

Interview with Reverend Bill Barnes at the Nashville Civic Design Center

Gary Gaston, Isabel Call, Dan Cooper, and Michelle Bowen. Transcribed by Isabel Call¹

Can you tell us a brief history of your life? I was born in the Edgehill area in 1931 in a house to the southwest of the Sounds Stadium. And for the first five years I went to school at Fall School on Eighth Avenue. I remember as a child visiting folks further west into the Edgehill community. There was a huge rock quarry – a good place to swim (and every once in a while a body was found). It was huge, mysterious, looked like the Grand Canyon. At age twelve, in sixth grade, we moved to way out to the suburbs out on Ashwood Avenue, which really was the suburbs at the time, went to Eakin and then Cavert and West High, public schools in Nashville.

And then I went to Vanderbilt, and got interested in some social work things at Cayce Homes, in East Nashville as a student. I did things as a student at Vanderbilt that added to my interest, particularly relationships between the Christian faith and cities. Really got into that. In Chicago, one summer in the Students in Industry Project, every student had an assembly line job and seminars in the evening about Christian approach to labor management problems. And the next summer, I helped wash pots and pans in a hotel in Martha's Vineyard in a New England Student Christian Project, similar kind of thing: reflection at night, faith, hotel work. Then was so broke that I volunteered for the army after my junior year at Vanderbilt, at tail end of the Korean War, and spent a couple years in the army. I was a cryptographer, putting messages into code and then breaking the code, and then with special services when baseball came around, so it was a wonderful two years. The purpose was that I had four years left on the GI bill, so I came back and finished Vanderbilt and went to Yale Divinity School for three years and worked in the inner city of new Haven for my field work in the high rise housing projects.

But more importantly were the summers when I lived in Greenwich Village and worked in East Harlem on 104th Street in a settlement house center there with the older Puerto Rican kids. Violence, overcrowding, real

¹ Some of Reverend Barnes' statements have been altered for clarity, but no change in content occurred.

kind of an eye opener. Even though I had seen poverty in Nashville I'd never seen anything like East Harlem.

What year was that? Divinity School at Yale was '56 to '59.

After I finished Yale, I decided that since I was interested in the church and urban stuff that I would take some time to see some things in Europe. Why? Because in the late '50s, Europe was still living in the after-effects of World War II. And churches were being all but abandoned in the wake of World War II. So as a result of their struggle there was a huge amount of experimentation. How can the church reverse its stance in post-war Germany. It had kind of stayed in a ghetto mentality and the Lutheran Church is still confessing because of its distance from the political scene, Hitler, that kind of stuff. So there were a lot of experiments going on, and I spent a year on a scooter seeing in nine or ten countries two or three dozen experiments in the life of the church: the worker priest movement in France, the evangelical academies in Germany, etc. It was sort of a Johnny One-Note life, looking over and over again in different ways at what's happening in the modern world, not as a result of ideologies like the Nazis, but as a result of the kind impotence of the churches, turning now to people who believed things should be different.

So I came back to Tennessee in 1960, back to the South, because I thought that the South, with urban life just beginning to mushroom – the South will never have an East Harlem because East Harlem was made of tenants because people needed to be close to factories – cities of the South began developing after the age of the automobile. We didn't need to, and don't, have that kind of congestion and slum realities [here in the South]. We've got plenty of low-income areas and government housing projects and so forth. I came back to the South because I felt like some Southern cities had the ounce of prevention option instead of the pound of cure. A little naïve. Came back and told my Methodist superiors that all I'd ever done was urban stuff, so I was given an assignment with five rural churches. I mean, Winchester and Fayetteville. I was in charge of five churches in three counties. Stayed there two years. Had a friend in Chicago and was about to go to Chicago to take a church when I was offered a church here in Nashville – I don't know if you know where Tony Sudekum Homes is, a housing project in southeast Nashville, one 500-unit another 450-unit, side-by-side – stayed there a pretty tempestuous 4 years, '62 to '66. And I say tempestuous because I had no doubt but that I had to be present in the civil rights movement, the demonstrations.

