used to the desegregation in the schools.

Byrd: You say you met in a white neighborhood. Was the resistance from the white residents?

Adkins: Yes, from the white residents because we were having the black children come over and socialize in their neighborhood.

Byrd: Was there any such resistance amongst the black community--their parents or neighbors--to any of those folks for coming?

Adkins: I didn't hear of any if there was. I guess you'd have to ask

the black people about that. As far as I know, there was none. As I said, they went to each other's churches, and at least my children were not aware of any ill feeling toward them in attending the churches over there.

Byrd: When we earlier talked to Dr. Brock, she was talking about the idea of formulating such a group. Were you in attendance at the presbyterial meeting in Wichita Falls?

Adkins: Yes, I think I was, although I don't send my roots back or my motivation back to that meeting as Dr. Brock does. But it was definitely a meeting within our church, a feeling within our church. This movement came from the group of our women in our church that started the formation. Several things led to it. It was the feelings of that young people's group and the studies we were doing in our women's group as well as meeting with the large groups of women in the presbyterial that motivated us to do something about the racial harmony within the community and communications between the different groups.

Byrd: But you were present at the first meeting, that first assembly?

Adkins: Yes. The first meeting that we had of this group was at Dr. Earl Kooker's house. There were, as I said, four or five there, and I'm not absolutely certain which four of five. I know that Mrs. Kooker and Dr. Brock were there; the minister's wife who had been sponsoring the young people and doing work with them was there; and Dr. Alice Kjer was also at

that time, and Alice Kjer was in that group, there was myself and Linnie McAdams, who is now on the city council. Linnie was a friend of Dr. Brock's at that time, so she came and also brought friends or hers that she knew would be interested. The other blacks that came were Mrs. Othella Hill and her daughter, Norvell Williams, and Bessie Hardin. Mrs. Hill is dead, but the others are still here in the Denton community. We are all still good friends. We made long-lasting friendships through this group. The group expanded very quickly. We had as many as seventy-five members in our group over the years.

Byrd: At that first meeting, was there a formal agenda, or just how was it done?

Adkins: More of just a discussion: "What do we want to do; how do we want to do it?" I don't believe we even elected officers for a while. I think we just got together and talked about what the problems were and where we wanted to go. Then we started bringing our friends into the meetings. One of the things that resulted for me out of those early meetings was... as I said, I thought I grew up fairly unprejudiced until I found a lot of hidden prejudices that I didn't even know were there. I found out that some ideas I had were very hurtful to the other group. I felt that it was really an enlightening experience.

We also then started making arrangements for our families

to get together. It was very early in the group that we started having a Christmas party every year that included the husbands. Then that expanded to a picnic in the summer that included whole families, where we had all the families get together. And one time each year, we would try to go as a group to one of the churches in either the white or the black community and worship together.

So those were the things that we used to try to expand our group in just understanding and knowing about each other. This happened before we got involved in actual projects, which grew out of the group, too. But the first aim was just to get acquainted and understand what was going on in both communities and what was important to both communities and ways that we could increase that friendship and that understanding.

Byrd: Could you identify some of the mutual concerns of the black community during this period in 1964 when this group was formed?

Adkins: Well, we found out a lot of things that we didn't know about the black community. For one thing, we found out that the women, when they went into the stores, couldn't try on garments before they bought them. They were not allowed to try on garments in the stores. Of course, we were vaguely aware of, but not really concerned about, the segregation within the movie theaters. We found out about the lack of employment

opportunities for the blacks in communities, that there were some stores that never hired blacks at all. So these were things that were immediate concerns to us.

Of course, we were trying to make the integration of schools go smoothly. When Fred Moore School was going to be closed, we were worried about the fact that many of the black students did not have the educational background that was going to make them successful, and we started a tutoring program for those students, to try to help them. Most of them returned to homes where both parents were gone and working, so they didn't have the chance to get the help with their homework that they needed. So we organized a tutoring program for helping them do their homework so that they would be more successful in school.

Byrd: Now was this solely within the group--this tutoring program you were talking about?

Adkins: Well, our group sponsored it, but we called on college students. We had college students who volunteered, and we tried to train them. The actual tutoring itself was done a great deal by the college students who had time to meet with these others, but it was organized by our group.

