

“Chatty” Hattie Leeper Oral History Interview 3

Interview Conducted by
Christina Wright
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Title: “Chatty” Hattie Leeper oral history interview 3, 2007 January 19

Description: In the last of three interviews with Christina Wright, radio DJ “Chatty” Hattie Leeper discusses her career in radio and other professional pursuits in Charlotte, North Carolina, from the 1950s through the time of interview. She shares stories about her colleagues during her employment with WGIV, WRPL, and WAYS radio stations, including “Genial” Gene Potts, specifics about the how radio broadcasting changed over the decades, instances of workplace harassment and gender discrimination, and the widespread practice of payola, the practice of offering compensation to DJs for playing certain artists’ songs, during the mid to late-twentieth century. Ms. Leeper also discusses opening, running, and ultimately closing her school, Chatty’s School of Communication, operating a free summer camp for children, holding successful talent competitions for young people, and other acts of service for the community that she engaged in. Ms. Leeper concludes by offering advice on how to be successful in life.

Biography: Hattie Leeper was around 76 years old at the time of interview, which took place at her home in Charlotte, North Carolina. She was born in Edgemoor, South Carolina in 1930. She attended Central Piedmont Community College, earned a Master’s in Education Administration, and was employed as a disc jockey at WGIV, WRPL, and WAYS radio stations; the chair of the broadcasting department at Gaston College; and the founder and owner of Chatty School of Communication.

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Transcriber: Tamara Turner
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Related Interviews Note: “Chatty” Hattie Leeper oral history interview 1, 2006 December 11, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte (<https://goldmine.uncc.edu/islandora/object/uncc%3A370>); “Chatty” Hattie Leeper oral history interview 3, 2007 January 19, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte (<https://goldmine.uncc.edu/islandora/object/uncc%3A372>)

Transcript Notes: HL : Hattie Leeper
CW : Christina Wright

“Chatty” Hattie Leeper Oral History Interview Transcript 3

Minidisc 1 begins.

CW: Today is January 19th, 2007. This is Christina Wright interviewing Hattie Leeper, and better known as “Chatty Hattie” for the UNC Charlotte Oral History Archive. We’re at 2412 Twin Field Drive, Charlotte, North Carolina, 28216. Hattie Leeper or, “Chatty Hattie,” was the first black female announcer in North Carolina. She began her career in radio, in 1948, at WGIV in Charlotte, North Carolina, where she was on the air for over twenty years. After WGIV she was associated with local radio stations, WRPL and Big Ways WAYS. In her later career, she has focused on education. She held the position of chair of the broadcasting department at Gaston College from 1985 to 1998. After which, she founded her own proprietary school “Chatty’s School of Communication” here in Charlotte. She’s also taught in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Mrs. Leeper has been honored many times. In 1989, she was inducted into the Black Radio Hall of Fame in Washington D.C. In 2000, she was also inducted into the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame. She has been presented with the keys to the city of Charlotte by two mayors. And she’s been a national officer of the National Association of Radio and TV Announcers. And last time we, we were interviewing we talked about WGIV and your early experiences there, and I wanted to pick up and ask you if you would talk about your colleagues and the people that you worked with.

HL: Oh yes! That was interesting. In my book, Christina, there’s a full photo of the staff at WGIV and also in the book, there’s a photo of my mentor that I had, Mr. Genial Gene Potts. I was working with him and the time on the clock that day was 6:20 in the morning. That’s one thing that you do when you’re in communications. You have to get up really early because you’re the entertainer, so you can’t wait and sleep late and get up and go to work, you know. You got to be there four thirty, five o’clock in the morning you know, to get ready for your show.

CW: How old are you in that photo?

HL: Um, I don’t remember but I do know I was quite young, early in my teen years because during those days I was little, you know. They called me “Chatty Little Hattie.” And you can see that I believe in the autograph of the photo there, they were calling me Chatty Little Hattie because can you see it from looking at it. I wasn’t even developed. (laughs) I was probably, maybe thirteen I guess. I have a handful of mail that had just come in for the Genial Gene show. And I had a pen in my hand and I would always date it, you know on the letters that came in. Put a rubber band around them, sort them out for the songs that they would request to be played on the air. Back in those days, there was a thing called “making dedications” on the air for your birthday. Dedicate a record for your anniversary or whatever, a new baby. And I would sort through the mail and write on top of each letter, you know, what category it fits in. So I was

accessible, I didn't have a radio show in this particular picture. I was just a helper and was being accessible, that's what I was doing, and I would do that before time to go to school in the mornings. You had to look really professional during those days. As you can see, the DJs wore suits with neckties and shirts. And I was the only female at the stations so I wore a dress because pants was not really the thing during that time. Dresses and skirts was a big thing, wherein now ladies are dressed in jeans. A pair of jeans, a hundred something dollars (laughs) for a pair of jeans, you know. But then you just wore dresses and you dressed real feminine, real nice, and you were respected seemingly more back in the day when I matriculated. Because if you dress good, and feel good, and look good about yourself and respect yourself, then others will return that to you so.

CW: What was your first impression of Genial Gene?

HL: He was like a father figure for me. He really was, because I always would latch onto any matured person that was a role model. I would find my way to spend time around that person because I was searching for a father that I didn't have that quality time with, with my own biological father. So to me, to work with a person such as he and he took me as a child of his because he didn't have any children, he and his wife, at all. So I was the little girl you know, that they didn't have. So it just made for a real nice match. About the other staff members at the radio station that you mentioned: we were like one big family, one big happy family that is. If one had a cold drink, you'd ask the other person, "You want a cold drink?" You know, we shared, you know. Everybody, we'd have a pack of peanut butter crackers, (laughs) we'd pass it along, you know, to the other staff members. We would just, just, and we were integrated during that time, that's what's amazing. Back in those days, we, we were integrated the staff, but I was the only female there.

CW: Did that strike you at the time as unusual, or did that just seem the way it should be?

HL: No, it just seemed very normal. It didn't really stand out why cause so far, that you know, we're different. We're doing this and nobody else is doing that or whatever. It just seemed the norm, you know because that's just the way it was. It started out being that way, and everybody got along, and everybody was you know, just one big happy family. We really, it went beyond just a family feeling at the station. We got to know each other's, you know, families and homes, you know. The wives, the ones that were not married we got to know, you know, their brothers and sisters. It was a sweet, sweet spirit with our staff. And being the only female there and as I look at the picture now, I get real watery-eyed because everybody on the back row is deceased in this picture. And everybody on the front row, and I was sitting on front row, (laughs) is still living. I often have fun, you know, thinking about that. You know I have happy tears as I think about it. But we were all very, very young, very young, high school.

CW: Would you like to talk about each of the people in turn, according to the picture?

HL: Yes, those on the front row, that's still living, is Ray Gooding and his radio name was "Rocking Ray." You had tag names back in the day. Sitting beside him was Doug Douglass. He was probably tenth or eleventh grade student at a high school, he was Caucasian. Sitting beside him was Chatty Hattie and sitting beside me was Scott Hooves. His radio name was "Hot Scott" and he was quite a character. People did not know that he was a Caucasian. They would hear him on the air and he sounded just like an Afro-American. And that's just the way he could just transform his voice immediately into character, and you would think, you know, that he was Afro-American. But people would come out to the station and they would want to visit the station on a tour with a class from a school. They would say, "let's meet Hot Scott," and we would let them look through the glass in there in the control room where the DJ was, and we would say, "That's he that's on the air now." And they would say, "No Hot Scott," and Hot Scott had pretty blonde hair with blue eyes. They would say "No, we want Hot Scott," and when he would open the microphone and he would start talking, they would say, "That is his voice, that is him!" And they say, "We thought he was going be a black man," and we say, "No, he's white." But what's strange, they would come to see me and thought I was white. Because I talked correctly, I pronounced, and my enunciation and everything was correctly, as I would do my commercials on the air and how I would introduce my records and so forth. And they thought surely, oh, I don't know what that perception was but if you sounded that way you were white. And it wasn't the case, and that was really blowing everybody's mind. We were an integrated station, the whites on the air sound black, and the blacks sounded white to them. (laughs) And it was really amazing, and then now that was the first row. On the back row to the left here is Danny Owens. He was a professor at Johnson C. Smith University and he was the jazz DJ on the air. He played some smooth jazz. He had the best jazz programs. He was really great.

CW: Did he teach music, or--?

HL: I don't think music was his expertise in, in his classrooms. But he was a very learned person. I mean, he had played with big bands, you know, national recording artists, and that kind of thing. He was not from North Carolina, he was from Tennessee, and he was strictly a wonderful, smooth-talking man.

CW: He was a musicianist himself as well?

HL: Yes, yes! But he did very little because jazz wasn't really that open around here during that time. Maybe a jazz trio on a Sunday afternoon during lunch or something like that. But it wasn't, you know, where you really had a gig going to jazz, you know, performances per se. Then beside Danny, he's deceased now, Danny Owen is. Beside him is Larry Keith who was in the sales area, he sold radio time for the station. That was his big thing, and he also did editorials on the air.

Larry Keith, he's deceased now. And we cared so much for Larry. He's white. He left the station, went over to WRPL, talked the manager into changing the format, that he would like to be the manager for the station and this kind of thing. When our station was sold and we knew that we may not be there any longer or what have you, and we wanted somewhere to go, so he went over and talked the station manager into converting his format. And when Larry Keith did that, he came back and he looked over the staff. He said, "I want you, Chatty Hattie, to follow me. I want Rocking Ray to follow me." He named the ones he wanted, you know, to take over there. He said, "We'll bring this station from rags to riches," and we said, "Okay, that's fine," cause we didn't know what the outcome was going to be after the new owners and managers came in. They were from California, and we knew they were bringing in a lot of their own folk for the programming and we might possibly be out the door anyway, so we wanted to have a foothold to continue success in radio and the market. So we followed Larry Keith on over there to the station. But we waited until the first day these people hit Charlotte, and I shall never forget, they came in and had a staff meeting with all of us and they brought about ten people from California in here. Not to stay, but just to, you know, get the station promoted and get it off the ground. And that company was called Tracy Broadcasting, out of California. They are not around now, I don't think. Might be, I don't know. But the first thing they wanted us to do, it was in the month of July. They wanted us to play Christmas music all day long, in July. This was to let the John Q. Public know there's been a shake-up over here, there's been a change over here. That would get your attention. To have your radio on, and hear "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," Bing Crosby was playing. Or you know, any other artists they had, Johnny Mathis, all of these beautiful voices out of California, all these people, Sammy Davis Jr., all of these, everything was all Christmas music. No R&B Christmas music, big bands Christmas music. Oh my goodness! We knew then, "Oh yes we're out of here." So we gave them our notice and they said, "Thank you, thank you." They were as relieved, you know, because they didn't know if we were going to be activists, and you know, have the public marching down there to save our jobs and this kind of thing. But we were independent and we were people that didn't want to be anywhere we weren't wanted anyway because we all knew that we had talent. Because we had brought that station from little known nothing to something, you know. And we had a gift of gab to talk. We all were educated, we were people who had arrived, so to speak, and we went over to that other station and took our listeners with us. And boy, did they have a hard time in the ratings, trying to get, you know, numbers built up because they had lost their powerhouse people. You know, we had gone over to the other station cross town, and we made that a real happy nest for about two years, and then we decided one day to wake up and smell the roses. And guess what, found out the owner of the station only had the station for a hobby. He didn't want to make any money, he just had it for a hobby. That wasn't even his field, communications, at all. He was in the medical field, he was a pharmacist. And but he just needed this for an outlet, very, very wealthy man and didn't care about making any money. That wasn't really what he wanted to do, he just wanted the name of when he went out to play golf or tennis, to say, "Oh you're the man that owns the radio station." And that's how all he cared about, is somebody knowing that he was "the man."

(laughs) But as far as us raking in money so that we could make money, you know, get a commission? He didn't care about that kind of thing.

CW: Who was the owner?