How did you become involved in the civil rights movement in Nashville? Back here in '62, there were several points of engagement. One was the interdenominational ministers' fellowship, which is a predominantly black ministers' group. (I think I may be the senior member of that group now.) A guy named Kelley Miller Smith was the president of that and I just knew from the beginning that I had to be involved. I had been involved from the Huntland? circuit. But there was no question that in my mind that to be Christian in the world is to struggle to

help the weak links for the sake of the strength the whole chain. Not the weak links to the exclusion of the other, but if the other links really knew, they too would be as concerned about the weak links. I really think that's what the Bible is about. That God tries to address a broken creation by addressing the weak links for the sake of the whole chain. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link. So that had been with me – this Johnny-One-Note life – for decades. So it was a natural thing.

I'll always regret that I wasn't here in '60 when Jim Lawson was doing the Vanderbilt thing, but came back in '62 and the marches were still going. And I became the vice president in middle Tennessee of the Tennessee Council of Human Relations. The director was named Backston Bryant, the best trench fighter I ever knew, great to him on your side. Jim Lawson was the vice president in west Tennessee, and there was a guy named Bill Paller who was a nuclear scientist in Oak Ridge in East Tennessee. It was this constantly thrusting people like myself and others into demonstrations. Even in places like Somerville, over near Memphis, which was one of the last campaigns. Every Saturday we'd get folks together and drive down and walk from a black store owner, Mr. McFerrin, walked from his store, downtown to the square in Somerville. Rallies on the courthouse steps. In Nashville things were going on in the neighborhoods that we were tired of. There were still the marches, the clergy marches down West End.

There was huge amount of stuff going on. The public facilities were being desegregated, the swimming pools, as well as places like skating rinks and that kind of stuff. Even in 1966 and '67 there was a skating rink out on Thompson Lane that catered to white kids in the evening and then at 9 o'clock they sent buses to Sudekum Homes and Napier Homes, the black area, to bring black kids in at 9. And so our church had a bus and we took a bus of folks, mostly black kids, and got in line at 7:30, and the guy closed it. And he closed it a second night and a third and the next night he was open to everybody. Because he couldn't keep closing his business. When you think of the Brown decision being in 1954, I'm talking about 1966, '67, and racism was still very much a powerful force.

Can you focus on Edgehill? Was there anything specifically that happened there? Well, Edgehill was pretty much an entirely black community at the time. We began the church in 1966, the summer, there were fifteen of us. We really wanted to be part of an interracial congregation that was not only interracial in its make-up but firmly committed to the health of the neighborhood. We kept talking about continuing a love affair with the neighborhood. It was an opportune time because urban renewal was just beginning its "execution phase." There had been some planning done prior to '66 but it was really the beginning of the "execution phase". The words "urban renewal" are like striking a match to gasoline in my interior still. I just think that so much that was going on in this country, in terms of renewal and development will plague us for generations to come. Two thousand

families were dislocated. Fifteen groceries were destroyed in the name of development. The commercial area at 12th and Edgehill was demolished. It took us a decade plus to get a grocery there.

