

Interviewee: Reverend Otis Smith
Interviewer: Kristen Tippett
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Transcriber: Kristen Tippett

Abstract: Reverend Otis Smith was born on November 5, 1939 in Lexington Kentucky. He spent his entire childhood in Kentucky and later went on to join the ROTC and serve in the Army. Reverend Smith eventually went to Korea after the actual war ended. After completing three years in the service, he came back home and almost immediately moved to Denver, Colorado. After he worked for a time with chronic asthmatics, he moved to Illinois and obtained a job at the East Moline State Hospital. He then moved to Dayton, Ohio and obtained a job at the Dayton VA. It was in Dayton that he received what he called his call to the ministry and proceeded to go to Southern Baptist Theological Center in Louisville. It was here that he met his wife, married, and upon graduation received the call to preach at the First Baptist Church in Tuscumbia where he has been for 43 years. During this interview, Reverend Smith talks candidly about his experiences with segregation while living in Kentucky and how different segregation was in contrast to the Deep South. He also talks of his experiences in the Army and a different type of segregation. He goes on to speak about his ministry as well as the rich history of Tuscumbia and the origins of the First Baptist Church in Tuscumbia.

KT: Alright this is Kristen Tippett and Reverend Otis Smith Oral History Interview for Public History November 1, 2012. If I could, can I get you to state your full name?

OS: Ok, Otis Benton Smith, Jr.

KT: Ok, and were you born here did you grow here?

OS: No I was not born here. I was born in Lexington, Kentucky. But that was in my grandmother's house and a week later I went home to Louisville, Kentucky. That's where my parents were living. But I was- in those days you kind of went to where your mother was-the mother's and so we went to my grandmother's house and that's the reason I was really born in Fayette County Lexington, Kentucky.

KT: Awesome. And what is your date of birth?

OS: November 5, 1939.

KT: So you have a birthday coming up very quickly.

OS: That is correct. That is correct.

KT: [Laughs]. So, how did you and your parents end up down here?

OS: Ok, my parents did not end up here. We are native Kentuckians as such. And I had been all around but I was called here to be pastor of this church in August, August 22nd really, of 1969.

KT: Ok, do you have any brothers or sisters?

OS: Yes, I have one brother and he lives, he lives right now in Carrolton, Kentucky.

KT: Ok. So what was education like when you were growing up? Where did you go to school? What were your experiences?

OS: I attended the public school system of Louisville, Kentucky and graduated from Central High School in Louisville in 19 and 56. And I went from there to Central State University and in 19 and 56 and graduated in 1960. That was, that was my primary education. You might know Central State by Weaver the team that beat when they used to have the National Division II football thing in McAllister, Texas I believe it was.

KT: Yes.

OS: Yeah, well one year Central State came and beat UNA in the playoffs.

KT: Oh well how about that.

OS: [Laughs]. Yeah I was about that one of fifteen people who was sitting on the Central State Side.

KT: [Laughs]. Well that is amazing.

OS: [Laughs]. Yeah, and that school is located in Wilberforce, Ohio.

KT: Ok.

OS: Mm-Hmm.

KT: So you went from Louisville to Wilberforce, right?

OS: That's right.

KT: Ok, so during the time period you said you went to school which is 1956 to 1960. During that time was of course the racial segregation and things of that...How did that affect your education or even you during going to school?

OS: Well, I did, I did, I did go to em. My high school was uh it was a segregated system. And uh Central High School was the largest black school high school in the state of Kentucky. My graduating class was I think about 365 or 385 one of those two. And we were a huge school right in Louisville and uh so my school days were shaped with segregation. My father was a captain in

the Louisville fire department. They had two fire station houses that were black and he was the captain of them as such and the highest ranking black officer at that time. And my mother she was a beautician. She had graduated from school (inaudible). She went to Kentucky State College which was the black institution in Kentucky at that time for higher education along with Municipal College which is in Louisville. And uh she was basically though a homemaker for the most part. So she kept me and my brother and my father had his job was in those days it was 40, 24 on and 24 off. You went to work 8 o'clock one morning. You go off at 8 o'clock the next morning. And that was the way they did it all the way, all when I was growing up. So segregation was the order of the day even in Kentucky and but there was a there was a strong element of bonding among our people because of we knew what we had to face and what not.