HL: His name was Ridsen Lyon, L-Y-O-N. And he was from Wadesboro, North Carolina. He's deceased now also.

CW: What does WRLPL stand for?

HL: (pause) "Ripple Radio" was the tag name. It was WRPL, "Ripple," and that was all it meant, you know.

CW: How, you know, you shaped some kind of a style there, but did it have a style before?

HL: What they did before was they had only females on the air, and it was all foreigners. One of the girls was from Sweden, one was from Japan, another one I believe was from, (pause) I've forgotten all the places. Argentina, Czechoslovakia, someplace. But they were not from here, they were from different countries, and that was a novelty to him. And then they broadcast from the showcase wonder downtown on the square in Charlotte. It used to be a hotel there. And the, the front window kept the drapes open so you could see the gals in there on the radio as you drive by. You toot your horn at these pretty redheads, these pretty blondes, these pretty, you know, they all had different colors of hair. And they were real sexy, hoodie chicks, you know. (laughs) So they didn't care about getting canned, you know, to leave. We never heard from them anymore after we went over that first day.

CW: Did you keep that format of having--

HL: No, no, no, no. That went out because the guys were not going to be coming in, you know, so that was out. I was the only female, so I wasn't going to be, you know, dressed like they were with mini micro dresses on and low-cut, you know, showing everything. Oh wow, no. They were go-go girls, that was the thing, you know, with boots. (sings) "These boots are made for walking, I'm gonna walk all over." And it was, oh gosh, it was so much fun for people in Charlotte. They would go all out their way to go through Trade and Tryon Street to blow at those girls in the window. It was something to see, and it kept a lot of people in front of the show glass you know, peering in all the time. People on their lunch hour downtown, the banks and everywhere, would stand in front of that window and eat their lunch standing up, looking at those sexy girls. So that's, it was a novelty for this man. So when we went in there, they drew the curtains, of course. You know, you couldn't see us in there operating because, you know, we were about doing a serious job. We on the air, not to your audience, so that was good for two years. And we

decided one day we're not making any money here. The, you know, we been here two years and we're not really getting--

CW: The sponsors weren't there?

HL: Yeah, and he wasn't that particular about you really going. And if you went out and got some sponsors, he'd just say, "Okay." You know, most places you work, they would say, "Oh, the revenue," you know. Audit lines and you know, they would be talking budgets and stuff. But he never had a staff meeting for anything like that. But a Christmas parade would come up and he would say he was renting a trick car, one of those little bumper cars, and he'd want us to get in the Christmas parade and ride in those little bumper cars. And let them run up to people, and choke down. Now he'd love that, oh my goodness! He just got a thrill out of stuff like that and would have the call letters on the trick car, WRPL. Can you believe that? So this was a far cry from what we'd been accustomed to. And when we decided among ourselves that we are doing ourselves an injustice, the newness of this is wearing off. That other station over town had started making an impact and we needed to get away from here before we start going downhill, and people, you know, going to start tuning us out, you know, start listening to what's going on over there where we left. So we said we better get to us another station. So I pulled out and I went to Big Ways Radio, WAYS. They were a top pop station in town.

CW: Where were they located?

HL: They were here in Charlotte also.

CW: Downtown?

HL: No, they were out on the suburbs, out in the Oakdale section of Charlotte. And I went over there as a salesperson and on-air personality as well. I did weekend shifts on the air. And Rocking Ray went to WBT Channel 3 television station. He went there and started working in production and producing commercials and this kind of thing. So we both went our separate ways, and then Larry Keith retired because he started having some voice problems and started suffering with asthma and different respiratory things, so he retired and we kept in touch with he and his wife Mary and the children. Let's see, what happened to the rest of them. The rest of them just started, you know, peeling off one by one. Leaving the area, going to South Carolina, different other states to work. But we left there, then the station was sold. The manager decided well, "I've had enough," you know. Somebody else bought WRPL after that and they changed the call letters to another format. And I don't know, they probably still around but not in that location. But it was really challenging, and then let's see who else is left that I didn't mention. And then Genial Gene of course, he had some health problems, very serious diabetic problems and he retired. And then shortly after that he became bedridden, and then he passed away, so he

didn't do any other radio after this. And the other announcer beside him, his name was William Saunders but his radio name was "Joy Boy." "You're listening to the Joy Boy Show." Well he passed away while we were all one big happy family at GIV, at a young age, in his early thirties. He got sick, passed away. And then it was like a heart attack, I believe was the, on his death certificate was a heart attack. Then he had been in an accident, an automobile accident, and that kind of, you know, placed a burden on his heart from the impact of the accident. Then beside him is Pete Toomey. He's Caucasian. Pete was very young as well and after all of us left radio, he said, "I'm not going to stay in this field. I always wanted to be in law enforcement." And we laughed, we said, "How you going to go from being in radio as a star, and his name was "Hound Dog," that was his radio name, "You're listening to the Hound Dog Show." He says, "Well I'm going to try hard and see if I can get on that police department." Well he had relatives there had done well. His cousin Mickey, and he had an uncle there also that was a police officer. So he took the test, passed it, and became a city policeman. And there he worked with that until he retired. And occasionally we'll get together or, you know, see each other and his family. They don't live here in Charlotte, but not too far from here. A little town called Belmont, North Carolina. So that's the extent of all of the ones that was here.

CW: What were all the different programming that they did? There was the jazz that you were talking about?

HL: Uh yes, Danny did a jazz show, and then Larry Keith did sales. He was the one that would sell all of the advertising. But there were others, sales people that are not in this picture because they were not on the air, so they didn't put them in a staff, you know, on-air personnel. But that's what he did, and of course Genial Gene did the radio programs. He did both types of radio program, he did gospel and then he did R&B.

CW: A sort of even amount?

HL: No, I believe he did more gospel than he did R&B because he would start each morning off at five thirty with gospel, and he would play gospel up until maybe the first hour and hour and a half, then he'd convert it over to R&B.

CW: He was your rhyming DJ too?

HL: Yes, he's a rhyming DJ. He could rhyme any and everything. Today the young people do all this rapping, you know, but he was rapping back then but they called it rhyming because what he rhymed, it was clean. It wasn't like what you hear today, you know. Cop killing songs, shoot your mama songs, drugs, sex, that wasn't a part of his rhymes, not at all. Everything was really educational. It was uplifting the way he would rhyme. You could just give him, just say for example, the color brown. Oh, one letter, one word, and he would rhyme and rhyme, make a

poem out of it, you know. He just to start off, "You are brown, go downtown," this and that, you know. Everything rhymed, it was just wonderful. And then Joy Boy did both R&B and then he did a lot of gospel music too. He had gospel shows and then he did R&B shows. Pete Toomey, being Caucasian, he didn't do any of the gospel and spiritual but he did rock 'n' roll. He catered to a teenagers audience. The young whites that went to Myers Park High School and that crowd, they listened to him as well as Scott Hooves because he was a student over on the east side of Charlotte and so was Doug here. They all were high school students and they catered to the white teenagers.

CW: Were they doing this sort of part-time at that time, and they were still attending school?

HL: Yes, all of us in school and, and, and working. That's why sometime it's so difficult to interview someone such as myself that has been doing so much. You cannot nail what year, cause if you maybe twenty-five to thirty, thirty-five, forty years old, you can come up with the year you did it. But if you lived past, you know, your fifty-yard line as I have, and you got to remember something happen when you were, you know, and you were doing two, three things at one time. See, I've always gone to more than one school at one time. I've always gone to more than one job at one time. I've always done more than, you know. Just everything I've ever done career-wise hasn't been doing it, I started this in such and such a year and I ended it five years or ten years later at this year. You don't know cause you were everything rolled over, mushroomed over. And it's difficult I imagine to interview someone like me because you don't even remember. You ask me right now, "What years did you have your record shop?" I don't know because I was in radio, and would get off and I was selling radio time out in the public, then I'd go by my radio, my record shops, and I had more than one. It was just, you know, and I did songwriting during that time. I did recording records during that time. "What year you started this?" I don't know, it was all going at one time.

CW: In respect to the years, I did want you to talk about those other things you were doing. It wasn't unusual for DJs to get involved in the many different venues. You probably got involved in a whole lot more than anybody else did.

HL: I surely did, I really did, I think that's how I built up these stair steps that's now called legend because the rest of the DJs, when they finished their air shift or what they had to do as far as radio, that was it for them. They partied or did whatever they wanted to do, you know.

CW: Around the country, you were one of the number of the ones--

HL: Yes.

CW: --who did, you know a lot of the promotions of fans--

HL: Oh yes.

CW: --and got involved in production and that kind of thing.

HL: Exactly.

CW: So when did you first start branching out in that direction?

HL: Almost immediately. You know that minute that I would go off the air, out my mind would be in three places. Do I want to do something in the office today? Do I want to plan a promotion to bring some artists to Charlotte at the coliseum? Cause I promoted, you know, artists. Do I want to go work with my artists that I have, that I've discovered? Do I want to go over choreography with them? Do I want to go over some new songs with them? Do I want to do this tonight or this afternoon? You know, I was just coordinating all the time and almost every week I would think of a lyric for some songs and I would write that down, I'd start work on finishing songs. You know, I'm busy, I'm just, you know, I was actually addicted to a microphone, a telephone, you know, those kinds of things cause I'm on the phone all the time. I'm talking to California, I'm talking to Chicago, Detroit, all these places where there are record companies. Chicago, everywhere. They're calling me, "I got a record coming out, I want you to hear it. Give me your opinion." "I have a session, a recording session coming up, can you come and be here in person and write the liner notes on the album about, you know, this album that we're cutting?" It's, it's stuff like that. And then my community involvement work, I was busy doing that. I was in church and I gave everything their props. Everybody looked to me. I would be in Sunday school, I'd teach a class or I'd be at the usher board meetings. Or cause I ushered at church, I mean I gave my church, almost had to, my pastor at that time worked at the station with us and I had to face him every other day, and he'd say, "You weren't in church Sunday," you know. So I had good role models, good mentors all the time around me. And then you visiting other radio stations and DJs, they were having anniversaries. The DJs back in that time, the announcers, they would have an anniversary every year. And I was friends with, oh lord, thirty or forty DJs, north, south, east, west. And I would be planning all the time I had to go to this one's anniversary, cause when you had yours they would come back to you and support you on your anniversary. And so I stayed traveling all of the time.

CW: What would an anniversary celebration be like?

HL: You would have a show. If you were a gospel DJ, you bring in top names in DJs. If you were a R&B jock or a rock 'n' roll jock, you would bring in like, for example, a whole program of people on my tenth anniversary in radio, you would bring in all these artists, and you would attend, and you would help to MC the show because it would be a whole colossal stage.

CW: Where did you hold that?

HL: (pause) At auditoriums. See, then they didn't have the big Charlotte Coliseum. What was the auditorium was the Park Center Auditorium [now Grady Cole Center], right there by Central Piedmont over there on Kings Drive. That was the auditorium during that time. And when you fill that up, you had had, you know, you were looked at as, you would look at the coliseum to fill it up. But that auditorium was our place to have our shows. Before that they had a place called the Armory, but it got so old and broke down, you couldn't heat it, you couldn't cool it. So they built the Park Center Auditorium and it's still there. So that is where we would have our shows. And they were nice, you know, very nice anniversary shows. And it would last. You would have it, maybe it start on a Friday, and you'd have a Friday night performance, you could have it Saturday, on Sunday you'd have a gospel show, you know, you could do whatever. But it would last two or three days, but you couldn't stay that long. But they wanted you to make an appearance on their anniversary so that they could announce to their public that Chatty Hattie from Charlotte, North Carolina is here, would you go to the stage and say you know, something, and maybe present flowers to the DJ or, he and his wife, or she and her husband, whatever the case may be. Their family takes a photo, that's how I came about having pictures of my anniversaries because they would support each other. Yeah, people weren't so jealous of one another making a fistful of money. You wanted to help somebody to leave there with a tub full of money and have Wells Fargo to take it to the bank for you. Wherein now, you know, people too jealous to see somebody do anything. I notice DJs now, if they get a new car, the other jocks work with them are jealous or talk about you or say things like that. We wanted to see each other with good-looking clothes, big diamond rings, homes, cars, trips. We loved that. And when I announced to the staff one day that I had a timeshare down at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, I had a mountain home, and oh my god, they applauded, clapped their hands, (claps hands) "Bravo, right on!" And then what you do if you were so much bigger financially than they, to keep them from fighting you and not supporting you, you give them a piece of the action. I'd say, "I have a timeshare I got down in Myrtle Beach and I can't go down there every weekend cause I'm gonna be busy, you want to go? Take your family?" You know, that's how you share what you have, is what, you know, we loved each other, we meant well by each other. We didn't care about being jealous or who got the biggest house or who, you know. You just didn't go there with your mindset, it just wasn't a part of it.