The purposes of urban renewal were multiple. One was an orderly expansion of the CBD, the commercial business district, they were growing in many cities and how were they going to expand if you didn't have the exercise of eminent domain? And the demolition of large numbers of houses and residents in order to allow for that expansion. The same process served urban universities, served Vanderbilt, served Belmont. That was actually a later development from Edgehill, the Vanderbilt urban renewal area. But it served the interests of the powerful, in my estimation. Huge swats of land were claimed by eminent domain. Even sound houses we demolished for the sake of large scale development. When I think about the fact that you offer fair market value in an area scheduled for total demolition, what happens to the "fair market" value? Well, it's depressed. Lower middle class, middle class black families whose houses were taken for redevelopment had a very difficult time finding replacement. If they were just offered replacement value it would have been considerably more than fair market value. For instance in the northwest part of Edgehill, buttressing on Division Street and Music Row, houses were demolished, land was redeveloped, sold at what one fellow at MDHA called an "urban renewal write-down." Some of the Music Row folks got plots there, land, only to see it miraculously rezoned to commercial after they bought it. You can see that all through the northwest part of the project. What do you do with the poor folks you're displacing? Well, you build public housing. Edgehill got it's share of public housing, it got new ones, and where we blocked further expansion of public housing by going to court, surreptitiously three hundred units of a 221d3 with rent supplement was put in it's place, which is now Hillside (used to be Edgehill Village). Just jamming poor folks into an all black area. Decades later they would come back and say "hey, let's do Hope VI, let's fix it up after we've screwed it up." They were going to build another 380 public housing units north of Rose Park School, and we formed a committee prior to the time HUD authorized advisory committees for neighborhoods. A guy named Kelley Miller Smith, Dockson Bryant, Andrew White, Mansfield Douglas, and myself had Sunday afternoon meetings at the old South St. Community Center. Two hundred people would jam in here and would say, "Gosh, they gave me a letter saying I got to be out of here in sixty days. What am I going to do with it?" "This is what they offered me for my house – I can't buy another one." But finally, with the help of the NAACP legal defense fund and a guy named Avon Williams, great renowned civil rights lawyer who took our case and threatened federal court action to prevent further concentrations of public housing in the neighborhood. Robert Weaver, John Kennedy's first black cabinet member, director of HUD, came and we didn't have to go to court. They abandoned the new public housing project and in its place they put a 110 turn key III units. Any idea what that is? This was 1967, '68, '69. Turn key III was a section of the housing law that said you can avoid the endless red tape of developing another government housing project if you get private developers to

come in to build the stuff, with a lot less red tape, and then, at the end of the construction, turn the key over to the local housing authority. They did that and they interspersed those units with 235 units. 235 was another development. Folks just above the income for public housing. They were government financed and you could buy one for maybe 275, 300 dollars a month. Those turn key III units were built and the way it worked was, Michelle, if you were someone with an income at the public housing level, you could move into one of those turn key IIIs and you'd have to agree to go to school at night, and you went to school to learn how to unstop a toilet, to cut the grass, to do the fundamental maintenance stuff in a timeline. If you maintained that property, and you paid your rent, in time you could build up rent credits, and those were translated into down payment and purchase. Everyone of those 110 turn key III is under purchase today. And the two kinds of housing are interspersed, so if you don't know, as I know, what the secret design of turn key IIIs is you can't tell them from 235s. It's one of the best programs ever thought of. Except when Nixon came in he said "This may be a good program but there's corruption in construction in New York of these units" so he killed it. The principles are still splendid. A wonderful piece of enlightenment in Nashville. So much better than the jammed-up public housing. You can see how all that gets involved in civil rights. This was a black community.

What was the relationship between civil rights and urban renewal? Urban renewal has been called various things, like the "white noose around the black neck." It was happening all over the country. Areas that were urban renewed ended up monochromatic. If there was any heterogeneity, it disappeared, kind of like the VA and FHA financing mortgages in the suburbs for white folks. This was a black area. It probably was not a coincidence that the line for urban renewal was the alleyway between Villa and 16th Avenue because at 16th you had Music Row. So black folks got redistributed and shuffled around and monochromatized. And then you turn to Vanderbilt. The relationship at that time between urban development and race was very clear. One of the things that was made clear to me was. I had a friend named Macon Hinton. He was a professor at one of the black institutions. He had a ranch style brick house near Wedgewood. His house was taken. The difficulty he had of finding, as a middle class black family, of finding anything whose price wasn't terribly inflated. Segregation really took its toll on housing choices people had at that time. There's so much one can say about that. It was not only black but it already had Edgehill Homes, Gernert Homes, two projects, another 180 units of public housing was added around Gernert Homes. This turn key III thing was developed on Hillside. White folks weren't being treated like that. There was some mistreatment of white folks in the Vanderbilt area. But this was so emphatically a black removal program and imminent domain at that time was vicious. I mean all you had to do was say, "Here's a large area we want to develop and we'll just declare imminent domain here." And public uses ultimately included private development of these areas! So, it was very much a tightening of racial and economic