KT: You definitely don't get that side of the story. Usually you hear the tension and the violence so that's very refreshing to hear.

OS: Well, it was, it was, within the African American community. That was it was because all of us went to the same high school. There were three junior high schools for us.

KT: Oh, wow.

OS: One on east end, one on west end and one I went to which was in the middle of town, Madison. And all of us converged on Central. All of my family, my father went to Central back in 1927 and '28 and '29. And my brother graduated from Central. I had two uncles that graduated to Central. Had cousins that went to Central. Everybody in our family, any black family that stayed there went to Central. There was, there was another black institution that was close by. It was called Lincoln Institute and it was in Shelby County. And Lincoln Institute was a black boarding school. Went there in about the 8th grade and they took in boarding students, 8 or 9 well I say 9th grade if I recall correctly. It's been a long time ago.

KT: [Laughs].

OS: But if you lived in places like in small communities in the mining communities up in East Kentucky or down below toward Missouri in the western part. If you wanted to go to a high school where there weren't any high schools available, Louisville and Lexington Bowling Green, those cities had black schools. But if you wanted to go beyond the elementary grades then you went to Lincoln Institute. So there was quite a rivalry between those cities that had schools high schools and then those who, who those schools that those people that went to Lincoln Institute. They went (_____) On the academic side there was always a push for our teachers. They were a personal interest, personal interest. All of my teachers knew my parents. My parents socialized with them they went to church with them. They were all a part of the community in Louisville even though you had some coming from east end, west end and then in the middle of the city where I lived there was still, still a, a connecting factor brought out through the educational system and churches.

KT: That's wonderful.

OS: Yeah.

KT: That is truly wonderful. So, outside of school in the actual town that you grew up in, what were some examples of segregation like in for example stores or just anything like that with you growing up in that time.

OS: [Sighs]. Basically, shopping was done neighborhood wise. My mother would go shopping at the neighborhood store. If she wanted to go to a larger store she'd have to walk a little farther. We only had one car, my daddy had that. So you had a lot of that. Shopping was on this order. Those stores that were in black communities got the warehouse goods last. The better products went to the predominately white neighborhoods. As I was leaving you were beginning to get some blacks moving into "more affluent neighborhoods" but what we did we made our own affluent neighborhoods, you know, and maybe if you lived on certain, if you lived in the west end and if you went all the way in there was the housing project place where we used to call little Africa, you know, as such. But right up from that you had the very affluent neighborhood the houses of a loan. My uncle who loaned a taxi was owner of the Liberty Cab stand I think- Liberty, was it Liberty? Yeah- my father's older brother taxi business and black businesses were pretty much in the same area. They used to have in Louisville back when I was growing up little tot, you had Walnut Street. The upper end of Walnut Street you had your two of your fine theaters. You had couple of your very nice nightclubs. You come right on down til you get to the other end of Walnut Street. And there was about 20 or some odd blocks of that. You used to have black policemen but they would just patrol that area, you know, walking back and forth , up and down.

KT: Yes!

OS: But those were old days. Those in the 50s, 40s and what not. When I was leaving it began to branch out. There was a spread out and things came along. So I think historically the city began to tear down the blue law, began to integrate schools. The school I went to is now a magnet school. And I can remember the first time we played a white school in football. There was just separated, huge, one side was one, one side was the other. Huge amount of people there. But it affected us in that we had a sense of having to achieve. You had, it was a matter of being something that you if segregation was going to last you were going to be something in your community. I don't know whether I am hitting your question or not.

KT: No, you are, you are. Did you ever have, I guess, did you ever have any bad experiences? Was there any that you would care to talk about? Or was it, it sound to me it was pretty I mean you pretty much made your own circle, you made your own affluency, and you were determined. But did you have any experiences that you can remember that were, you know, that kind of marked your history, marked your childhood?