CW: You have a very generous heart too.

HL: Oh yes!

CW: So it came from your family?

HL: Oh yes!

CW: And your upbringing?

HL: And you'd be surprised how many of those band players that I managed, those singers back in the day and their mother-in-law's furnace would go out in her house. Not the singer that I managed. They'd come to me and say, "I don't have any money to help put furnace in the house, can you help us out on how to, some ways and means we could, do you know, could you give us a down payment?" I said, "Well, how much is the furnace?" And I'd talk to him and I'd go see what's the problem and say, "Okay that's what it is." And see back in the day, things weren't high like it is now. You could put a brand new high line furnace in a house for nine hundred dollars or less. I'd put a furnace in that house for one of my artist's mother-in-law's that's keeping their kids so they can travel on the road. You want a warm house for kids. I'd put a furnace in, you don't owe me nothing. I don't think that lady ever thanked me. I didn't care about it. I didn't have time to know nothing about a thank you note from nothing I do, cause I'm too busy helping somebody else. Every Easter I would buy over there at my record shop at North Charlotte, I would buy shoes for all the little girls and little boys that walked past my record store going down to Hawthorne School every day and coming back. We weren't bused in those days, you walked. And I would think about how I didn't have shoes when I was a child. I'd gather up all those little kids over there that was in that subculture area and tell them, "Stop in here, baby, and let me see what size shoe you have on." And I just shake my head because they were wearing shoes too small, they were wearing shoes too big, had raw blisters on they little feet, and I couldn't stand it. And I wouldn't take them downtown to get the shoes. I would just buy assorted sizes in little black patent-leather shoes, little white Sunday shoes, and for the girls and the boys I'd get, you know tennis shoes for them. Lace-up shoes was the big thing, you know. It had three eyes, and you tie a knot in all the shoes. That was the style. And at Easter time they would have buckles on the little girls' shoes, and that was the cutest thing to see how those little children would just rub their little shoes, and that patent leather they just, you know. And I would buy I know maybe a hundred and fifty pairs of assorted shoes, and just--

CW: (speaking at same time) You must have been very popular.

HL: --distribute them out, just distribute them out throughout the community. When they passed by my store--

CW: What was it called, the store?

HL: It was called Stack-a-Record Shop, Stack-a-Records, it's a picture of it in the book.

CW: Was it very popular?

HL: Very popular. I had all the latest music in the store. You know, gospel music. I had tapes, and eight track tapes was coming out then.

CW: I know you said you couldn't remember dates, but approximately when did you get into the record selling business?

HL: That was probably in the late seventies. Late seventies.

CW: So you'd left radio?

HL: No.

CW: Were you still on?

HL: I was still on the radio. In fact, before I even went to Big WAYS, I had the record shop. Sure did. But I tell you, I would put on a big pot of vegetable soup and I had a little kitchen in the back of the record store. It wasn't a kitchen but I made it a refrigerator move, little economical area. And I had a little stove in there, little two-burner stove. And I would go in there in the mornings and make a big pot of vegetable soup. And I would take a big pan of cornbread from home that I would bake because I didn't have an oven in there. And when the kids got out of school they would pass my record shop and they would stop and get a bowl of soup and cornbread. It would smell so good to even adults would say, "I declare, can I have a bowl of that soup? I'll pay you." And I'd say, "No, you don't have to pay me, come on in and get you a bowl of hot soup." And the bus, city bus would stop almost in front of my store and people would say, "Lord have mercy." You see them on the bus holding their nose, they never smelled Chatty's soup in there. Cause of good onions, carrots, peas.

CW: Where was the shop?

HL: It was on Pegram Street, right on the corner of Pegram and Hawthorne. Right now--

CW: Right near the school?

HL: Uh-huh. They have bulldozed all that down now, cause that's been thirty years, you know. So that corner is not there anymore, just, I think it's bare. They may have built something there by now, I don't know. But I tell you that soup, all those kids. And then I would tell them, "Now what homework you got to do? What did your teacher assign you for homework? Let's do your math, and let's do your English." I would help them with those. And all of those little kids had good grades cause I would show them, cause their parents, they were going home to a house

where maybe their momma may not be home. Maybe they didn't see her before they left that morning to even go to school. You know, the mothers are high, you know. A lot of them were okay parents you know, fairly good parents. Grandmothers raising the children well, they did well. But they didn't have a lot because they were domestics, you know. They worked minimum wage jobs and this kind of thing. So there were a few affluent families over there in the area, but not many. And I sure did put shoes on those little kids' feet, and I gave them cornbread and soup in the cold weather. And I had a soup kitchen before it was popular for churches and social services that reach out, I was doing it.

CW: Right. You never forget your roots?

HL: Oh no. Yeah unh-uh, never, never.

CW: When you were at, what does WGIV stand for? I meant to ask you that.

HL: Let's see if I can remember. W-E, the W was "we," I think. G, Give. We give. It had an army, GI.

CW: Oh yeah after the war. Uh-huh, that's what it stood for.

HL: I kind of forgotten but I think it's in the book. It's in this book of mine.

CW: Well, how did you characterize your own show? I know early on you did a lot of talk radio, and you know, you would interview people and things. As time went by, how did it change?

HL: In many ways, the change came by technology was the cause of it all. We didn't have the luxury of computers then. We had old manual typewriters, you know, and things of that nature. Well see now, that's obsolete. So change with technology and computers made a big difference. And then the internet came in, then cablevision came in for TV, and then you could get, you know, educational programming. So the change of technology is what really surfaced and made big difference for the better, you know. You can't beat it.

CW: How does it affect the DJs? I mean during the time you were at GIV, what were some, what became different about your show?

HL: It was all manual, it wasn't even FM. It was all manual. The music sound a little bit hollow cause the acoustics wasn't stereo at first. Then the next level, it went from that to stereo. Then from stereo it moved to another facet, you know, high fidelity, and then it just kept going up, up, up, away. Then here comes, after the eight-track tapes, to the push in, you know with the bigger,

this size. Almost the size, almost the size of my book (laughs) was an eight -track tape. And it went from that to cassettes. You know, smaller size.

CW: So you as a DJ, you would use cassettes?

HL: Oh no!

CW: No, right.

HL: It was discs, it was manual. You had two turntables, one on your right and one on your left. And you'd play this one and put an arm over there on it, you know, take the needle and put it over there on the record, on the album, or on the 45 [rpm record].

CW: Did you increasingly play music? And, and do less of the talk side of it?

HL: I did more music. Now the specialized shows that I did was all talk. Like when I would do recipes, that was a talk show. When I did the lost and found segment.

CW: So did that continue through your career?

HL: No, that started phasing out pretty fast.

CW: It did?

HL: That phased out and that, they had a swap-n-shop. You could call in and say, "I have an old sewing machine and I'd like to swap this for a keyboard," or something like that, you know, and we got into that. But eventually that became taboo, you know. See, times was marching on, and people don't want to sit and listen to that. Teenagers wouldn't be interested in hearing you swap a lawn mower out for a weed eater. You know, they want to hear music. Elvis Presley was kicking, and they wanted that.

CW: Was the listenership changing? Was it becoming more teenagers, would you say?

HL: I can't say that it became more, but it increased but you didn't lose their parents either, you know. They stayed right there on the dial too. Yeah, parents, they were the ones that would have the money to go buy the music for the teenagers, and they were buying it for themselves too. They loved that music, you know, "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" with Otis Redding, Mom liked that, Pop liked it and the kids. You know Elvis Presley, "Love Me Tender" and "Put on My Blue Suede Shoes," parents love that just like the kids. It was all you know, the music was all mainstream music.

CW: So you were increasingly playing this music. Were you always R&B?

HL: Yeah. And then I did some gospel shows but I didn't have what was known as a Chatty Hattie gospel show but I would have to sit in a lot for gospel DJs or assist music with gospel DJs behind the scenes, because you had to do everything manually. You didn't have sound effects. If you did a commercial you had to make it sound like rain by balling up some notebook paper and well, I was a production person in the background, you know. Putting the sound effects to the commercial. Making squeaky sounds with objects to sound like you're at an automotive shop or whatever that commercial is. You had to make your own effects because you didn't have all of these sound effects that you could push a button and here comes, you know, the sound of thunder if you're doing the weather, whatever, you know. You had to make your own. You had to go to the, what they call Associated Press news machine, the AP wires to pull your news off and give that to your DJs to read on the air the news. And sometimes you wouldn't have time to proof it. So I'm the one in the background that would proof it cause it would be errors. Maybe the same line might go over twice, and you don't want the DJ to say that twice, so you'd run a line though, you know. So I was the brain behind everybody's show. And see, I was doing stuff like that before I became a personality on the air. I had made myself accessible and was needed, and that's why I tell so many people now, don't always look and dream of, "Oh, I wish I was in the driver's seat." You can get there by things that you offer free of charge. Volunteer, but don't become a nuisance. Don't every time they look around, see you in the way, you know. Be about uplifting and helping the programming. But nowadays you can't get in the door so much that way as you could then because you got security guards now at the, you go to WBET, you got to push a button. And they got to look in the mirror and see what you look like, who you there for. You know, you got the sign-in sheet. See, you didn't have that then because crime was not like it is now, you know. So everybody that came in, you didn't think they was coming to rob you. They didn't have all of that now.

CW: Right. And now you know, as you did yourself, you provided career guidance for people so that you can go to college and study these things. When you were a DJ, how did you decide which records to play?

HL: Oh, wow! That was, I guess a feeling. It was a feeling. If I played a record by Aretha Franklin, a female, I would come back and play how I felt from the feeling I got from her and maybe do Ray Charles. I would go by my listeners' fan mail that they had sent me, requesting, "Would you play Ray Charles between two and two thirty? I'll be on my break from the phone company and we want to hear 'Baby What I Say' by Ray Charles." And so, you would have an element of timeframes you would try to please the masses of people. Then at three when school was out, you got your teenagers and you want to play some fast music then for them, because they don't want to hear the blues, like that I may have been playing earlier at ten in the morning

maybe. And on Mondays, they used to, it was the cutest thing: they called it “Blue Monday.” You turned in and hear Chatty Hattie playing the blues. Bobby “Blue” Bland and all of those hardcore blues songs. And then they would say Chatty must have had a terrible weekend with her husband cause she’s blue today. She’s playing, (laughs) they would just turn and they’d call you up and say, “What your husband do to you over the weekend? Playing all that blues, it sure sound good.” And it was just that kind of clownery. It was a feeling, that’s how, they don’t have that feeling now that they put in the songs because the songs are not about a story. They don’t tell a story.

CW: What are some of your favorite songs?