segregation. *So there was already segregation but this just eliminated choices?* Sure, there was already segregation. Edgehill was a poor neighborhood, but it had a lot more diversity before urban renewal. After that it really homogenized. Parenthetically, all the struggles we're having in the schools now: "Do you want to go to school close to your house, or do you want diversity and be bused?" The fundamental issue of resegregation of public schools in America today is the issue of housing segregation and economic segregation. It didn't all belong to the curse of post-World War II in American cities, but a lot of it does. We had FHA and VA programs, wonderful programs to help folks move out of the suburbs. Only it helped white folks move. In the 6 or 8 years after WWII, when suburban expansion was most fierce, only 2% of FHA and VA loans were given to non-whites. 2%. In 1948, the Supreme Court said you can't segregate if you build developments with government money, you have to do away with these restrictive covenants. Restrictive covenants were legal until '48. For several years after the '48 decision the wording did not disappear from FHA handbooks, which warned you against insuring mortgages for "inharmonious groups." That was the word they used – inharmonious. Poor folks and black folks. So, huge, changes were occurring in urban America, and as a result, it became cheaper to live in the suburbs if you were white than to own or rent in the cities. All that is the context we have built, and the racial implications are pretty apparent. Public housing in most case is black housing. Not entirely, but to a very large extent. I got a study a few weeks ago from Tracy McCartney who heads the Fair Housing Office in Nashville. A new study done in 2000. They were testing both mortgages and rentals. Black family goes in, "Sorry we just don't have a unit." Two days later, white family goes in, "Well, yeah, we've got a unit." The testing process was very convincing, although it doesn't apply as much to mortgages now as it does to rentals. Race is still very alive and well in terms of the offering of houses. You can see with the overlap of poverty and race, it's kind of a double penalty.

Did Edgehill start out a primarily black neighborhood? Oh, when I was a kid here, west of 8th Avenue was a typical Southern city's low-income neighborhood. I can remember in '66 after we started the church, I remember walking across the hill where the public housing is now, and seeing outhouses. There's no question but that radical things had to happen. But to raze them and to put in their place concentrations of public housing. Public housing, in my mind, is a story of tragedy in the United States. It began in the Depression with Roosevelt and it was a good thing. It didn't begin as a way to house poor people. It began as a way to put construction people back to work. Unemployment for construction was 40% in the country. And so we put them to work. And initially fairly diverse families moved in. Intact families. After World War II, the national real estate lobby was successful in telling to Congress "Don't let anybody get this subsidized housing who's not poor. Because we need commissions. We need folks to buy." And they were successful. So the public housing became a place

where only the poorest of the poor would live. That wasn't in the 30s; that was in the latter part of the 40s. Throw in another piece. Throw in the state welfare laws, which said you can't get welfare if you've got an employable male in the house. Tennessee was one of a number of states that embraced that. So 95-97% of all the households in public housing, except for the elderly units, were female-headed. Then you throw in, in the '80s ('86 '87) the crack thing. And it was a won place to sell crack, evade the police, because of the design of them. A lot of them didn't have very good roads through them. And so you end up with a pretty awful place to try to raise your child. It's a result of the succession of public policy. We're trying in vain to do Hope VIs. So, we're going to sell these units to people.

Did urban renewal change the cohesion of the neighborhood of Edgehill much? Well, just think, Dan, you've got 2000 people being dislocated. Some of them came back into public housing. Many didn't. They went to other public housing projects. So the visceral relationship between community solidarity and rental. It's very much more different to organize a rental neighborhood than it is a home-ownership neighborhood. "We don't want folks in here that aren't like us." You know NIMBYism is alive and well. But you don't really have that among rental people. It's not theirs. And especially public housing organizations. So, yeah there was a real loss of a sense of neighborhood. The people who stayed were sometimes brought together by anger and a sense of injustice. We formed an organization in the '60s called Organized Neighbors of Edgehill. It was largely a response to the urban renewal, what we thought were the injustices of that. That kind of petered out after urban renewal in the '70s and was resurrected some 10 or 15 years ago. But you can imagine what it would mean to any neighborhood to be decimated like that. And then to be put into not your 60 year old individual house, even it's substandard, but into concentrations of public housing. It's very difficult, I find it almost nowhere in this country, to have really strong, aggressive community organization that consists mostly of rentals. It's sad but it's true.