Byrd: You mentioned something about desegregation in the movie theaters. Could you elaborate a little more on that for me?

Adkins: Well, I don't know a great deal about it. I know that there

was a group at the college that got more involved with that than we did. There was at one time a picketing of one of the theaters to try to get them to not segregate and not discriminate in that movie. I think that was organized on campus, so you'd have to get the information about that from someone else. But I know that some of our group joined in on that march to the theater to try to bring pressure to end that segregation.

Byrd: The reason I asked is that I'd heard a considerable amount about that, and I've done some background reading about the Campus Theatre.

Adkins: You probably know as much about it as I do, or more (chuckle).

Byrd: This was back as early as 1961, as I recall, and your group was still addressing this in 1964.

Adkins: Yes.

Byrd: How long did this kind of practice continue?

Adkins: I don't know just exactly when it was stopped. I really don't.

Byrd: Could you describe any other manifestations of discrimination that had been carried out in the business community by retailers and what-have-you?

Adkins: Well, we got marginally involved when we found out about what our women friends were experiencing in the retail stores. We had some stamps printed up that said that we believed in and approved of equal opportunity hiring.

I don't remember the exact wording, but we put these on the envelope or on our checks when we paid our bills to try to encourage the businesses to be more open in their hiring policies.

We got involved in trying to integrate the neighborhoods. One of the things that was immediately evident was that when you desegregated the schools, because the blacks all lived in one part of Denton, they were the ones that had to be bused. In order to desegregate the schools, they closed Fred Moore, and then all of the blacks had to be bused to school. We were interested in desegregating housing, too, and we had a little pledge card that we went around with and got people to sign--a good neighborhood policy that they would accept open housing. When we would get a group within a neighborhood, then we had a map where we kept track of neighborhoods where we felt like that housing would be open. We kind of canvassed Denton on that, and that's another way that we tried to bring about integration.

Byrd: What other kinds of activities...you said earlier that you had rather an informal agenda before you became involved in social issues.

Adkins: Well, after we found and located the problems, then we did get involved in a more activist role. I guess the one that involved more activity and probably is the most evident and, I think, from talking to my black friends, the one most

appreciated was the move to pave the streets in southeast Denton. We first got involved with this kind of through a back door in that the League of Women Voters was doing a survey on the needs of southeast Denton and were going with a questionnaire house to house in that area, and a good many of our group joined in to help with that survey. Dr. Ethelyn Davis then compiled that survey and issued a report; and at the end of that report, the thing that was pointed out as being the most needed was paved streets.

So our group then got actively involved in that. Mrs. Bruce Foster, Trudy Foster, was president of our group, and she was very active in this. They surveyed to find out all the absentee owners of the property in order to get paving done. I still have the charts that they presented to the city council to show what had to be done. Members of our group went out with quick claim deeds to members of the community to get permission for the paving and curbing on the property for those who owned their property. Through such activities, then, the city council did approve paving of that, and that was the beginning of...there were no paved streets in southeast Denton up until this survey.

Byrd: Okay, we were talking about some of the agenda and the activities that the group was engaged in, and we were talking about street paving. Can you be a little more specific? You said that after you located the absentee landlords and

what-have-you, what kind of success did you have in actually getting them involved in the programs?

Adkins: Well, it took a lot of groundwork, and I was not one of the ones that did as much as some of the others. But it did involve locating and writing to and communicating with, or getting the city to communicate with, these absentee landlords in order to get permission and get them to pay for their part of the paving. It also took a great deal of persuasion of the city council itself. As I said, Mrs. Foster got all the statistics together and made some graphics and some charts to show the city what had to be done and where the ownership of these various properties were in southeast Denton. Then after the city voted approval for that--and some people were kind of cynical and said they voted approval thinking it could never be worked out--some of our groups then surveyed again went back with the quick claims deeds for the owners that were there and got a great deal of cooperation from the community itself. Then by our group doing the groundwork, the city council then went ahead and passed approval for the paving, and at least some of the streets were paved. It took over a period of years before as many were paved as now, but we got the main arteries paved at that time. When I ask my friends now, as I did when I found out I was going to do this interview... I asked some of my friends--people who had been associated

with the interracial community--they feel like that was probably the most gratifying thing that was done by the group, although we were involved in several things.