OS: If you're talking about like the Birmingham situation and such, there was the some chaotic situations in the 50s. As far as personally being bothered, no. I, I, I, I, because you were within the confines pretty much. Like I said when you went to Leevi (???) Brothers, you were directed pretty much to the budget basement and they like to assume that was because of money you could get items cheaper but really told the tale. There was certain place you could not go. Couldn't go to white theaters because they said we had our own. There was, there was and what

we call not as bad as today which was called little gangs cause neighborhood things, you know. Kentucky always tried to pride itself that it wasn't Deep South but it was middle, you know, it is right on the Mason-Dixie so to speak. We could not go to the drive-in theaters. So, all of us rode over to New Albany, Indiana. However, I must say that Southern Illinois and Southern Indiana were worse than us.

KT: Really?

OS: Oh yes, oh yes. They were like a little Mississippi and Alabama. Oh yeah, there was there while we went to the drive in over there there was only one drive in that really opened up to us. So things like skating rink you know you can (_____???) that. They were they were there were places in Illinois and Indiana that we could not be caught you, you wouldn't be dare caught on the street after certain hours. I mean it, it was, it was bad. Yeah, Southern Illinois and Southern Indiana were really, really terrible.

KT: That's the story you really don't hear much of is...

OS: No, you don't, you don't...

KT: You really don't .

OS: Now, but if you go through there there were, there were curfews put on, on blacks back in the old days.

KT: Wow.

OS: Yeah, yeah, yeah they were, they were, they were so you had your blacks going to say like East St. Louis, Illinois because there was more in that community more than the St. Louis was, you see.

KT: [Laughs]. Yes, yes.

OS: But places, the places just above Evansville, Indiana , you know, and just above New Albany Evan-Ind-I mean Indiana, and you had, you had a lot. Now don't get me wrong there was terror in Louisville. There was, I'm beginning to, it's unfolding a little bit. There were people who were lynched, you know in certain communities and things. Yeah, there was terror. But it, it wasn't as pronounced possibly. But housing segregation was a big thing. Public buildings thing, Different drinking water fountains and all that thing existed. So you did have the segregated order that has tried to say we ain't as bad as. Yeah.

KT: Definitely. Now what you said before, blue laws, can you explain a little bit about what the blue laws were?

OS: (Sighs). Well, let me think for a moment. Let me switch that and say whether you could live in a certain area. Whether you could get loans from a bank.

KT: Oh, ok.

OS: Whether you could get certain positions even if you were hired in industry or in the civil government. Definitely what neighborhood you could live in because when you lived in certain areas and you moved into an area and they was all white you were gonna to get touched, you were gonna to get messed with as such. There were marches in Louisville.

KT: Really?

OS: Yes, there were marches.

KT: Were they on a huge scale or was it kind of just small or...

OS: No, no they were marches because you see Martin Luther King's brother was a pastor in Louisville.

KT: That's right he was.

OS: Yeah, yeah. And so oh yeah we had our stages. Blue, and I was trying to think exactly, and it I might have used the wrong terminology because blue laws stood for, and I can't remember exactly, but it had to do with restrictions, you know, as such. And there was just certain areas even poor areas that you just didn't go into like down by the river area front area and certain areas where you had a certain other ethnic representation. Yeah, and there is a definite definition for the blue law but at this point I can't pull it up.

KT: That' ok, that's alright.

OS: But, things were unwritten laws and how you, you know, what you could or could not do.

KT: Such as, just for example.

OS: Take the theater. I tell a tale because of this friend of mine, a pastor, who say, well he's retired now in Atlanta, and he came from Pittsburgh, I think, Pennsylvania to go to a to a place called Simmons University. That was our seminary. Oh, I know what it was. Blue law was that you couldn't sit in classes where the white.

KT: Oh, ok.