What do you think the institutions are that hold the Edgehill neighborhood together? I think Organized Neighbors of Edgehill had done a pretty good job with that. Mike Hodge, who you know, is sort of a guru, in my opinion, of neighborhood organization. He did the organizing in Edgehill with people like Brenda Morrow and others. Mike really knew what he was doing and accomplished that in a very short while, especially for a big white guy. It could have taken him a lot longer than it did. But he organized with Brenda Morrow – who is still the president of the residence association in Edgehill Homes – was a tremendous help. MDHA has given us an office. For 3 years we had generous United Way help and then we shifted staff and the staff didn't get our proposal in on time and we lost our funding. So we're struggling right now just to live financially, but it's – a

month and a half ago we gave 22 youth from the Edgehill community scholarships. Each student has a mentor partner, an adult partner, meets with them at least once a month. It's really a good program. That's O-N-E stuff. There's been all kinds of cooperation with federal housing programs. We've built some houses, 2 or 3 with the scholarship recipients. They're coming back and investing in the community after they go to college. I think O-N-E is an important tool in that community. The churches are certainly factors there, but at the same time, churches behave, especially, excuse me, black Baptist churches, behave pretty autonomously. It's been impossible to get a very strong organization of churches in the neighborhood. We've tried it, and the churches are pretty strong congregations, but they don't spend much of their energy in cooperative efforts. They mostly develop their own programs and their own buildings and do a very good job with the people who come there, not all of whom, of course, are from the Edgehill community. But they nonetheless are important institutions in the community. There still is a great dearth of commercial development in the neighborhood. So there's not much of a business association. And so I think the main organization that gives some cohesion and then tries to look not only at the trees but at the forest of the community, is O.N.E.

“Have these organizations affected the physicality of the neighborhood?” Nothing huge on that. When I drive along South Street between 12th and 8th and I see instead of a large housing project individual units, 235s and turn key IIIs, I am really grateful for that intervention. That would not have been the same without that intervention of the organization of the neighborhood there. The houses that we built, few thought they be, with Empowerment Zone enterprising government money, and some rehab as well, has been a good thing. We've had numerous battles with operators on Music Row, who circle, excuse me, like vultures over a carcass, in trying to rezone the area east of 16th, on South Street, to spot-zone, so Music Row can operate its cottage industries. They're little places where you make your demo and you can head toward making a million. And I could talk longer than you'd want to listen about the recurring visits to the Metro Council, battles sometimes with Council representatives who are willing to spot zone. The area is different. . [tape flip] . commercial use instead of residential. When you do that, not immediately, but in the long run, you begin to totally change that area. Why? Because you pay more property taxes with mixed office space. In time, the property accelerates. What's wrong with that? The only thing is that it's less and less and less residential. Incrementally it's more and more and more commercial. And with the supply of low-income, middle-income, and minority housing, in the city, it's a mistake to turn the neighborhood. And you can see the results of it along 17th and 18th, north of Wedgewood. When I grew up here, it was all residential. Folks lived in those places. Now everyone's got a sign in their front yards. That's okay, but we didn't want that in Edgehill. The area's different because of the consistency of that intervention. Over and over again, folks in the buses, up to the council, make our case. I'm talking about an ef-

fort that extends over decades. It's different because of that intervention. It's not what we wish it were. I wish we could have had less traditional public housing. There are wonderful people in there and Lord knows I've known them for a long time, but when you concentrate multi-problem families, no fault of their own that concentration, then you get a certain predictable result. You don't want your child to go to Carter-Lawrence if Carter-Lawrence is a neighborhood school. It's going to be almost all public housing kids. Ain't got no daddy at home. I don't mean to sound paternalistic about all that, but the fact is the reality of it. End of sermon, but we've got to be able to somehow diversify neighborhoods and give people choices in their housing which they haven't had.