Another project we took on one year was the subsidized housing apartments that are now called "Phoenix" and were at that time called "Dreamland." They were not well-kept, and they were not well-supervised. There was a great deal of trash, broken bottles, broken stairs, and broken balcony railings. It was a lack of supervision, a lack of gaining cooperation of the tenants. There were a great many problems, such as crime in the area. A lot of those problems still exist, but we did have a project there for a while where we went over and tried to do some of the physical cleaning up. We also contacted the managers and tried to put some pressure on them to pressure the tenants. That was with modified success, but it did show that there were people that were interested in what was going on in the area. Again, I think the city council was aware of our activity in that area, too. So that was another short-term project that we attempted.

After we had been organized for a good many years, the programs were centered around trying to help us personally, and we called our series of programs that year "Stagflation." We just had a series of programs on how to do things economically--how to make your own cleansers, cleaning house, how to shop economically, and planning a nutritious meal on

a limited budget--just things that helped all of us at home. We had a good series of programs that year that were helpful to all of us who were on rather limited budgets.

Another thing that those of us who had small children did was to have Saturday morning play school for our pre-schoolers. We got the two groups together, with the mothers and the children, to let the three- and four-year-olds play together, again in the hopes of getting the children to have a wider acquaintance. This resulted in our inviting them to the birthday parties, too, so we had integrated parties for our three- and four-year-olds, too.

Byrd: You mentioned a little earlier that for some of these first interracial get-togethers there was some resistance within the white neighborhoods in particular. As these meetings grew enough in size and perhaps frequency, what was the reaction?

Adkins: I never did sense any real problems among the adults. It was when the children first started. Of course, they were the pioneers--the ones that went first. In the early days they were having a backyard party, and the neighbors started throwing rocks. It was violence; it wasn't just objections. But after the adults started meeting--of course, we met in the evening, so maybe they just didn't know what was going on (laughter)--as far as I know, there was no real

resistance to that.

There was a little bit of self-consciousness, I think, when we first started going to church together. Nobody would think anything of it now because most congregations these days are desegregated. But at that time, for a group of women--black and white--to come and sit in church, was...you were looked at. You were very aware that people were aware of your presence, and so there was some self-consciousness there. No one ever expressed any hostility to that, but there was some self-consciousness in that it was a new situation.

Byrd: How did the husbands of the white portion of the group view your activities? Were they supportive?

Adkins: Well, mine was. I didn't hear of any that resisted it. When we had our Christmas party, most of the husbands came, so I assume they were in favor of it, too, and approved of what we were doing.

Byrd: Do you have any perception as to what the level of support was from the black husbands?

Adkins: There were some spouses in the black community that we never saw and never got acquainted with, and there were many reasons for that. Some of them worked nights and so forth. From the ones that did come, I think that all of us found out very quickly that the stereotype of the lazy black was completely false. I remember at some of the Christmas parties

discussing the work situation with the black couples, and we defined how many jobs they were holding down and raising their own families. When we visited in their homes, we noticed how well-kept their homes were. That stereotype of the black people being lazy and not knowing how to work was certainly false, as far as our group was concerned. I always came back to feeling, "How on earth do they do it all?" I just couldn't imagine. For so many of the women at that time, the only job that was available to them was keeping someone else's house; and to know that they had gone off to somebody else's house, probably a different house every day for a whole week, and then to go into their home and see that it's spotless, too, really impressed me that they were so energetic.

Byrd: Was this done on an alternating basis--meeting in white homes, black homes?

Adkins: Yes. As I remember it, we tried to alternate. At first it was probably each month: "Well, where will we go the next time?" But as we got larger and more involved, we had to meet sometimes in churches rather than homes because we outgrew the homes when our organization grew to where we were having thirty to fifty people there at a time. Not many of us had homes that were large enough to accommodate that group, so we met in the churches. But in between that time, when we were still small but more organized, we did

alternate between the homes in the white community and the black community.

Byrd: You previously described that there had been some violence when the black children came into white neighborhoods. Was that true on the opposite side of the coin, when whites went into the black homes?

Adkins: I never sensed any. I know that all of us...well, I shouldn't say all of us, because I don't know that for all of us. But I know with my own upbringing, even though I considered myself an unprejudiced person, I had to talk to myself to tell myself that "there's nothing to be afraid of to go over into the black community at night and visit in the homes." Our concept of those neighborhoods was that it was a high crime area, and I suppose that's true statistically. So there was some personal fear and uneasiness at least in doing that, but there was never any occurrence that I know of. It was a matter of just overcoming those fears that you had grown up with.