OS: Yeah, and it just took that to make me remember. In the early 50s, Garland K. Offerd(???) ,who was my grandfather's pastor at the Westchester Street Baptist Church, put in an application to go to Southern Seminary. He already had a basic degree from Kentucky State and I think he had a masters from somewhere but he wanted to get a doctorate and he had to set outside the classroom on a stool and listen just like you're listening to the professor whose inside because they could not be in the same classroom.

KT: That is amazing.

OS: And that, that was all the schools. But I remembered so much in, in, in the seminary cause that's the seminary I ended up going to later on. But, and when he and he got all kinds of ill feelings but the professors got were upset and so then there began to be a push not just in that case but all over that black students could come and sit in classes. And but Offerd got his degree and wrote his dissertation over sitting outside.

KT: That is ama- what was his name again?

OS: His name is Offerd (???). Garland K. Offerd. He's dead now, he's, he's gone. And then there were three others who attended school and they got their basic what used to be called bachelor of divinity, bd, yeah they got their degrees. They were in the class but Southern went through a lot of transformation because being Christian they just could not see why you had to have that kind of thing. And so when they opened up then people started attending University of Louisville and all this happened 50ish, 40, 50ish and that kind of thing. And this friend that I was going to tell you about basically that friend he came from Pennsylvania he went to Simmons and then he went to Southern from Simmons from Simmons. And he was a very dark completed fellow what not. And he went up to go to the largest theater in Louisville downtown and they said "I'm sorry you can't come in here," you know, "the law won't permit us to let you." He left, went back to the seminary, got with a couple of African brothers, got one of their garbs, got a hat, went to the same place, and I can't remember whether it was the same person or not but he went to the same place and walked right on in simply because they looked at him as being African rather than Negro.

KT: Wow. So they just changed their appearance and they were...

OS: That is exactly right.

KT: Changed their clothes. Now that is phenomenal.

OS: Yeah, and they just figured that he was an African. He went in, paid for his ticket, and walked right on in.

KT: That is amazing.

OS: Yeah.

KT: Wow. Now you said that your school is now a magnet school, is that correct?

OS: Yeah, yeah from a...yeah

KT: Ok, and what is exactly does that mean, just for definition wise?

OS: Well, basically that's just that's schools just like they're trying to get schools here where you can put on a faster scale they can bring students in and from different parts as such and school is still located where I went to school but that's, that's, that's what they operate on now pretty much academically, academically, supposed to be, supposed to be first class and what not

and of course there is a lot of bringing in. Now I understand across the nation that magnet schools really are segregated situations, you know, where, where people can go based on their intelligence so to speak which keeps out the majority of, of, of others the white obli (???), you know, that they all want.

KT: Right, wow, that is...well it sounds like it was eventful in Louisville but it wasn't as eventful as say the Deep South was, which that's the story that a lot of people don't tell. Now did you ever hear of Dr. King actually coming up to Louisville? Was he ever there when you were there with marches and things with his brother?

OS: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. Well, now see, by the time the thing hit the fire I graduated from Central trade in 60 and I think King died in 68.

KT: He did.

OS: Right. When I graduated, I went into the service.

KT: Really? Ok.

OS: Yeah, I was in ROTC. And so I went to Fort Benning, Georgia, did basic, and from there I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky and spent two years. Then from there I went to Korea and spent a year. So after three and a half years I got out. So I've so the things that were going on in Louisville that were hot and heavy I wasn't there during that particular time.

KT: You were training and then in Korea.

OS: Yeah, yes.

KT: Well then let's kind of move to your experience in Korea. Was that, were you, I guess could you just tell me a little bit about it. Could you just tell me what the experiences were?

OS: Well it was post-Korean war you know because that ended in '53 I believe it was.

KT: Yes, it did.

OS: You know you're history don't ya? [Laughs].

KT: [Laughs] I do, yes sir. I try.

