

Sandi Abbo

Tape Log

Narrator: Sandi Abbo

Interviewer: Kathryn Wall

Interview Date: June 11, 2025

Location: Marian Cheek Jackson Center

Length: 1:06:29

Interview Processor: Avery Baker

Comments: Everything is paraphrased except for quotations.

TAPE LOG

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>
0:00	Introductions.
0:17	Talks about family history in Chapel Hill. Mother grew up in Pittsboro, father grew up around Sanford. Father was a CME pastor, which moved them out of Chapel Hill into High Point, Salisbury, Winston-Salem, and then back to Chapel Hill where her parents then separated.
2:22	Educational experiences in Chapel Hill. She attended Frank Porter Graham Elementary School and switched to Estes Hills Elementary School in fifth grade. She attended Guy B. Phillips "Junior High" School as part of the "integration class." Attended Chapel Hill "Senior" High School.
4:42	Attended Barat College of the Sacred Heart in Lake Forest, Illinois, a Catholic all-women's college. Said she knew she wanted to leave Chapel Hill.
5:57	Lake Forest, IL was a culture shock. Ms. Abbo said the material they taught grew her appreciation for Chapel Hill's education system. Her upbringing at St. Joseph CME also taught her public speaking and oration.
8:10	Remembering A.D. Clark Pool. Before it was built, there were no swimming pools for Black children. Ms. Abbo and her family would go to the one in High Point that allowed Black children.
10:05	When school was out, Ms. Abbo and her siblings attended Vacation Bible School at all of the Black churches in Chapel Hill nearly every week.
11:45	Started high school in 1969. Felt disconnected from her white classmates; her and other Black students were trying to get civil rights while white students were able to live worry-free.

- 15:49 Images of protesters being attacked with dogs and hoses was “real for us.” Snuck away and joined a march to support Black workers who were being persecuted.
- 17:16 Emphasizes the importance of having a “real” curriculum and expectations for students to excel, rather than just passing students to the next grade. Believes education is as essential as oxygen.
- 18:53 Talks about encountering people who are disconnected from Chapel Hill’s Black community.
- 21:45 After her parents separated, her mother took care of her and her sisters full-time. They lived in Pine Knolls, then Tin Top, then at the apartments on Lindsay St and Church St. Discusses her mother’s career path, from cleaning houses to working in the infirmary.
- 26:30 Remembered vividly how difficult it could be sometimes as the second oldest of her and her 4 sisters.
- 30:19 Felt called by God to make a story quilt one year before her mother died. Reminisces on the moments of joy her mother would make sure they had, like making ice cream for her and her siblings.
- 34:14 Describes experience attending Frank Porter Graham while it was segregated. Had a strict, solid teacher whom every student wanted to please. At Estes Hills, there were little to no Black teachers and a lot of physical fights.
- 37:39 Attended school during the Vietnam War. Young Black men were drafted and came home with trauma. American society excluded Black people from eating in certain places, but happily sent them into war.
- 40:00 Worked at the Department of Family and Children’s Services in Georgia. Worked alongside Black women who were relegated to the basement while the white workers enjoyed their own floor and break room.
- 42:13 Discusses involvement in Chapel Hill’s integration movement. Joined marches in support of fair wages for UNC workers.
- 44:32 Taught by Dr. Joseph Knight at Chapel Hill High. “He taught Black history for real.” He taught her how to do her own research, which opened her eyes to the history of the world around her.
- 48:00 Remembered her Black teachers in high school, including the home economics teacher (Ms. Pope), librarian (Ms. Ruffin), and Coach Peerman. Always wanted to attend Lincoln High because Black students celebrated their identity there. “We’re not invisible anymore, and we’re not going to be invisible ever again.”
- 52:11 White teachers in advanced classes had different expectations for Black students compared to white students. Many of her classmates had never been around white people in a classroom before.

- 55:17 Black students were allowed to try and join every extracurricular activity, including chess, yearbook club, and sports. She participated in the Agape club with Jewish students. Her and her friends were courageous enough to try new things.
- 1:00:03 Appreciates how her and her community members are getting older and living long enough to know their great-grandchildren.
- 1:01:40 The lack of culture in the broader Chapel Hill community was what pushed her to leave. Everything revolved around white UNC students. Now, she feels like she could live here happily. "This is what made me who I am."