What do you think are sources of pride for the neighborhood? Physical places like parks, physical structures like community centers? I think one way of looking at that, when O-N-E has had home-ownership workshops, I've been amazed at how well those are attended. The organization speaks to the needs of the people, the wants of the people. I think people are invited to begin to do something for themselves. I think that as contentious as it is, all this White Way Laundry discussion is people expressing themselves, sometimes in disagreement, which is okay, sometimes it's not okay, but it's okay. The democratic process is the sausage-making thing, it's not pretty. I think those kinds of processes, Dan, make for a sense of community and enable us to see other points of view that help us see the forest instead of just the trees. I think for eight years O-N-E has met with the police once a month. Not just O-N-E, but other people have come and Pat Lane said a few months ago that at Horton and 14th there's a drug concentration every night, and it's improved now. Community policing, where people again are invited to say, in a protected communal setting – they wouldn't do it, go by themselves and say it. It's not healed, but the suspicion about police has considerably improved over some days I remember. So all the ways in which we create processes for people to express themselves builds a sense of community and a sense of self-respect. I think when we took Mark out to see Edgehill and said "Help us do a visioning process here," it's a little on the rocky side, but it's another piece of the same thing. It's saying to people "We respect you, we respect your opinions, you may not get one-to-one effect of all those, but we're going to hear it and it's going to be a part of the stew. I just think that's great. In the absence of any other method of unity. I think that frankly, O-N-E's work has made Edgehill probably, in my opinion, biased, the premier neighborhood association in the inner city. I think to create the process where you keep on, whether it's over the police issues or the crime issues, or whether it's over housing issues or educational issues, people effecting those things.

Are the parks of Edgehill significant to the neighborhood? How have they affected the neighborhood? That's a really good question, Gary. And the answer is not simple. The youth football teams and softball teams use the top of Rose Park Hill, spotlights, good sponsorships, those are good things. I don't know what the answer is, as

to the lack of use of so much of that Rose Park area. Large, green strip. I don't think I'd walk through there at night. What can you do with a park are like that? Do you put more roads through it? Do you try to create more watching eyes? The city swimming pool is used fairly well, but I guess what I'm thinking of, on a scale from 0 to 10, 10 being maximum use, I'd say it's about a five, maybe a six. I'd really like to see us consult with folks over at the park board and talk about the fact that there's a huge expanse of land here – I'd rather see it used for houses. Than just sit there as a green space. Not used. I'm talking about the area behind Carter-Lawrence School. *What about Reservoir Park?* It's hard for me to know. I used to spend my days there. Some of my best memories as a child are from Reservoir Park. It just seems to be walled off some way. And I frankly don't know – I know it's not used much by the neighborhood. The Rose Park Community Center is used. There's a gym there. I don't know. There are tennis courts, you can see them from Eight Avenue, and the big reservoir is still there, but I don't think it means anything particularly to the Edgehill community. *Has Reservoir Park always been there?* Ever since I remember. Gosh, every – what was it? – Friday night, Saturday night, there were park movies, outside movies, and hundreds of people sat on the benches and I couldn't wait for next week to come because it was a chapter play. The cowboy was falling off the mountain or something. It really was the center of activity. I still remember Ms. Lilly, who was the woman who was kind of in charge of the center. *Why do you think that has changed? Is it because of public housing?* I think that there is a kind of a natural barrier there now. The back of – what do you call them there? – the Park on Hillside, used to be Edgehill Village, there's no easy access into the park. It serves a purpose like sometimes wide streets or interstates serve as a marginal walls. So it's something I haven't thought a lot about, but it's an observation I think anybody could make, that that's not an asset to the Edgehill community. But it would be great, in light of all these questions, to have some real park experts sit down and talk to the community about how to maximize the use of these spaces.