OS: Bless your heart. But post, had been said I was stationed in the 1st Calvary division 8th cav. And the 8th cav was north of the Mgim (???) river. I was right up there near where they would have the meetings together and what not and as a matter of fact I was over there a couple of times right in there you know you're walking right next to the Comm...North Koreans. But my unit was up north. We were allowed to carry loaded weapons particularly on guard duty and ecteria and nothing ever happened it was just different from being in the southern part of South Korea. Northern part you had the cav and the n you had the 7th infantry division and when I got

out it was the strangest thing I got out in '64 things were hot in Laos right next to us and when I got out they had me scheduled to go to the Big Red One in Kansas but I got out and I think it was four months later I read in the paper where the Big Red One was going over to Vietnam as a unit.

KT: Oh, wow.

OS: So I'm, I'm not a, I'm not a, a wartime vet as such.

KT: Right, ok. But you were in Korea?

OS: But I was in Korea.

KT: Now how did of course the segregation issue when you were in how did that affect you when you were in the service?

OS: Basically, basically when I was in you did your job you got your rank. The hardest on me were my own black superiors along with others. I was planning on making a career at that time and it I had platoons under me. I was a first john when I went there, over there. And platoons under me and I also served in headquarters company of the 8th, 8th cav of the 1st Calvary division. And I, from the segregated standpoint you just didn't feel that. Except one instance, (laughs), except one instance. And it wasn't segregation because of race. It was segregation because of position. I never shall forget when I went to Fort Benning, Georgia in 19 and 60, October, to do my training, I can remember going into the officer's facilities, restrooms and everything. And when I walked in there, they, you know, they had a person to take care of you if you needed to, you know, the club and it was all nice and clean and everything. And just by chance I walked around the corner to see where the em's were and it clean, don't get me wrong it spot you know how the army is, you know. Plain, just plain. I remember writing back to my mother telling her I said now I know what it is when segregation and not being segregated for (___???) facilities, the differences you know. (Laughs). But there was it was there was a pastor who told me that was who was from Louisiana, my pastor there B.J. Hodge in Louisville, and we were talking about things, and he said, I have never been able to understand white folk in segregation. He said when "I was in Louisiana working sugar cane situation, the man would come out there to bring water for the workers. And said that he'd come out and hanging down you'd have a ladle for the blacks and a ladle for the whites to get your water and we both dipped into the same bucket. (Laughs)

KT: Go figure!

OS: And he said he just never could understand that, you know. [Laughs]. And so but it, it I can understand why they had to get officers and things because that's what you get the point for in the naval academy. My boy went to the naval academy and one of my sons. So I just I, I didn't, I didn't find it to be any different. But like I was saying, the one difference was that being an officer as such you had to go to the country club. And the country club...ok. Just didn't have any fun there. Yeah, so what we would do we would take off uniforms and put on plain clothes and get one of the sergeants in our unit to take us to the NCO club. And the NCO clubs where you had one officer's club like at Fort Knox or maybe two the NCO clubs you might have three or

four but you had one that would be black and one would be for other ethnic groups and another one for whites, you know, and that's how they had them on Fort Knox and so we always wanted to go to one where our group was because that's where we understood that's where we were able to socialize, that's where we had our own thing. But if you got caught, you, you you, you were reprimanded, you know, pretty much. So that was army experiences.

KT: Ok, alright, so how long, let's see, what year did you get out of the service?

OS: '64.

KT: '64. Where did you go from '64?

OS: In '64, I came home and then I went to live in Denver, Colorado. I passed through there. I had an aunt that lived there and I passed through there going in the service. And I got out and I was coming home and I stopped by there. By that time my parents were living in Owensboro, Kentucky. That's where my father who was a pastor also lived there. And so I lived in I went back to, to Denver. I liked Denver, I really liked it, I liked Denver, Colorado. I was gonna stay there but I got a job working in National Jewish Hospital with, with asthmatic, chronic asthmatics, and they, they are, they were shipped there from all over the world. And that was one of the things that my war experience, I mean my military experience helped me because they got two young Korean kids in for examination and they would try to give them medicine and everything and the kids would just shake their heads and wouldn't do anything and would talk to each other in Korean and I didn't know that much Korean but I do know how to say a few things. And so I told the nurse one time I said let me, let me handle them because I was in therapy that day. I then was going into what we call recreational therapy as a spin-off of the degrees I had. I majored in recreation, physical education and health. And I came in and spoke Korean, spoke to them and all that kind of thing and low and hold they said they looked at me and from that point on when she came to give them medicine and I walked in but they wouldn't say a word they just had to go on and take what they were going to take because they knew, they thought they knew that I would know what they were talking about. So experiences do help but lived in Denver for a year. Moved from Denver to East Moline, Illinois. Stayed there for a year at the, at the East Moline State Hospital.