HL: Oh, “Under the Boardwalk” by The Drifters, Marvin Gaye, “Baby What I Say,” “It’s Nothing Like the Real Thing Baby” [sic]. All of your Motown sounds. The Temptations, the Supremes, and The Four Tops. I love Gladys Knight and the Pips, Patti Labelle. I can name you hundreds of artists and songs that really moved me. Al Green, Solomon Burke, people that you don’t even hear of today. And what we played is their new releases when they would come out, and once in a while you’d feature one of their old tunes that was popular maybe two or three years ago. You’d throw that in as a buffer, you know, things of that nature. Wherein now, these rappers, their songs are not giving you that uplifting feeling of love and happiness in the singing. You don’t know what they’re singing, you don’t even know their names. They got some crazy names that they have. Our era had songs by people with names. You had a name on your song. Now you might get a record with X on it. X? Who is that, you know. You could go to a record store, back in the day you could call for, “I want to get Al Green’s new record, I want to get Wilson Pickett’s record, and I want to get The Drifters record.” You would call for it by name, the song and artist. Nowadays it, they just go to Best Buy or wherever they buy all these CDs, and they just look at the cover on it and see a naked girl and they buy it, you know.

CW: It’s interesting though at the time, the older generation was looking at this new music as being a change from their music, and you know the big band music or whatever, and they saw it as being new and a little scary even then. Which is sort of interesting, each generation has a hard time maybe, understanding the younger generation of the day?

HL: Cause they had missed that whole thing in there. I was at a function not too long ago and this husband and wife said, “Oh, we grew up together and we fell in love listening to your music on the radio. See that little boy right there? We got him, that baby, listening to your love songs you used to play on the radio.” You hear such true stories it makes tears come to your eyes. When I have book signings with my book at the library and different places I go to take that book, people tell me stories that I had no idea the impact that it made until somebody come up to me and tell me, “I used to listen to you.” They never changed their radio dial back in the day, they kept it on 1600 on the dial, on WGIV. They would buy a radio in the store downtown, take

it home, plug it in, it's already on the station. They never moved it. They just kept it there all the time, they slept by that radio station. Isn't that amazing?

CW: Huge impact. It's sort of interesting, as the DJ was really like a personal friend to many people.

HL: Yes, we were the superstars to them. Cause they could see us, they could touch us, they could feel us, wherein you got to wait until these other folks come in town. But the price wasn't that expensive. I was looking at the price you pay to see Marvin Gaye on one of the shows in my book. I think the advance admission was maybe a dollar and a half. And there's no show you could go to now, nowhere. A soda at Carowinds is more than that. And you didn't pay but a dollar and a half, two dollars at the door if you didn't buy in advance your ticket. And that was for almost every event that came to town, you did not pay over one-fifty, two dollars for admission.

CW: The events that you had, I think you mentioned this before too, they were attended by a very integrated crowd. Do you feel that radio and at this time, at these events, helped to bring integration into focus?

HL: Yes, exactly, exactly.

CW: Did you feel at the time; did you sort of notice and feel that somehow music had managed to bring people together?

HL: You know, we were so busy doing a job well done until it didn't even focus on us. Until you take time now and sit back and look and say, "Hey, I helped make this a smooth transition." We didn't know it, like people say to me all the time, "How did you feel? When did you know you had really arrived?" Arrived? I don't know, have I? Like, they'll ask my kids, "What do you think about your famous mom?" And they don't know what you're talking about, all they know is my mom. They don't look at those other avenues of it, you know. They grew up in a home around seeing all of this, and they think this is the norm. You know, they didn't think what I was doing was so exceptional cause I never gave them that feeling that this was something that was extraordinary, cause we didn't feel it. We felt that we were just doing a service. And you couldn't say no, that was not in my vocabulary. If somebody wanted me to come to any event, I would say yes whether I wanted to go or not. And I've said yes to people at two or three things going on at the same time, and I, pop, called by all three of them. Now I used to run like that. Now that's dedication, I'm telling you. And no money! I wouldn't have my hand out for money. I really, you know, and you did so much stuff for the Red Cross, for the Heart Association, for hospice. And I can't tell you the people I haven't bought hospital beds for and walkers for. Didn't even know them, just heard about the need. And you would find out that it was really

true, of course. You know, you wouldn't go send something to somebody, and you know, you haven't investigated it. But you check it out and you find out, okay, and they wouldn't have to be nobody I knowed, I wouldn't look at what color the skin. I didn't care.

CW: Was that typical of the DJs, would you think?

HL: No, a lot of them were not where I was. I was a troubadour. (laughs)

CW: Did you ever, in terms of the Civil Rights Movement is going on at this time and at the station, did you ever feel as if you were playing a part in it? Were there people who were feeling that they could take a role and they could help the Civil Rights Movement to move forward?

HL: What we more or less did and said to our listeners, be non-violent. Don't get tempers aroused here. Don't fight back. (pause) Do things in a peaceful and respectable way. One day Martin Luther King was in Charlotte and he came over to the station to visit us, to thank us because he had heard from his hotel room, on the radio, us telling young people when you go downtown, don't push, don't shove, and don't steal. You know, don't harass, and act peaceful. If you don't have any business downtown, if you not down there to shop, and if you not down there in on the movement to march in on the five and dime stores to eat. If you not in the movement, don't be in the way. Don't intimidate your audience, don't do that. Stay at home, pray. We were doing things of that nature and people listened to us because we were like their bible. They believed in what we said, and they did that. We had a man one time that was running from the law, and he came into the radio station and gave himself up to us to take him downtown to get booked for the crime he had paid. Cause they felt like they were in good hands you know, to come to us, cause we were trying to see that he was treated fairly, not beaten up you know, with brutality, police brutality. And they would come to us for all kinds of things. And we have done our shows and told the inmate, "You sit here until we go off the air, and we'll take you downtown." And we were not afraid that he'd do anything. People protected us cause they know that we were there and meant well. We not going to look down our nose at you because you may be homeless or an alcoholic or, you know, drunk somewhere. We'd speak, and we'd go down the street. And I'll never forget it, Genial Gene would give you a headache in that jeep blowing at everybody he passed. He waved at everybody, "Hey cuz," you know. And he spoke to everybody on both sides, hands off the steering wheel. The Lord sure has taken good care of us because we'd be waving like in a parade on both sides, speaking to people. "There go Chatty Hattie, Hey Chatty!" And I was like making a figure eight, like a princess you know, speaking to everybody. Just making a figure eight like this on both sides of the street, my head was gone. I mean, that was our everyday thing and both black and white did it. Young and old did it. And I mean, it was just, and everybody we saw, if we were close to them, "Come here, baby." You hugged everybody. And everybody you see on TV now that come on, these artists, Jay Leno, first thing

they do is hug and kiss. Same thing we did, we started that. And it has continued, everybody come on a show, they hug and kiss. Every group, every artist that come on.

CW: At what point did you get invited to be the secretary, you know, of the national--

HL: Association of Broadcasting. I would attend the meetings and since I was, when I would go, I would go to get something out of it. I wouldn't just be going just for the fun of it or the partying of it. I did a little of that, but not a lot cause I like my rest. I like to get my sleep at night. And at all the conventions, you know, they'd be partying all night long. I mean, they would have these big hotels where they would stay opened the bar all night long. And have them on the beachfront you know, where they could stay out after midnight, and just have a stomped-down good time. I would find myself to my room by ten o'clock at night. If I hadn't seen all I was gone see for that night, I'm going to bed because I wanted to last. I didn't want to be around cigarette smoke. I didn't want to be around cigar smoke and pipes, and all the DJs smoked, you know. That was their thing, they smoked. I never got into that. Or they would take a drink, breakfast drink, dinner drink, every meal, drink, drink, drink! I didn't get into that. I'd see people doing it. I would taste it, but it wasn't what I wanted in my mouth the rest of the day. So I would go to bed at night, get my rest. Eight hours or more. And even until today, I still get my sleep. And people say, "How you stay looking young like you do?" I eat fruit every day. Right now, I got oranges in the kitchen. I got apples, bananas, and I'm gonna eat some all of that twice today. And I'm going have two or three leafy vegs, and I'm gonna have salad, you know. If I eat meat, okay, and if I don't, it's okay. Very little salt, most times no salt. And I did this for myself. Doctors didn't tell, I don't ever go to the doctor because I don't ever feel sick. I go twice a year for checkup to the dentist and to the doctor. You know you can't be tuned out. Something could be happening in your body and you don't know it, so you go and have your mammograms, you know. You have your maintenance, your body maintenance, your health stuff. But as far as being sick and have to go to the doctor with diabetes, hypertension, I don't have any of those things and I knock on wood. It's because at an early age, I took care of my health. I got my sleep in, and I got my proper food in. And I drank soy milk, you know. I do a lot of health, organic, that's me, that's Chatty Hattie.

CW: You were probably the perfect choice to be the secretary, the most together person. (laughs)

HL: They would say to me, she's always jotting down and writing, you know. When we would have meetings, I would make notes for my own use, so I would know you know. At night I'd get in bed and look at the notes and say, "That was good, Hal." Had a DJ named Hal Jackson in New York. He's been in the business longer than any DJ that's still living, even until today they honored him December of 2006 in Florida at a big convention. And he's another one who took good care of himself. He's probably, gosh, in his late eighties. But he still is really doing a great job in the field of broadcasting. And I would probably still be in there if the station hadn't ever

sold. I'm sure I would. I would, you would have to carry me out of there to my funeral, I would still be there. Because that's all I loved, that's all I knew is to, you know, be a part of the community, be a part of the public. So they knew that they would get dedication if they give me the job of being secretary. They know I would be at the meetings on time. And then when it would start getting past a couple hours, I'm not going to sit in a meeting past an hour and a half, two hours. I don't care what you saying, I'm up and out of there because you saying the same thing over and over. Get to your meeting and do your agenda, you know. I had organization, you know. I would tell them you not going to have good attendance if you going have people sitting and sitting and waiting thirty minutes before you start. Then when you do start, every time somebody new come in, you go back over what? I say we not going to do that, not with me being the secretary. And I would teach them how to do protocol. That's important to me. Organization is important to me. But if you're going to go in there and just take up my time, I'm not your secretary. Because I want my time to be valued. I want my time to be constructive, you know. I want to do something that's pertinent. Don't just say for the sake of having a meeting.

CW: Well did you, what was the purpose of the group?

HL: We would give awards to DJs in various cities and states for work well done. The meetings would be focusing on where were you going to go for you next conference, you would vote on that. You would vote on things that you wanted to do as far as profit and sharing. Do we as a body of DJs over the United States, do you want to come together and have our own savings or this kind of thing. You want to have like a 401 [401(k)], you talk about things of that interest. None of that got off the ground because they all would say, "Well, I have my own bank at home," or, "I have a joint account with my wife," or whatever. "No, I'm not interested in that," so you would take that off the agenda and go to the next thing. You know it was strictly forwardness, bang, bang, bang, all the way down. We'd give scholarship to a needy boy or girl through our organization like the United Negro College Fund now. We would start a scholarship to give, and we would try to give one to every state that's represented at the meetings.

CW: Was there some fundraising that went along with that?

HL: Actually it wasn't. It was the record companies would make donations, so it wasn't like fundraising. They were expected to come in and pick up the tab on x amount of rooms at the hotel for the DJs to come in. They would give a check for our organization from say, Motown Records or Decca Records, Atlantic Records, just whatever the record company is. They would perhaps come in and say, "Here's a check for five thousand dollars towards your scholarship." "Here's a check for ten thousand," depending on the size and the money that they're making. Cause they need these for write-off, cause these people make a lot of money, these record companies. I mean the Beatles company, hey come on now, they don't care about, and that's just like a dollar to them to give an organization ten thousand, twenty thousand dollars for a

scholarship. By the time you would calculate all of the various companies, record companies in the U.S. and make a record of all of that and count up all--I wasn't the treasurer but my notes would transfer over you know, on the budget part. So these are some of the things that you would do. Then you would plan to have awards programs, and like they have now the Golden Globe Awards, walking on the red carpet. We had our own, you know, among ourselves.

CW: And did that group decide who would be the recipients or did you do that by polling the whole membership?