Can you say a little more about Vanderbilt's and Belmont's impact on the community? One apparent thing is that 16th Avenue is the boundary between white and black. Nixon changed urban renewal into neighborhood development programs, which is what Vanderbilt got. There's an attorney here, Joe Johnston, that knows everything about this. In order to qualify for urban renewal, you had to demonstrate that 51% of your housing supply was substandard. If you pull that trigger, if you prove that, then 2 out of every 3 dollars that was spent on the project was federal. It triggered the federal program. Vanderbilt reached that 51% in its area by buying up the houses and letting them decay. Now I'm an alumnus of Vanderbilt and I really appreciate what happened to me there, but that's the truth of it. And there were lawsuits and all that kind of stuff. I was even invited to appear in court to testify to the question, "Is there a large delinquency rate here?" Vanderbilt maintained that there was. And when I did the research, the number of juvenile risk was very low in comparison to a lot of neighborhoods.

Vanderbilt really – well, Bill Coffin said "Sometimes certainty is more important than truth." It's more important to be certain than to let in any inconvenient truth. I had my squabbles with people in the planning office at Vanderbilt, but that really is what happened, despite all the wonderful contributions that Vanderbilt makes to the community. It was really painful for me to see them doing that. ***What are some of those positive contributions?*** Well, is it positive to give a large quality urban university space to expand? Yeah, sure it is. I mean what are you going to do if you don't let the business district expand, and urban universities expand? Sure, parking garages and athletic fields and children's hospitals. It's a wonderful asset. And they did it the way they knew they could do it. I wish that maybe compensation could have occurred. It's interesting that the park out there, the one on Wedgewood, it's got that serpentine sculpture. That woman they named it for was a huge opponent to Vanderbilt. As I say, the guru of all this is J. Johnston. He's the attorney that fought this all the way through. But it's ambiguous. There are benefits but you wish it happened in a little more humane way. If you've got a house in that area and it's due for development or whatever, and I offer you a good price for it and even help in relocating, getting something else, full service for relocation, you won't spend the next five years of your life kicking against it. But that really didn't happen.

What is the single biggest change that you've seen in your life in Edgehill, both positive and negative? Well, it's just like Vanderbilt, there are positive sides. It's good to have sanitary and storm sewers separated – in the whole city they were all in one pipe! It's good to have traffic arteries widened and expanded and 12th Avenue and Edgehill were so done. There's no question but that traffic movement is better in the neighborhood. There aren't any outhouses in the area that I know of. So physically and aesthetically, it looks better. Depending on how important that is to you. You add that huge redevelopment, and the Rochelle Center has doubled or tripled its space on South Street. The Rochelle Center is testing for disabled people. The Methodists got their national communications building there. Everybody who bought there got a good bargain for that land. There are some good changes. The Kayne Baptist Church got pretty good location out of it. So there are some good things about it. Bad things: decimation of anything retail, commercial, except for beer places that are also numbers places, you can get killed any night over at Sam's. But that was really there before.

Back to positive, there are some health facilities there in the neighborhood. The negative part of it was that urban renewal really accelerated class and race homogeneities. Really accelerated that. For a long time, when you went over to the housing authority and said "I want to move into a housing project and they said "We've got a vacancy in Edgehill," you said "No thanks." It was like Sam Levy Homes, it was one of the last ones. Today it's one of the first ones you want. Now that is because it's got a pretty good residents' association, what I was saying about the meetings with the police. The drug problems are not over yet, and it's not just

Edgehill, not just Nashville, it's all over the country. Public housing projects, because of their design, became great nesting places for crack, the drug trade. And that means stealing, means break-ins. I mean folks will do anything on drugs. The thirty years I spent there. We used to feed homeless down there and a man was walking out at 12:30 down the hall of the church building with a microwave, just stoned to death. We had nine or ten break-ins a year before we got an alarm system and bars, which helped the situation a lot. But anywhere you've got that kind of concentration of public housing, low-income folks all jammed together, you've got a tough problem.