KT: I have family in Moline.

OS: Do you?!

KT: I do.

OS: Oh, bless your heart.

KT: I do. My dad's family.

OS: Is that right? Yeah, stayed there yeah I was there the ground, it it started snowing I think in about the second week in November or something and it stayed on the ground all the way over till April. I mean...

KT: Forever.

OS: Yeah.

KT: It does, it really does. It's not pretty snow but it's snow [laughs].

OS: Yeah, yeah you're right [laughs]. Yeah and so and then finally got the job I wanted. I wanted to come back to Dayton I wanted to live in Dayton and that was near where the school that I graduated from and I finally got a job back there at the Dayton VA, yeah the Dayton VA. And it was there when I was called into the ministry. I hadn't been there about eight months maybe maybe a year and I was called into the ministry. I left there immediately went into the seminary and the first year of seminary my wife, whose from Winchester, Kentucky, she was coming down to Sullivan what they call Sullivan Business College and we met and that's, that's where our ministry's gone.

KT: Ok, you did seminary in Ohio, is that correct?

OS: No, no, no. Southern in Louisville.

KT: Oh, you did it in Southern.

OS: Yes, Southern Baptist Theological Center.

KT: Ok, so when did ya'll get married?

OS: Well, we were in, while we were there, in Southern. We got married in, I went there in 6, I got called into the ministry in '65 and '66 I went to Southern, '68 we got married, and '69 we moved here.

KT: Ok, alright. Sounds very adventurous. When did you...

OS: Well, I hope I'm not boring you with all of this.

KT: You're not boring me at all. When did you graduate from Southern?

OS: '69.

KT: '69. So you actually got the call to preach here. Is it here that you preached or was it just in the area?

OS: No, no no no, no, no no no no. I was called when I was in Dayton, called to preach and I was a member of the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church there in Dayton and I got, I preached my first sermon in July and in August I made arrangements through my father and through my pastor in Louisville to come and see if I could go to Southern. And entered Southern at '66,

graduated in May of '69, and in August of '69 I received a call from this church so God sent me here and I received a call from their (_____????) to be their pastor. Forty three years ago.

KT: Forty three years. And you're still here.

OS: Still here.

KT: Can you tell me a little bit of history about this church? I mean I heard there is a kind of a long history about it so could you tell me just a little bit about it.

OS: Yes oh yes. Yeah the history of the church is phenomenal in this area. It was, they had put it out for years that they were organized in 1865 at the close of the Civil War that was issued statement that at the close that the slaves had gotten together and etcetera. Through research I found out that they were really organized in 1866 because in 1865 in October there was a man that was in that was affiliated with the church in here in Tuscumbia, white fellow, at one time he was named Shackelford I believe. And he in turn had, had gotten with a pastor cause he was kind of a moderator for what they call White Muscle Shoals Association which covered Lawrence County and this county. And he got with the minister that was at a church called Mount Pleasant and it was through the research that I did that we found out that Mount Pleasant was older than we were because in 1865 in October when the Muscle Shoals had their associational meeting, and I found all this out information at Sanford University over down in and spent a day or two down there just reading over that history of that association and they had gone to the meeting asking to be admitted and they were told by the powers that be of that association we cannot segregate. I mean cannot integrate that you'll have to form your own association as you get churches. And so they went through the bottom of that year and over to the next year being the only church for blacks on this side of the river. Now, this there is some there is some history of the churches in Florence. Couple of those churches and what not but over here that was the situation. Roughly, there was a man by the name of Northcross, you can see his picture right in here, let me, this, up around the wall, right there [shuffling]. Yes, he, he organized this church and not only this church but a number of other churches in the area and in 19, I mean 1868 the Muscle Shoals district was formulated as such but this church was organized at some point in 1866. We celebrate it being in July but it was at some point in 1866 but it wasn't in '65 so what we did we had to celebrate that anniversary twice to get it on track. And so we are 146 this year we are 146 years old.