Byrd: If I could refer back to something earlier, you stipulated that the group was active in trying to identify the absentee landlords. Could you be a little more specific and identify those folks for me now?

Adkins: The absentee landlords?

Byrd: Yes. Were they white, black?

Adkins: Oh, I think they were mostly white, but I wasn't involved

directly with that. Mrs. Foster could tell you all the details because she really worked on that very diligently and was president of the group that year. I was teaching at the time and didn't have a lot of spare time to give, so I wasn't as involved with the "legwork," as they call it. But it involved a lot of searching of records and looking things up. She had a group that helped her that spent many hours in doing that. My idea just from overhearing was that mostly they were white absentee landlords, but I'm not sure.

Byrd: A lot of towns have an informal power structure, if you will, and I was wondering what it was like here in Denton.

Adkins: There was some of that. There was some of the power structure in Denton that owned property over there that was not being maintained, yes. That was one of the things that was a road-block that we had to overcome.

Byrd: The street paving program...was this before or after the controversy that I've heard about to some degree over the urban renewal plans for the city?

Adkins: I'd have to look up notes on that. I can't tell you. I could find out and get the dates on that, but I think that it was before. I remember that we had some programs on urban renewal and talked about trying to get some low rent or subsidized rental housing built--duplexes and smaller buildings rather than the apartment-style. There was at

that time the feeling that the crowding of apartment buildings was one of the things that caused the lack of feeling of the tenants that they were personally involved in this, and that it was one of the things that encouraged the crime and so forth. So there was a movement at that time about building low income housing in more scattered ways--duplexes rather than apartment houses. I remember that we had a program about that, but I don't remember whether we followed up or did anything. And I don't remember the chronological sequence of which came when (chuckle).

Byrd: When we talked on the phone yesterday, I said that one area I wanted to discuss was the overall climate of the times in terms of possibilities for improved race relations. Can you describe how it was to live in the city of Denton compared to other places you'd been. You said you'd lived in several places as a youth. At the time you came here, was Denton ripe for the integration of public accommodations.

Adkins: Oh, I think it was or we would not have been effective. If it had not been a community that had some good support and some people that were open to that, we would not have succeeded. I think there would be communities where what we had to offer would not have made a dent in it. We were not a power structure; we were not within the "in" group in Denton at all. It was mostly church- and university-related people. I think there had to be an openness within the

community. Of course, I think also it was inevitable after the Brown ruling. This was going to take place, so let's make it go as smoothly as possible. I think the school board wanted it to go smoothly. We didn't always agree with decisions they were making, but I think they wanted it to go smoothly. I think that when you started trampling on people's pocketbooks, you always reached some kind of resistance; and in putting pressure on people to hire blacks, to pave the streets and all, you got into the financial aspects, and then you'd meet resistance. But on the whole, I would say the community was ripe, as you pointed out.

Byrd: You said you were not teaching at the time Fred Moore School was actually closed down.

Adkins: I was teaching about the time they were closing Fred Moore. I went back to teaching, It all happened about the same time. One of the proposals before the school board at that time was to use Fred Moore as at least an educational center. One of the suggestions was to make it an all-sixth grade school or to use it in some way. It had nothing to do with this interracial group, but some of us who were teaching said that we would teach there if that was the decision. But the school board decided to close the school rather than try to work that out. I don't really know what all went into that decision.

Byrd: What became of the instructors and administration at Fred

Moore when that facility was closed?

Adkins: Well, I think by law they had to be hired within the school district, and most of them did then work within the Denton school district. I don't know that all of them did. I became acquainted with many of them who did later on. They were fine people who moved into the school district, and I had some good friends from that group, too.

Byrd: It is our understanding that there were, I believe, in the neighborhood of 157 children who were bused from out of the district, from communities where there were no black schools. They were bused into Denton from outside the district. We were wondering if you could give us some insights as to what became of those students once the Denton schools were integrated. It's my understanding that only six students decided to transfer from previously all-black schools to white schools. We were wondering what happened to those 157 children from out of the district. No one seems to know if they wound up going back to segregated schools in other counties or whatever.