I mean some of my stories about children are just unbelievable. What happens to children in situations like that. Couldn't let Alexis see her momma on the weekends because her momma was doing tricks in motels and taking Alexis with her. That's true. Foster parents have to say "you can't see your momma on the weekends." The things that kids are still going through in those settings. Schools aren't going to be able to solve those problems. I wish they could, they may aspire to it, but you're not going to solve anything when kids spend 16 hours doing something else. So anyway, those are some of the things I see of. The police issue is still strained, although it's moved from a 1 to a 6 or a 7. The police problem is a hard one in areas like that because police assignments are made based on seniority. A lot of the rookies get North Nashville and Edgehill and Casey Homes and as soon as they have enough seniority to choose, they get out of those neighborhoods, and I would too. But it's so important for the police and schoolteachers to stay. Your currency is your trust, not your skin color. People start saying, "I think I know he's for us, she's for us." And so the rotation of police officers, the rotation of schoolteachers, principals, in neighborhoods like that is extremely high. And we have this concentration of housing. So these are some of the things. There are plusses and there are minuses. I think the minuses are so strong that they beg us to do something different than what we've done before. And Hope VI is a good plan to diversify public housing. The problem is there are no replacement units being provided. If there is a certain amount of gentrification in Hope VI, which there is, where do the other people go? You won't find very good records for relocation. I've tried. So all that takes place.

What is your vision of Edgehill in the future? Well, that's what Mark's going to do. I would see diversity, economic as well as racial diversity. I spent thirty years in the congregation that was in 1966 between 35 and 40% African American. Thirty years later, it was over three hundred people, and it was still between 35 and 40%. We learned some things about the importance of black leadership, try to get the community's trust, and so forth. You know I would feel so cheated if I had gone through a vocational ministry from one homogeneity to another. It would be terrible. I would be very deprived. Do you know what playing the dozens is? It's a black community thing. I was driving the bus one day in the summer program, the bus had about a hundred kids on it breaking the

law. And Spanky and Larry, two counselors from the neighborhood, started talking about each other's momma. And all I'd seen when people talked about people's momma was you'd get a knuckle sandwich. Larry was whuppin' Spanky. The whole bus would rock with laughter when Larry said something and then when Spanky said something it was just kind of mmm. He was whuppin' him. It was a contest. And I thought we were going to have a terrible fight. We got off the bus. I didn't know about playing the dozens. It's a phenomenon in the black community where you say "Your momma is so dumb she saw a sign in the hospital the other day that said 'Wet floor' and she thought it was a command and she did." "Your momma is so fat she went to the beach the other day and Greenpeace ran down and rolled her back into the ocean." And people save up. Not everybody plays – you can still get hit in the face if you say something to someone who doesn't play. But it's a status thing if you play. We have a black associate pastor who said "From the time I was a small child I started encycloped-ing all those insults, remembering them, so I could play the game. Greer and Cobbs are two black psychiatrists and they wrote a book ??? and in that book they stated that playing the dozens, or dissing, they think started during slavery when Daddy was sold and Momma was God. And then when you're 14, 15, 13 you may get sold. Slavery was unfriendly to families. And when you got sold, and you got separated from Momma, you felt like life had ended. And so instead of moping around the next five years in sadness, you turned it into humor, which made it tolerable. Now I think that's a wonderful tribute to the human spirit, that it has mechanisms for transforming the terrible tragedies. That 's why I said I would have felt cheated. I don't play the dozens, I'm not the right color to play the dozens, but I admire when the kids stand on the corner and the others can't play but two of them can. It's a tribute to the dignity of the human spirit to overcome the worst injustice and tragedy. That's what I hope stays in Edgehill, that way of thumbing your nose at injustices and tragedies. You can see it was a love affair.

Do you see any physical changes? Diversity needs physical changes. I hope the White Way Laundry thing turns into a mixed development where there's some retail. Because we lost so much in urban renewal. I think there's an old strip of land north of Murrell School that's still from urban renewal unused. I'd like to see single family units built there. The housing diversity thing – Vine Hill torn down, Preston Taylor torn down, they're looking at Sam Levy Homes for Hope VI. I hope I see the day when public housing projects are no longer. Not that they just simply tear them down but they replace them with something more humane. We're willing to tear them down but we're not spending money to build replacement units. Yeah, I think a lot of physical. But I think of them mostly as housing diversity.