HL: Some of it was done by polling. The committee itself didn't do it, the officers didn't do it, it wouldn't be fair. And you couldn't pick your own family, you know, and this kind of thing. But you had other committees that did that. It was like an umbrella and had these different branches off. This group here handled that or this or that. We had a group that handled the sick, and shut in, and the burial, because we had DJs that were getting sick and dying and some of them didn't prepare for insurance to bury and all this. So we had a committee that handled that kind of thing. And this is actually how Jesse Jackson got started in being an activist, through that organization I was in. We were in Chicago at a hotel there for a meeting and it was a convention. And he was one of the people that came over and he got connected with the organization. And actually all he was doing then was some little lightweight preaching at a church. And he came over to do the invocation at our affair, and got bitten by the bug of the organization and started from there. That's how he actually got started, that's what the truth is. I don't know what he wants people to believe, but he didn't start off being "the" Jesse Jackson spokesperson that he is now until that organization kicked off in Chicago.

CW: Did it help him with the connections sort of, the people all around the country who had access to radio?

HL: Um-hum, exactly. So it was, he found a niche there and latched onto it. So that's the true story of that. I was there, I know. The list goes on and on and on about, and I held that position as secretary and they would let you hold a position I believe two years was the max time. And they did not want me to give that up. I told them no, you have your foundation now, you know, you know how to carry on. I'll monitor and be advisor and assist but it's a lot of the travel because you would have to go to every state that they were, you know, having a big confab at. You may be in Las Vegas, you could be in California, you could be in Miami, Chicago, Detroit, and we went St. Louis. Let's see, where else did I go? Atlanta.

CW: California, did you mention that?

HL: Oh Lord yeah. I stayed at home of the Coconut Grove. Harry Belafonte was big during that time, and he was my next-door neighbor at the hotel. Harry Belafonte, Sammy Davis, all that

crowd. Old Blue Eyes, (laughs) Dean Martin, all of them were living there, they were there. I have been in some high places with some high-class people but it has never hit my little mind that I was doing anything any better or any different than anybody else. I just always felt that well, this goes with the flow. And I never been a person that would run up to people and say, "I'm Chatty Hattie, I'm from Charlotte, North Carolina, and you're this and you're that." I didn't do that to them, but people would tell them who I was and they would come to me. And say Barry Gordy of Motown Records, he'd come to me and say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you. How you are bringing me from rags to riches with all your airplay and all you do for Motown records." I mean it's just been heavenly. It's just been real sweet, sweet. All the way around the bend and back. Yeah, I loved every moment of my field. My career, I loved it. I had support. My husband helped to push me and stood by my side and was with me, supportive. My mother was my hero. She was my babysitter. She, you know, when you don't have these kinds of problems and you in your career and you have support to push you up the ladder, you can go to the top and beyond. But if you got a jealous mate at home, "Who was that man you shook hands with?" Or, "Who was that you played Happy Birthday for?" My God, "I don't know." That was part of the business. So you can really do well if you've got a helpmate that is focused and you're focused, and you mean to do well and you're truthful and honest with these people. You can, you can go as far as you want to. The sky is the limit, it really and truly. And you don't ego trip. Like a lot of people say to me, "You still live in the same place you lived thirty, forty years ago? You haven't moved to the east side of Charlotte?" No, I'm happy where I am. This was just a flat land when we picked this house out and had it built from the ground up in this subdivision. And all you can do in any house is use the bathroom, the kitchen and the bedroom. So why do I need to, if my house is paid for, why do, to keep up the Joneses? Why I got to go live in a gated community when these thugs, if they breaking in, they come and they don't care what kind of community you live in. Consequently I can knock on wood, no one ever bothers anything around my house, you know. I never, I can leave anything out and it's still people, "That's Chatty Hattie's." I seen people tell folk, "Don't ever mess with that woman, don't do her like that." I lock my doors and go to D.C., go to Atlanta, anywhere. I don't think about somebody breaking in my house. I don't think about it at all. I pray about it and say, "Lord, take care of things for me while I'm gone. You know my heart, you know I'm going to see about the love of my grandchildren." And I hope things are okay when I come back. If not, I got a lot of insurance on everything in here. I could make another start over, but you know, it won't be the things I have now, maybe, you know. But I'm not going. I can't take any of this with me when I die. I cannot take this, these treasures that I have. I can't take it with me.

CW: And you've always had a good perspective, I think, on things.

HL: Oh yes! Oh, yes.

CW: This is close to the end of this disc so I'm going to stop this disc now, otherwise it will just run out.

HL: Okay.

Minidisc 1 ends; Minidisc 2 begins.

CW: So we were talking about your experiences as a secretary of the National Association of Radio, and then later I guess for TV announcers. What was the relationship between that group and the production companies, Motown and Stax Records? How did they, you said that the production companies liked to fund the rooms or give you some money toward scholarship funds, that kind of thing. Were they usually present at those events?

HL: Yes, they would attend and send their representatives. They would send their promotion department. They usually had what was known in those days as a promo man or woman, and they would send that as a representative. They would come, and then if they were too busy or out of the state and couldn't come, they would send their representative. Their promotion department would show up. So it was a very, very close relation, very close-knitted.

CW: What was your experience of the payola that of course was perfectly acceptable and then was sort of banned because of--

HL: Greed. (laughs) Greed is what caused it, yeah. People kind of blew that out of context over the years. It started out being very nice, very open. The A&R people would come, the promotion department would come to the radio station, bring their product for you to listen to it, and if you choose to play their record on your lineup of music, they would give you pay, they would pay you to do it, you know. Good money, big money, you know. So that was a big thing, payola. And that lasted for quite a number of years. All of the top DJs got a big piece of payola, when these people would come to town. You would get it through the mail. Not only through them bringing it to you, but you would get money orders, you'd get cash, you'd get everything through the mail. Then you would get gifts through the mail. And all of the record companies took care of their DJs at Christmas time. You would get gifts galore.

CW: What kind of gifts?

HL: Oh, just name it! It could be furniture, it could be fine china, it could be silverware, and it could be a vacation for you and your family to the islands, round trip, including your hotel. It could be watches, it could be, oh God, oriental rugs, chandeliers. These are things I collected, so I don't know what others did.

CW: What would you do with it all if you couldn't use it?

HL: I would put most of it to good use, most of it. Some of it, sometimes I would get as much as four or five new watches at one time. So I would wear one or two of them during the week, put on the ones with diamonds on Sundays. (laughs) You know, different, then I'd pass on to my daughter or to my mom. Somebody close in my family. I had a Chatty Hattie fan club, I would give a lot of things to them that I didn't really need to hold on to, you know. I like to pass on, you know. I'm just that kind of person.

CW: What was the most unusual thing you ever got?

HL: I think maybe the baby grand piano was unusual, from Diana Ross. The golden egg from Stax record company. Pure gold egg as a cigarette lighter. I mean, just unusual things that would blow your mind. I used to get the prettiest three and four-piece Samsonite luggage sets. I could change luggage like people change seasonal clothes. I had so many sets of fine luggage with my initials on it. It was personalized to you because, but believe you me, you earned that. You earned it over the years, all you did for these companies and you actually earned it.

CW: What is the company or the stars that did it? It sounds like with Diana Ross.

HL: You would get both. You'd get both. The company would do it and then the stars would also do it too.

CW: Did you generally know the people intimately who were sending the gifts to, you had spent time?

HL: Oh yes! Never any strangers sent you anything. You knew them and they knew you. Yeah, definitely.

CW: Are there people who stand out that you met among those stars?

HL: Oh God! (laughs) All of them meant so much to me, even the underdogs, the ones that didn't make. You know, there are a lot of artists that made one record and you didn't hear from them anymore. Or maybe made two records and you wonder what happened to them. You know they had poor management, or poor company they were with, or they were not people that was that hot(??) with their voice, their singing, like *American Idol* now, you know. They're riding high right now, but you know, how long will that last? It will be more to come along to replace them. They'll move along into films, movies, and somebody else will have the records going, you know. So it just depends on a number of things. You can't really answer why this or that on other people. But I've been there and from the inception when they first start out, and I would be

just as nice to them, those newcomers, as I would. And the local talent around here in Charlotte, I would always have time for them. I would take time to be very patient with our local people.

CW: Were there any local bands that really got big?

HL: Yeah, you heard of the Zodiacs, Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs? They went on to make very well, perhaps the longest stand of the local acts. And a lot of folks do not know this because it's not before the public a lot, but I was the first person that brought them from rags to riches. I was the first person.

CW: Really? What happened? You heard a record?

HL: They were young kids out of South Carolina, Lancaster. I brought them to Charlotte for a talent show. I used to do talent shows like this *American Idol* stuff. I used to do that all the time at colleges and high schools and pick out talent and develop those people. I'd pick out four winners and make stars out of them, singing stars. And so that's what happened with Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs. They were a little group called the Royal Charms, that was their name. Then as they grew bigger and started making a record, they changed their name from the Royal Charms to the Gladiolas. They found out that they couldn't stick with the Gladiolas name, because there was a bigger group somewhere else had that name. So you know you have your name copyrighted so nobody else could use your name. So they had to change the name a second time, then they came up with the Zodiacs, was the last name they came up with. So that's how they started out. But I had my hands so full until when I would discover artists like that, I couldn't take you under my umbrella and manage you. Cause I had already Mike Williams, I had the Tempest, I had the Appreciations, you know. I had Wylie Bennett, I had, the list goes on and on and on of the artists I already had. I could not take on anymore and do them justice. So I introduced them to Harry Goings, who is deceased now. He's been now gone three or four years. But I introduced them to Harry, and he took them and continued because he didn't have any artists. He had a nightclub. He had never done anything like that anyway, managing groups. But I knew that he had some money and could keep them, you know, flowing. And then of course after I gave them to him, you know, they don't mention now that I brought them--you know, everybody wants to act like 'well I'm the discovery on my own,' but I'm not that type of person. And I don't ever embarrass, I don't even say that in my book. If you don't want to own from whence you coming, then it's fine by me. Because the Lord in heaven knows, I'm the one. And they know I'm the one. I know I'm the one. I don't have to knock on every door and say, "Hey," you know, "they wouldn't had this big record. *Stay (just a little bit longer)*, *Stay* and all these hit songs, if it hadn't been for me." I don't care about that. I have my own, you know. I, I don't need to be reminded of what I did. And he sees me now and tells me quietly, "Thank you again," you know it's all good. It's fine, it's alright. What hurts me more than anything else is the people that went through my school and graduated that I helped to get jobs at these big stations, TV and

radio, and they act as if they don't even want to own that they got their education and that I'm the one that brought them to the position that they now hold. That hurts. You know, I will forever be grateful to somebody that started me on my career cause after you finish somebody's school, they don't have to have anything to do with you, not really. But I would go that extra mile. I would take you by the hand and take you to program directors and station managers, introduce you and say, "This was a product of my school. This student had a G.P.A. 3.57 or 4.0," or whatever. "Give them a chance." I did things like that. And they would take you on part-time, and train you and give you an internship, and next thing you know they on the payroll. (pause) They see me now and they have they head up in the air and they nose up in the air. That hurts more than anything that you can imagine. And so many of these same people left my school and owe me money. Didn't finish paying.

CW: And this is when you opened Chatty's School of Communication?