KT: My stars. That is amazing. That is amazing. And so, you said you've been here for 43 years, is that correct?

OS: Yes, um hum.

KT: What kind of changes have taken place since you've been here?

OS: As result, I mean...

KT: Just, I mean, have, what have you added on to the church. I mean, what has been added on to the church I guess since...

OS: Well, the building, where you're sitting now was a part of the old church. The, the pulpit was approximately right there in that middle right there. The choir stand was approximately this area back up to that wall right there. The office that you went into you didn't even come in that door there was, you came in another door that was right next to there and there was a small office and right next to it was the ladies lounge. This part right here where this door is was going into the men's restroom and then from where that wall connects on back on that side was a kitchen and little dining area. This part right here going this way was all land. This is the church existed right on down this wall right here. And that church that was started in 1889 and completed. It was the only brick building that blacks had. That's one of our deacons there. [Interruption]. So this on back this way was all sanctuary where we got the fellowship hall and that that that was added on. This back part, the church used to stop here, this back part was added on in 1954 and this had the upstairs and what we did was, was renovate all of this and add the other part on in, in 1981, '82.

KT: Ok, alright. Has there been any, since it has such a long history, does it have any significant events that, maybe took place around here or in the building or anything that you are aware of?

OS: Well, starting, starting, off in the old days this used to be one of the places where they had the school. You've, if you know anything about Alabama State there is a name by the name of Trenholm. And of course the school down there was eventually named Trenholm. See, Trenholm was a member here. And he had they had some school parts in here. Some of the other people that you can do it we've got our record but they can give you more of a thing. But they used to serve here, this was a hub church of the community for a, for a long time. Then we had also had the Church of Christ which is got a long history in this area and the Methodist Church, Leslie Temple which is right across the street. Yeah, so basically we've been here for people to worship, people to fellowship, people to congregate and when they opened the school they called it Trenholm school which it went all the way up, you know, to, to the high school. And then they closed it, they closed it the year that I got here, '69.

KT: Ok, so it went on for that long?

OS: Trenholm, Trenholm School, yeah. Not here in the church now. It was across the street. But they, they closed, they closed it in '69. There were students before then who had transferred over to Deshler but the actual closing it down was in the Spring of '69, just before I got here.

KT: When did it stop being here at the church?

OS: Oh, no we just had in up until they were able to get the land and building (?). It wasn't, it was official but it wasn't, you know, like this was, this was the place.

KT: Gotcha. Well, see, I did not know that. I actually went to Trenholm or what was R.E. Thompson then when I was, oh, middle school I guess. I went to the Southside, and R.E. Thompson, and Northside and then I had switched but I did not know all that history that went along with it.

OS: The educational process of this, the Tuscumbia schools they have literature I don't know whether you have got it over at UNA, in the, in the, in the thing, in their archives, but, but it has been very significant, very significant because every other year or so they have the reunion and you can see people who have gone from all walks of life right here from this school. Tuscumbia is a very strong community, it is a very strong community. It is unique, as such and it is very proud and prestigious in the sense of wealth, not wealth but just a wealth of feeling, a wealth of accomplishment.

KT: There's definitely a sense of community. Strong community.

OS: Yes, yes.

KT: Ok, well is there anything else you'd like to add or anything you'd like to talk about?

OS: No, no I think you got all what you wanted.

KT: Alright, alright. Well I thank you very much. It has been a pleasure. I have learned a tremendous amount, leaps and bounds. But, thank you.