Adkins: I wasn't even aware of that, so I can't help you with that at all.

Byrd: When the group grew to the size upwards of fifty, how soon after the formation of it did this occur, that is, when you had such a large number that, as you suggested, couldn't be accommodated in individual homes? Was that reasonably soon

after the formation?

Adkins: Well, again, my memory for numbers is not good. My impression was that it was in five or six years that we were that large. I know that we had a big celebration on our tenth anniversary, and by then the list of members was seventy-five, or upward. Frequently, it was a different group that attended; I mean, there was a small core that would be there everytime, but many of the people who were on our list would attend just occasionally. So we certainly didn't have seventy-five people attending, but certainly, within ten years, we had that many and had a large group. We had a celebration with a black poet and a big party at our church, observing the tenth anniversary of the formation of that group. We kind of reviewed what we had tried to accomplish.

As one of the things that kind of gives an idea of the climate at the time, are you acquainted with the book Black Like Me, which was written along in those years? It was a story...I should have looked up that author. He blackened his skin and went into the South and traveled in the South to have the experience that the black in the South would confront. He was in Fort Worth, Anyway, he came and spoke to our group once, and this was a very moving experience for those of us who were active at that time, to find out exactly what was happening among the people there. He had had a very personal experience with that. This was early

in the desegregation movement, and not much had been desegregated at the time. That was another one of our outstanding programs that we had.

Another single thing we did occurred when they organized and proclaimed Black History Week in February, one of the first times that that was celebrated was in our community. The black students at North Texas organized a parade, and so we heard about it. We didn't really do a float, but we did a car and labeled it for our group and rode in the parade to make people aware of our existence at that time.

Byrd: Had you publicized the existence or the activities of the group?

Adkins: Oh, yes. I don't know if the paper still does it, but for a long time the Record-Chronicle had a special edition on women's clubs, and we sent in our information, and our leaders were pictured, and our club was written up in there. On several special occasions we received publicity. I think people were aware of what we were trying to do.

Byrd: How long did the group remain active?

Adkins: Well, I was looking at some materials that I had there, and in about the eleventh or twelfth year, I think we were looking at ourselves to see what our goals were for the future and whether there was any reason for us to continue existing or whether we had pretty well reached our goals. We sent out a questionnaire, and most of us found it worthwhile for

the fellowship. There were no real projects that we sought to conquer at that time, and I guess it was just that we were all busy. The children that we had organized to help were grown and graduated, and we kind of wanted to get a younger group started to follow us to work with their children. We were not successful in doing that, so it just kind of gradually faded out. Mainly it was because of the lack of any big projects that we felt like we could accomplish that we disbanded.

Some of the things that happened that some of our members were involved in, but that our group wasn't officially involved with, was the Denton Christian Preschool. It was an outgrowth of, again, a small group of our people that were interested in forming that. Are you familiar with that school? That's also held at Trinity Presbyterian Church, where you have three- and four-year-olds from underprivileged families that we try to give a little boost to before they start to school. It's a United Way agency now.

We were also part of the group that pressured the county commissioners to organize a health unit. At the time we were organized, there was no health unit in Denton. Our group as a whole was not involved in that, but there were members of our group that were very much involved in bringing about pressure there. So those were two of the things that were kind of outgrowths of what we did, but not directly.

Byrd: Do any of the members of the group still meet informally?

Adkins: We're just really good friends when we see each other. We just greet each other very warmly when we see each other (chuckle).

Byrd: Is it also safe to say that maybe some of you oversee or whatever the activities of the preschool?

Adkins: Well, I'm president of the board of directors at that school right now, (laughter) so, yes, sir, many of us are involved. And Lovie Price, who was into our group very early on, is one of the teachers and has been a teacher with that school the whole time. She started in and is still a teacher in that. I guess she's the one that said that her interest in that dated back to our Interracial Fellowship. I saw her this morning, and she reminded me of that. She would be a good one to interview if you want to get into some of the feelings of the black community at that time. But she's been with that school from its inception, and I think that's over fifteen years now, going toward twenty years. So she was one of the backbones of this organization and has been very much involved from the very beginning. She was not at the first meeting, but from the very beginnings and on through the years, she has been active all the time.