HL: Oh yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh. And then some of this was even when I was at Gaston College. I used to have, oh, if you had any clue how many students I used to meet at restaurants and different places that couldn't come all the way up to Gaston College in Dallas where we were located to attend a class. And I would bring--and they didn't have a fax machine or a computer. And I would bring the assignments to them at a restaurant. I've done things like that so they could pass their grade if they were doing a seminar class, or working on an internship. I've brought work to you at a restaurant or at a drugstore or wherever is convenient to get you graduated. I have a student I will never forget. Cute little ole, he's a man now, he was a young man then. He was nineteen. He had a hard time, he was in a broken home, and he was being raised by his daddy. And I nicknamed him. And I saw in that kid a lot of potential. I don't know what it was about that kid. He was a white student, not that color mattered, but he happened to be white. I'd call when I didn't see him in class, I'd call his house. He'd answer the phone and I'd say, "Why aren't you in school today?" He'd say, "My dad's truck not running and it's too far to walk." And it was, it was way too far. He lived in Lincolnton, Bessemer City, somewhere, and Gaston College was in Dallas. So yeah, that was eight or nine miles, he couldn't walk it. I'd say okay. I had morning and night classes. I say, "I'll be there to pick you up for your night class, cause we going to have a test and I want you here." And he would meet me almost in the center part of the city of Bessemer City at four o'clock in the evening, and I'd drive from my school up there and pick that kid up. And would bring him down to school, and then I'd call his daddy to come pick him up at school and take him back cause I had to drive back to Charlotte. I did that for two semesters till that kid graduated. And when, but he didn't graduate, he dropped out cause he had to go to work. It just got too much on his daddy's, daddy's health failed, and he had to take care of his father. I retired from Gaston and opened my school, and I gave him all the information on how to get to my school down here in Charlotte. He said, "Lord, I could never make it down there." I said, "Oh yes, you will." We made out some kind of pact with the old man up there that had old junk cars. And they fixed up old trucks so that kid could come down

here to Charlotte, to my school. And he came. And he came for about a year and then graduated from my school, he didn't graduate from Gaston College.

And when he graduated from my school, he said, "Lord, now I got to try and find me a job in radio." I said, "No you haven't, leave that to me." I got him a job in radio, and then I got him promoted after he was there for a year. I said, "He need to be making more money. It's taking all this kid make buying gas and putting it in that truck." His daddy's health got better, and got him a nicer vehicle. That child is still under my arms and that's been ten years. He is now living in Hawaii, I believe it is. Yeah. And has finally met a girl that he thinks he's in love with. And he is anxious, he's been crying to come to Charlotte to see Chatty Hattie. The radio station say, "I don't know the woman, but I've heard of her, and we going to give you a three-week vacation so you can go see Chatty Hattie." And we gonna to rig up some equipment, cause he's on the air in Hawaii. We gonna rig up some equipment for you to take down there, we going to install it at one of his friend's houses that do production work and voiceovers in Charlotte and he's going to be staying there with him and going to still let his programs be recorded here in Charlotte while he here for three weeks, and going back over the air simulcasting back to Hawaii every day. And his friend is also like a godson of mine. He's white, his name is George Featherby, and George was raised by my mother-in-law in Mooresville. His mother deserted him when he was a little boy, about two years old. And he's always been raised around black families. When he finished high school I told him, I said, "Now what you gonna do for your life's proposed work." He said, "I don't know. I guess I'm going to work in fast food." I said, "Unh-uh, you're coming to Gaston College." He said, "College? Good gracious, I just did get out of high school." I said, "I'll pay for it. You come to Gaston." He said, "But what about living? What about, you know, eating, what about--?" "Leave it to me." George called me yesterday, (pause) and I cried real tears. You know I told you I had been crying a lot. He called me, he has moved from Hawaii back here to Charlotte. Brought his wife, he got married and she had two or three kids. They brought all that, they the Brady Bunch. He's making big money doing voiceovers for all these Billy Graham crusades and all that. So I'm the one that got him into that. And this same little kid that I'm telling you about that's coming, they lived together in Hawaii. And he has never been without being around me. The greatest portion of his life, and he is just so depressed, this kid, till he can't stand it no more. And he's coming, and the station just thinks he's the smartest, and he is. I taught that boy everything. I would break equipment and tell him to go fix it, he could fix it back. A genius with technology. Both of them, George Featherby--he did a show in Charlotte WPEG Power 98 for about three years, and he attributes all that to me. And the other one that's coming--and I want you to see him when he comes. He's short, little short thing, got the blondest hair, almost white his hair is. The prettiest, greenish-bluish looking eyes you ever saw. And he adores me. His father tells everybody in Bessemer City, North Carolina, that there's a black woman in Charlotte that's--my son was touched by an angel and that woman. He would've never, his daddy's health is better now. The boy has got his daddy a house. It's a, they were living in a trailer. He out of that now, living in a nice house that you up pull off of a truck. Four

sides, you know how they do those kind of house. But for up in that country area it's living on high ground. And all of that has happened through being one of my students, and me being a mentor. I can give you story after story and call these people on the phone and let them tell you what I'm saying, because people just can't believe it. They say, "How can this be?" And I had a reunion one day here at my house one Saturday. I got on the phone, had a conference call, and I had about twenty-two students that came here that's married now. They grown and got they careers in radio and TV. And they came here to this house, and I had the backyard with, you know, umbrellas and everything all over the yard and we just had Chatty Hattie good time, eating barbecue chickens, just you know buffet-style out in the yard. And the [Charlotte] Observer came out and did a story on it. And had pictures and had it in the paper, and called it "celebrations" part of the paper. And it was about, out of all that crowd that came, I think it was eight black students that showed, and the rest of them were all white students that came. And they came because they didn't live right here in Charlotte. They were all surrounding areas of North Carolina, and Tennessee, and Virginia, Myrtle Beach. All in this area that came, and it was just almost a two-day notice that I decided to do this. And I drummed up that many people that just showed up. And these two boys, they have missed being around me every day so much till they are getting depressed. So George, his radio name is Apollo. He has moved back here with his wife and family and calls me. Now this one will be here in the next couple of weeks and I'm going to call you. I just want you to hear them tell about what I've done for these people.

CW: How do you recognize someone who you think has talent?

HL: I saw that in this boy, he need a mother figure. His mother was a flapper. Left him and his daddy and his sister for another man. And he would come to school with a hung down head every day, and I saw how I used to be like that. And his manners, his attitude was so warm and so receptive of me. His respect for me, you could just see it. He wore it like a neon sign, that I respect that woman. She would take me where I can't go cause she know a lot of people, influential people. And he would just sit down and, and, and just humble his little--and he's a short little 'ole thing, and he would just sit there and he'd just, his eyes would just fill up with water. And the tears never fell down his cheek, they would just fill up. This, and he would leave out the room and then he'd come back. I guess he'd go somewhere and cry and then he'd come back. And I'd say, "You hungry, aren't you?" I'd say, "You haven't had anything to eat, I can tell you, you hungry." And I would go in my pocketbook, and see, we had a nice cafeteria on campus at that Gaston College. I'd say, "Go over there to the cafeteria and eat whatever you want and you sign a book over there." I had already talked to them in the dining room that I had two or three students that I recognize could do so much more if they had some food. And I'm gone pay you by the month for their tab. Don't let them eat desserts and soft drinks. Give them water or sprite or Gatorade. Don't let them take any food out of the cafeteria. Let them eat it inside. And they won't ever hardly come together cause they don't know each other in this bag. But when they finish eating, you make a note of it at the cash register. And don't embarrass them

by letting them sign it, you sign it cause I trust you. And I did that a whole semester for that kid. And many times I would drive him from where he lived to school and his daddy would come at night and get him to take him back home. And his father has told every parent in the trailer parks and everywhere all up there in Bessemer city what I did for that child. Couldn't work with his daughter. The daughter was hot-headed, smoked cigarettes, having sex. I don't work with that crowd. I don't bother with them. But this kid, I could see he was different. That he needed a boost so he wouldn't fall in the traps of the sister, cause she didn't make it out of high school to even come to college. But I drugged this one through and made a way for and I nicknamed him "Shaggy" cause his hair so shaggy and blond, and it would fall all down over his ears. And I called him Shaggy and that's the name--I talked about him in my book, and I talked about Apollo, both of these white students.

And they are just--and they don't know it; I have them in my will. And I will always look out for those two boys and they make more money than I do now. And anything they would have an inkling that I would need or want, they would jump over a mountain for me. I never had any boys, you could see all I got is girls, split tails. And I took those two in. Now little Shaggy, he, (laughs) he little 'ole short, not much taller than that. He a little midget cause his parents didn't want him. The momma didn't, so his growth was stunted somewhat. And but Apollo was raised by my mother-in-law up in Morganton. He's tall and big. He calls my mother-in-law his grandmama, but she's deceased now. And she told me on her dying bed, "Always look out for George." Cause she was the mother he didn't have. She raised him along with all of her sons. And so I told her, "Don't you worry, cause George not going ever let me leave him. He follows me everywhere I go." And see I had that kind of support with all of the things I did out in the public. I had all these mentors, you know, that looked up to me. And they protected me, and they would haul all my equipment in where I was playing a fashion show, all my music, and they just thought that was the biggest thing they could do, you know. They had they chest out and some of the black boys would say to me, "You sure do cater to them. You don't do me like that." No! You know why? You haven't proven yourself to me. I don't see it in you what I saw in those two boys. They needed a mother figure. They needed to be fed, they needed clothes, they needed education. They wanted it. You could just see it bursting out that they were doers. Every time you see them, they wouldn't be out shifting on a playground, throwing up a ball, hoop. They would have a book. I would look out my window at Gaston College. I had a pretty office over there, and I would see them sitting under a tree. Not together but individually, studying. You could see they wanted to learn, they wanted to do something with their life.

CW: What made you decide to go into education? I know you always thought you should be a teacher and your mama told you--

HL: Um-hum, um-hum.

CW: --that you needed to pursue your own education. But what made you to decide--?

HL: It was easy because I knew that sooner or later as you mature, as you age, you need not be on the air. As the airways were changing with the time and your era of the baby boomers were moving on. And I knew I needed to prepare for my leaner years and I needed something to fall back on. So that's why I kept on and pursuing education, because I say that will be what I do next, be a teacher and an entrepreneur. I always want to do two or three things at once, never one, and so I said I'll be prepared for teaching when I decide one day that I've had enough of the changes in this field of broadcasting. I can always teach at a college where there's a radio station so I can get my groove on, when I want to pick up a microphone, you know. Or even if I was at a high school, work in one that had technology. So that's what I did. And then after doing that, I say, well, I'll open my own school. I'm making money for everybody all my life, never made any for me. Just everything I make, I was making it, but I, everywhere it's going out. I wasn't saving for nothing for me of my own. So I say well, okay, I'll open my own school. It was terribly expensive to open up a proprietary school and getting your state licenses and your supplies, your books, your teachers, your rent, utilities. I had to make four to five thousand dollars overhead every month and I did that all those years. And I said, well, crime is so bad, somebody's going to see me pulling up and out of here at this school--cause I had day and night classes--at night in a Jaguar. Cause I always kept me two or three cars, cause I had to walk so when I was a child. (laughs) I said, somebody going think I got some money and going try to rob me. And I been blessed and lucky all this time and nothing has happened. I'm going to go on and get all of my students graduated and I'm going to retire. My family had a fit. "Oh my God, you going to die. You been busy all of your life, ever since fourteen, please find something to do. If you retire, what you going to do?" The family just went crazy. "Oh my God, she won't live two weeks and not be able to be out there with the people. What she gonna do that for?" Everybody got scared to death. I said, "I have a plan." "What, what, what?" I say, "I'm going write a book." They say, "Okay, retire." (laughs) And then I let the school go. I dedicated and donated everything to the museum, cause I wasn't about to have an auction or none of that. Cause I had collected up some stuff over those years. And I said I'll just have them to come over here with a great big truck and get all of my radio equipment out of here. My microphones, my production room, my computers. I had eighteen, almost twenty computers in my computer lab. I mean, I had a school. Listen, it was top shelf. I dedicated all that stuff to Goodwill, to Salvation Army, United Way, and the museum and several churches. Cause I had desks, I had chairs, I had, oh man, everything.

And I would run a camp every summer, when school out I had a camp for the little kids, from preschool all the way up to about the fourth or fifth grade. And do you know what? I would let parents, whether they were affluent or whether they were poor, bring their kids. And I did that in the summer for six and eight weeks, free of charge. All I had the parents to do was bring snacks

for the kids, cookies or something for snack time. But at lunch I gave them a full-fledged meal. Pizza, some days hot dogs, just whatever. Meatballs. I just, you know what, cheeseburgers, French fries. Everybody would be in line to sign up for Chatty's camp in the summer at my school. I would take the kids swimming two days a week to Marion Diehl's center [Marion Diehl Recreation Center] on Tyvola. I would take them on field trips to Discovery Place, and I would get complimentary tickets to all of these different things for children because people knew I was doing a service, that I wasn't being paid as a camp director. I was just volunteering the love of my heart to have these kids in there and have them reading and doing math skills, and structured, you know. We didn't go outdoors in the heat and get bitten by bugs and stuff; we stayed in the air conditioning. And I would take them places. And one day, I took them to an amusement park up in Belmont and that's the only time we had outdoor recreation. Cause I was always afraid it would be my luck for a bug or something to bite one of these babies, these kids, you know. And it would just kill me for something to happen to them. And I wouldn't take them outdoors cause one summer the mosquitoes here was awful. And you couldn't even see them, but you'd see a welt on the child and oh, I couldn't stand that. So I did things like that every--and I got an award from the city of Charlotte for volunteering my services, my time, without pay, to feed and house kids that probably would have been latchkey kids at home without a parent. Keeping themselves, watching the wrong things on TV and all of that, you know. Let the parents bring them and drop them off at my school. I did that, and I think that hurt the parents. It was like a funeral when I gave up my school. Parents crying, "Oh, one more year, one more year, please, please!" But that rent was two thousand, plus everything else. I had to turn over five to ten thousand a month to make it, and I was doing that free. So I said, "Why are they crying? I'm the one that need to be crying!" (laughs) But all of those folks still call me. "You think you'll come back?" "No, I'm done." This book got me going.

CW: Right. So you're not planning on another career now?

HL: I don't think, not those. I may think of a new one, maybe a new one, yeah. I probably will do--I want to get me a book club. I want to, you know, have some ladies in and read some books, share book knowledge, you know. I want to do that. Or either join a book club. You know, I'm literary. Now, you know, I don't want to work with, where somebody could come in with a gun and shoot the place up and take computers and stuff. I was blessed to get through that era without anything happening. But I had enough eyes watching me, taking care of me for things I've done to people. Probably didn't have time to do any damage to me. (laughs)

CW: I haven't asked you yet, really to say how you felt about being a woman in what was pretty much a man's world at the time when you started.

HL: Yeah, that's what I used to catch all the time from the guys in the early days. They would say, "This is a man's world. You should be home having babies and watching dishes and

cooking, doing laundry. This is no job for a female.” And I would think about that, and say to myself you can do all of those things you just named and do this, too. For Pete’s sake, you know.

CW: If you have a mom who’s at home.

HL: You got somebody’s home, doing your duties at the house, and a husband that’s supportive of you doing these things and come and join you wherever you are. I’d always tell him where I am, and he’d come and leave with me and we’d go eat together. I had a lot of quality time and family time with my family. And yet, as I look back over it now, I wish I had put more time in, but you can’t do anymore cause they gone. But I was with Mom, cause my mom always lived with me through my marriage. She always lived with me, so we’d see her every day and I would take her out. And a lot of places I would go, she wouldn’t want to go. She didn’t feel well. She was content to stay home cause I had everything convenient for her at the house and for my daughter. So they just enjoyed, you know, quality time together.

CW: Was it challenging on the job side though? Did you ever feel as a woman it was harder or did it not make any difference?

HL: I was, I had tough skin, you know. Despite all that tenderness and all, but I had tough skin. When the rough got going and the tough got going, I rolled with the punches, you know. I wasn’t going to be a crybaby and let them see me cry. I would cry in privacy over the heartache sometimes I would endure with sexual harassment, you know. Cause you didn’t have laws for protection for women back then, you know. A man could say anything, even hit you on your hip, touch you, you know. But when they would start up, when they have those moments they want to be picking at me, I stayed ready for them too. Because what I would do is give them the same challenge back. I know once there was one of our salesmen, he wasn’t one of the on-air staff but a salesman in the sales department. He said a little comment, one day I was at the pencil sharpener, sharpening my pencil. You know, you had an arm on it and I was grinding the pencil and it just wouldn’t get right. The point would get too pointy and would break, and I would start over again and I just kept on with that pencil. And as I was standing there, he was behind me, looking at my body shake, I guess. I don’t know what he was looking at. But I didn’t know he was behind me cause the pencil sharpener was mounted on the wall and I was standing at the sharpener. And oh boy, he was getting his cookies. And he made a comment that was kind of X-rated about my behind. And (pause) so I turned around and looked at him and I didn’t show any teeth. I just gave him a warm look and said to him, “If I gave it to you, what would you do with it? What could you do with it?” And boy, I had no more trouble out of him. He didn’t expect that to come from me, he expected me to I guess act some way, you know. I don’t know what he thought. But I just turned around, didn’t show any teeth, just gave him a warm look, and looked dead at him and said, and put--I do remember I did this. I put my hand on my hip and I said, “If I gave this thing to you, what would you do with it? What would you do with it?” And I

waited there and he didn't say nothing, he was in shock. So he never bothered me anymore. I put a period at the end of that. One other time, there was a couple other little incidents that would come up of sexual harassment. The water fountain was there in the hall, and you want to get a sip of cool water. So I always would bring a cup so I wouldn't have to bend over, because it was mounted a little bit low. And I brought a cup to the fountain and would get my water in the cup so I could stand up to drink my water or take it to my desk to sit down to drink it. Because this announcer I noticed it, he was full of play. He wanted to pick at me, I could tell. And he said, "Oh, you bring a cup for your water, you don't drink from the fountain?" I didn't answer cause I didn't have to. He repeated it again in a little octave louder, and I said, "Yeah, you don't drink plenty of water every day for your health?" I went to a mother figure on his behind. I say "You should drink a lot of water too." I said, and by me dressing and having on high heels--I wore heels all the time, high heels. And for me to stoop down low like that, I didn't want to do that. So I would bring a cup, being a lady, and let the water go in my cup. And I turn it around to him, and I turned around to him and said, "It would certainly help your skin, your skin pores if you would drink lots of water," and I just went into health on him. And that kind of got him cause he always want to run up there when he see me getting some water. That's why I quit bending over at the fountain. I just started bringing a cup cause you could just, you know, stand there and fill your cup. So you could stop a lot of stuff if you tactful and know how to handle it. And I demanded respect and they gave it to me after they saw that, you know. They weren't going to get by.

But there was, it's always a bad apple in every crowd. There was one more, and he was kind of new to Charlotte. He had been used to working in New Orleans and just say anything he wanted to say to any female. And I say to myself, he's used to being around all men, but we'll break him down eventually. Never could break this idiot, he was just, just a fool. So one day he started on me. He say, "You sure got some pretty hair on your head," and he said, "Can I feel your hair?" I said, "I wouldn't suggest you do that," and he laughed, everything was funny with him. And just, you know, just every day he had something to pick at me on. Just something he had to say off shady to me that I hadn't been used to, cause I had trained the rest of them and they were leaving me alone. And I told him one day, I said, "I tell you what we gonna do." I say, "How much time you got before you go on the air?" He said "Oh, I got about fifteen minutes." I say, "Well can you come in the program director's office for a minute, he's not in there, and I'm going to close the door. I want to tell you something." And he say, "Oh, I ain't going in the PD's office, the program director's office." I said, "It's all right, I go in there all the time. You with me, it's all right." He went in there, I say, "Close the door." He said, "Oh you gonna kiss me, you gonna give me some sugar." I say, "No. Sit down. I want to have a word of prayer with you. I'm a Christian, and all these little shady, off-color sayings that you have been throwing out, that you want to feel my hair, you want to do all these little shady things to me that you say. And I'm sure you here from New Orleans and you been working with men all the time, and other than your secretaries up in the office, and you didn't come into contact with them." But I say, "Back here

in the program department, the guys here at this station respect me and I respect them. And I just want to have a word of prayer with you, because you going to have to change the way you are looking at being around a female.” I say, “And then again, I am younger than you. I am doing a grown adult’s work here at the station, but you could go to jail for messing with me. I’m a minor under you.” I said, “I want to have just a quick word of prayer with you.” And I prayed with that little wild turkey (laughs) and tears rolled down his cheeks. And he said, “Thank you, thank you!” And he said, “Never will I bother you again. I’ve never had a woman to say a prayer with me. I’ve had women to cuss me out.” That’s what he wanted. He wanted me to degrade myself by calling him names and then he would of have me then wrapped around his finger. I said, “But you need prayer. It hadn’t dawned on you that I’m a child of God. I’m a child of the king. And he’s blessing me right now.” And I said, “I do not fight. Many women be ready to hit you in your nose, but not me. I love my hands. I’m not screaming at you because I have a velvety voice that makes my income. And I just need to have prayer with you and let you know what’s going on.” I say, “And I’ll continue lifting you up in prayer at night when I go to bed.” Whoa. He didn’t tell a soul at that station that I had prayer in privacy with him. And the program director happened to come back, opened the door and came in before we finished my prayer. And he stood there and put his head down too. And then I was glad he came before I finished, because he knew then there wasn’t anything off-color going on behind the doors. But he told several people, the program director said, “She sure did handle that a, A-S, (laughs) she sure did handle that.” Said, “We put her up against anything and anybody. That little Chatty Hattie says she going be a little powerhouse to reckon with.” Oprah Winfrey one day said something on her program similar to what I had experienced, but she didn’t handle her experiences the way I did. I think she retaliated back, threw something at somebody, or something she said on her program, but I’d never threw any violence. I never did that. I never screamed, I never acted out of character where I would make somebody not like me. He became one of my best friends after that.

CW: That’s nice.

HL: Isn’t it? I could tell you some stories, and these are all true stories. When he got fired from our station, he got fired for some silliness. You’d have to sell radio time, and he went to Esso station, they call it Exxon now, but it used to be Esso station, service station. He went there, that was one of his accounts, and they gave him rather than a check, they gave him cash. And a receipt he gave them, and he didn’t turn that money in. And it was a small amount of money, it was less than twenty-five dollars. Cause you would go there on a weekly basis, they wanted you to come and collect. Cause all they did on their commercial was sponsored the time and the temperature. You’d say, “WGIV, Eastern Standard Time is three thirty. Sponsored by Exxon, get your gas at Exxon.” That’s all you say. So his bill was very, very minor, but you collect every week and he didn’t turn money in a couple times. And when you have your staff meeting with your sales department, you would have a print out of all of your collections. And there was nothing by that, and they ask him, “Are you going by, getting the money from the service

station?” And he say, “Oh yeah, I’m going after this meeting’s over.” He always going after the meeting over, stalling. And they had found out that this guy had been paying every week. He had receipts there in his office at the station, so they called him in and they let him go back to New Orleans. Yeah. Put him on a Trailway bus, I never will forget that. Send him back to where he came from, his home. And I was relieved, but I was sad because I had become very friendly. But I never, I never forgot, you know, what had transcribed. And I kept distance, but I felt a little sorry when you know, anybody get fired, you know. That’s why sometimes when I see Donald Trump tell people now, “You’re fired,” I say, “Okay, I know how that is. (laughs) I know how that is.”

CW: Did you, you didn’t find any discrimination in terms of pay, did you, being a woman?

HL: I never cared a rip about pay for the simple reason, I was making so much on the side. And doing my own activities, getting paid to MC programs and fashion shows. Payola was big, and somebody was in that station almost every day, almost two or three times a day, different people bringing money. When I would get my check, I didn’t have time to deposit it. It would go sometimes for several weeks after having my payroll check before I even put it in the bank. So I don’t, I never cared that much. And then I had a husband providing. I wasn’t hungry for nothing. I was being blessed every way you turn.

CW: Were there any other female radio people who you saw as mentors?

HL: No I didn’t, not in Charlotte, but there were in other places.

CW: Nationally?