Byrd: I've heard some suggestions that part of the reason for the group's demise, if you want to use that term, had to do with the increased level of concern for an overall feminist-type

movement. Is that in any way at all accurate? In other words, did other issues become paramount at the time?

Adkins: I couldn't speak to that. The issue that took my interest at that time occurred when I became very involved in teacher issues. I was a schoolteacher, and I became very politically involved with teachers. So that was probably the thing that took my mind away from what was going on. Maybe others were more involved in the feminist issues. I consider myself a feminist, too, but that was not the issue that was primary or took my time and interest.

I think you're right. There were many other issues that seemed to be more demanding of our time than this did at that time. As I said, we were all into another stage in our lives. You go through ten years, and you're in a different stage in your own life, also.

Byrd: To my recollections of the mid-1970s, there were a lot of blacks militants or black militancy. Did that have any bearing? Did that draw blacks away from this kind of activity that you all had been participants in for so long?

Adkins: I'm not aware of any of them that got involved in the black militant group. If they were, I'm not aware of it, but there could have been some who decided that that was the approach to take. I don't know. None of the people that I was close friends with got involved in that.

Byrd: Okay, I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about the

group's membership. Were there any requirements for membership?

Adkins: No. Anyone who was interested in what we were doing, of course, was welcome. In fact, at one time there was a discussion of whether we should have "Christian" in our title because we didn't want to feel that...no one really wanted to exclude any other group if they were Jewish people or other people who were interested in working with us on this problem. No one was excluded. The reason we maintained that in our title was mainly just to give testimony for the motivation for our group. We felt like that it was from our Christian beliefs that we were motivated to do this, and so that was more or less testimony to that, rather than any requirement. I know there were members of our group who do not consider themselves Christians. The Unitarians, for instance, don't call themselves a Christian church. And we did have Unitarians active in our group. I don't know if there were any Jewish members. I don't know of any, but we certainly would have welcomed them if they were interested in doing what we wanted to do. It was not exclusively Christian just because of that name in our title.

Byrd: I've had the impression earlier that there was an attempt, a conscious attempt, to try to keep a balance between the number of blacks and the number of whites. Was that, in

fact, done consciously?

Adkins: Well, we worked at it. We didn't want it to be lopsided one way or the other. Nobody was excluded on that account. If we saw it going one way, then we tried to recruit from the other group (chuckle) to try to balance it. We also toward the end were very aware...as I said, many of us had matured in ten years, and we hadn't kept the younger people interested like we'd hoped to, and so we were trying to keep a balance in age there, too. We were not as successful in that. And if the attendance started going one way or the other, where only the majority of the whites were attending rather than the blacks, then we looked at what we were doing and what we were not doing in order to keep it more balanced. To that extent, we tried to keep it balanced, but certainly not by excluding anybody.

Byrd: I also had the impression that some in the group early on tried to limit the membership among the black women who may have been cleaning ladies or domestic types. Was that a conscious effort?

Adkins: I wasn't aware of that at all, that that happened.

Byrd: I'd heard that.

Adkins: Well, if that happened, I wasn't aware of it. As I said, we encouraged everybody to bring their friends. Anyone that was interested in coming was encouraged to bring their friends with them. I don't know of any attempts to limit it to domestics.

Byrd: I have one last area. In the inceptive period, in 1964, my recollection is that that was the year of some major congressional legislation--the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Was the group a participant in the move to register or encourage blacks to get involved in the voting process? Did the group become politicized at that time?

Adkins: We did do some work in calling and organizing for voting, but I don't think we were politicized. But, yes, we did try to get voting lists and work on encouraging our group to get involved in voting. But there was never a campaign that we took on and said, "Let's get this person elected." We were aware of the fact that we needed to be sure that our groups were politically active--that was one of the aims of the group--but not aimed at any one particular candidate or issue.

Byrd: That concludes the questions that I have for you, and I'd like to take this time to thank you very much for letting me come into your home and take up your time this afternoon. This has really been enjoyable for me and very informative, and I'd like to thank you again for that.

Adkins: Well, I've enjoyed it a lot. For one thing, just prodding my memory and going back through some very enjoyable experiences and remembering again some very warm friendships and very rewarding activities that we had and just reviewing

those in my memory has been a very pleasant experience for me. I enjoyed that opportunity.

Byrd: Well, thank you again.