HL: And we all, and they patterned after me. I couldn’t get over. This girl, her name was Lizzy, in Texas, and her radio name was “Dizzy Lizzy.” We would talk to all of us, we’d get on conference calls all the time. And they would call and ask me different things about how do you do this in North Carolina? How do you conduct this business? Or how did you do that when you did it? And I would tell them and they say, “Well, that won’t work, I don’t think, in Texas. They think differently. It’s a different mindset.” And then the Martha, “The Queen,” her name is Martha Gene, they call her “The Queen.” She would call me and ask me different, you know, strategies on how I did certain things and she say, “Oh, that will work in my area. Thank you!” She was in the Baltimore, Washington area, so that wasn’t that far from North Carolina, so that worked. But the West Coast gals, they would have some brilliant ideas about different things they would do, different contests they would run, and different things. But theirs was always money, money, money-driven, and I was always doing it because I love people. And they would tell me, “Well, I didn’t do too well on my contest.” I had a contest like that too in my book, where I had youth dressed in little white dresses and little boys--you probably saw a picture of

that in here. And they say, "Well, I didn't do too well with my contest." And I would say, "Well, what was wrong?" And they would tell me such and such, they had to pay twenty, twenty-two dollars to get in and this and that. And I say, "Well, what you give for you winning prizes?" "Fifty dollars, twenty-five dollars and ten dollars." I say, "Oh shoot! I don't do mine like that." They say, "Well, how you do yours?" I said, "The parents don't pay if they got their child in a contest for you, and you going to have them pay at the door to come in and see." I say, "Oh goodness! I don't do my pageants like that." But they always would fail, cause they want parents to pay to come in. The mama, the daddy, the uncle, the grandparents, they counting all that as money, raking it in. Money, raking it in. My people come free. Your child is in it. And you've had to go get the clothes for your child to participate in the affair. They say, "Well, what can I do to, how did you let them come in free? How you count?" I say, "Overall, you make more. They would sell more tickets for you. And don't sell them so high. They want twenty and twenty-five dollars for a little kid show like that. No! I said, "At the door they just come in, the parents free and the families." I said, "When they get inside at intermission, we pass the plate for a donation. It's for charity." They say, "Well, it's for me when I have something." I say, "Oh shoot! Well y'all have a nice day, you taking up my time." I say, "You can't always want to receive and never give." And that was their downfall: greed. Always want to be compensated for every little thing. And they coming in, making you popular, making you a star, making you have pictures of what you can put in a book one day or what your great works you've done, and you charging for every twenty and twenty-five dollars. And all the little children, they not doing any singing or dancing. They just modeling out on the stage and standing in a group. Little tots, teaching the children how to be participating in things, and you going charge that kind of money. I say, "Well, don't ask me anymore, because I'm not changing my method of having it." And you didn't have to pay. You had it at a church where, you know, in the educational room. You're not paying any admission for that. And I say, "What would you serve?" "Oh, we don't serve." I say, "Well, that's another thing. I always serve little finger foods." This is at seven o'clock at night. Cause the babies got to get home and go to bed and you don't have nothing. They want punch, kids like that red drink. (laughs) They say, "Well, you're just a person that's just got more patience than we have." I say, "No, you are having this to make money for your pocket and you don't do everything for self."

I never put on a project just for self. I brought James Brown to town at the auditorium and I did that in conjunction with buying some wheelchairs for a lady that needed a wheelchair. Genial Gene and I did that. And it's in the book where he went on *The Price is Right* to get money. We did things out of giving, giving, doing. Not for us; we were just happy that somebody got the result of our efforts. But you don't find people that way anymore. It's a new mold of folks out here now. It's gimme, gimme, gimme, for me. But we gave back everything and put our personal money to make it bigger. You know, if we had a show or something and maybe cleared after expenses and everything say, three or four thousand dollars, maybe it was five hundred short of being four hundred, we put that in there. I put two hundred and fifty and he put two hundred and

fifty to make it four hundred, four thousand even. That's the way we did. And the newspapers would always know what we were doing. They would be everywhere. We would have things and they would write that up the next day. "Chatty Hattie had big show to raise money for wheelchair amputees." And I'd go to the hospitals. I'd go every week to a different nursing home. It's some people been checked into these nursing homes and their families have not been back to see them since they been there. And I would go on Valentine's, take them some hearts and put it all around on a string, around their bed and stuff, Valentine hearts. And they'd look forward to Christmas cause they knew I was coming. I was Santa Claus, they knew I was coming. I'd go see the ones that had families coming as well as those that didn't have families coming, both black and white. And I'd go to the hospitals' pediatric ward and read to those children that's not able to. Cause those nurses, they can't do that. They don't have time to do that, by the time they do medications and take them to therapy, and do this and that. And the parents that work in the day, and the grandparents can't be there every day. I'd go up and read. They'd say, "Chatty Hattie coming," when I get there they have a whole room full of them waiting. And they pat their hands, some of them had casts on and they have to just do they fingers like that, patting that I was there.

CW: Was that sort of public service?

HL: I was, I was.

CW: Do you think, what do you think made you successful? What were the crucial components of that?

HL: I think kindness, kindness. If I had to sum it all up, it was me being kind to others. Me reaching out to the young and to the old, to black and white, to rich and poor. It did not matter, it did not matter. And never ever did I ever say, "No, I can't do this," or, "I'm busy," or, "I have an engagement." I would make it. If I couldn't make it at that time, I'd say, "Can you change that date to tomorrow or to next week? I'm coming; I want to be there for you."

CW: Do you think that tied back, back into your listener? You know, made people listen to you more?

HL: I think so. It had an impact because you'd be surprised what word of mouth will do for you. People would tell others.

CW: What talent or what skills on the radio do you think you had that made you a really wonderful DJ? What do you need?

HL: That knack of me knowing how to actually perform the duties behind the scenes, the productions that I did to help make my shows programmable. The gifts that we would give away for contests, the services that we rendered helped make my shows great. Cause every day I would have somebody pull a hat, a name out of a hat, and say, "You're the winner of a bag of groceries, compliments of Chatty Hattie." And they could go to the supermarket, and it was a special one each week that we would use. And they would go there and give them their code number after I go off the air I would call them or they would call me and I'd give them the code. And they could go and get a basket of grocery. So people listen for free bag of groceries or some free gas and I did that on my show. You didn't know if I was going to do it at the beginning, the middle, or the end. You had to listen to the whole show. And these were things that I did on my own, that the station didn't sponsor. Now the station sponsored some things too, but those were some incentives that I did on my own. And you don't find DJs of today, I don't hear any of them doing those kinds of things.

CW: No, they don't take responsibility in the way that the old DJs took more responsibility, didn't they, really, and used their own ideas more.

HL: Yeah. So I think that that played a big part in the success of the programming. Now I know today's time here in the twenty-first century, if you paying these high prices for gases, and prices were not high-priced then, they were moderate. But to get a free tank of gas even then, everybody loves that. That's worth you listening.

CW: So the ingenuity to come up with those little hooks.

HL: Uh-huh. And I was blessed with something, I just, on my drive in to work, to the station, an idea would come up of something I'm going to use for the next giveaway. It wasn't something I sat down and pre-planned. I never knew what I was gonna give away, other than I would make arrangements at the stations, gas stations and the grocery stores in advance, you know. I'm gonna give away a bag of groceries from your store. I would tell them to put potatoes in the bag, a bag of fruit; apples, oranges, or grapefruit. I would tell them to put some rice, I would, you know, staples like this to feed a family, you know. I would tell them to put cake mix, frosting, cookies, gallon of milk, uh, and there was some other, there was one meat--oh yeah, it was two packs of chicken. They could put one in the freezer if they had a small family, it would be two packs of chicken, and that's what would be in your basket. And I would go on and have that specified so they could never use that for beer or wine or, you know, sodas and that kind of thing. But those was things that I did, and you know back then, seriously all of that I mentioned didn't come up to about twenty dollars.

CW: But that was a lot back then.

HL: Yes! And they would tell everybody, they'd get up in the church everywhere and say, "Chatty Hattie give a basket of groceries." And some people would be really desperate for that thing. Most of them, even me now, if I got all that free, I'd love it. And so, that's what I did to stay number one. I had the number one slot.

CW: You obviously have just a lot of natural ability with communication and your voice and everything. Did you have to work at any of that, or did that, does that all come natural?

HL: It was a natural, it was. I didn't have to program myself for it. I didn't have to study and practice. It just automatically--I become a different person with a microphone. I go into character. I get so busy with being resourceful when I'm speaking to a multitude of people, to the masses of the people. And I'm relaxed at doing it. I don't get nervous. Some people get stage fright, I overcome that real soon in radio. I started out going to be like that and when I got my first paycheck, I said, "Oh my God, I'm going to get money to sit down and talk." That stage fright left me quickly. I didn't think about it anymore, I just kept on keeping on.

CW: So looking back over your long career, what do you think has been--what would you want to tell your great-grandchildren about what you've learned?

HL: I would tell them in no uncertain terms--not a long story, cause kids today, they don't wanna hear nothing gonna last long, cause they say you old fashioned or you don't know what you talking about. So what I would say to them now is: whatever you're dreaming of doing, whatever your dream is, go after it with all you've got. But have in your mind you want to be the best there ever was, but don't imitate somebody else to get there. Be original, be yourself, know yourself. Be focused. Don't imitate nobody else; you can't last long like that. I had staying power because I was original. I didn't have somebody else I was saying, I want to be like Aretha Franklin, I want to be like Dionne Warwick, I want to be like Nancy Wilson, no. Chatty Hattie wanted to be Chatty Hattie. Then you can last like that, cause I'm not trying to be somebody else. And I would tell my great-grands, and great great-grands, if I'm living to ever have that generation, I would say to them, just be focused. Know what you want to do and pursue your dream. And give it your best shot. And if it doesn't work out, don't be a quitter. You're not kin to me if you quit. You just start something else, cause everything you touch is not going to work for you. I just happened to be the exception to the rule and never did anything that didn't go well. But just be for real, be natural. Don't let people take your kindness for weakness. Pray about it; you'll come out okay but you certainly have to make up your mind that this is what I want to do. And go after your dream. And don't dream that you going to fly to Mars, be realistic. But you know, don't go over and beyond your capabilities, but whatever that comfort zone that you feel that would hold your interests, whatever your hobby is, put your all and all in it and do it your way. Don't look in a magazine and say, "I want to draw like this artist, I want to write like this artist, I want to sing

or dance like the American Idol.” You be your own, your own originality. And you’ll do well. Yeah.

CW: Do you have any other concluding remarks you want to make?

HL: I can’t think of any other thing, other than I love this journey, and I think I put that on the back of my book down here. Oh yes I did, I said, “I wouldn’t take anything from my journey.” And that journey has been rough. It hadn’t been smooth, not always. There were hills and valleys. But I wouldn’t take nothing for the journey, because it made the woman that I am for all of these thirty plus years into a career, three or four careers. How many careers did I have? (laughs) I don’t even know. Oh gosh, but I do know that I have been real, real, challenged. I’ve challenged myself with these careers. And I would always say to myself, “You’re a winner. You’re not a quitter, you’re a winner.” And if that doesn’t hold out, it’s okay, it’s all good. There are many more obstacles, many more battles to fight. So you just keep on doing and doing it till you get to your comfort level and you stay with that until you feel that you’ve done all you can do in that. Never stay in anything until you are washed up. Go out with us hollering, “More, more!” And I proudly say that because I go to radio stations now and the phones light up like Christmas trees. “Chatty Hattie, Chatty Hattie.” And you always want more of you. Never stay in anything until you’re just dead in it. You know where you just not wanted. Give it up when you’re still hot to trot, that’s a good way to be. Go out looking good. Go out with people crying, “Don’t close your school. My child want to come there next year when they graduate.” Have them wanting, more, more, and more. Have them wanting you to stay, have staying power. Don’t stay with anything until you got to be pushed away on a wheelchair. Go out looking good, when you’re vibrant, when you still, you know, active, and you still can think, “What was I talking about,” you know. Don’t go to sleep while you’re talking, you know. So those are some of the things that I would say, in conclusion here is go out a winner. Be a winner, take nothing for the journey and go out a winner.

CW: Well thank you very much.

HL: Oh, I love you! (laughs)

End of interview.