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Years of Attendance/Grades: K-6th, Graduated 1980
Jr High and High School: Shepard, Hillside
College: Hampton, VA
Grad: NCCU Masters in Rec. Mgmt.
Occupation: Administrator, Clinical Research
Children at ICS: No
[Referred by Felicia Graham, Bethany and Ellison 1B]

1. *What are your earliest memories of Immaculata? Do you remember what you thought about ICS as a young child? Do you recall why your parents sent you and what they already knew about the school?*

It felt like a normal school to me. The only diff was we went to church in the morning. I remember always being a part of the ceremony in the am. It was always exciting seeing your name on the list (for helping with the mass). I remember Sr. Mary Elizabeth. She was very orderly. She stood in the middle of the hall to make us walk to the right. It is still a bother to me when people don't walk to the right. She was there when my father died when I was in the 6th grade. He was the one that they called when I was sick or in trouble. Sr. Mary Elizabeth came to my father's funeral. It meant a lot to me that she was present. I guess to represent the school, but she saw my father all six years and I guess she knew him.

My parents sent me there because I would have had to wait another year for school. My mother taught in the school system. If they had really taken it (ICS) through 12th grade, my mother would have had me there, but I really wanted to go to public school. She gave in

2. *Do you have any memories that stand out that you'd like to talk about? (Special celebrations, a specific teacher, etc.). If you could go back in time, what grade would you return to and why?*

I would return to the older years because we played basketball at the Y and a bus would take us from school over to the Y and that was a lot of fun. Several of us ran track together with the Durham Striders and we'd take over that space...we played kickball everyday on the upper level of the playground. That was what everybody did. I was the last picked, so I was the roving reporter. I'd go around and interview everybody.

Are you a Durham native?

Yes. I grew up over by Lawson St. My mother was a Durham native, and my Dad was from Union County.

3. *I've spoken to several African American alumni who have talked about their experience as an African American student at Immaculata. Can you talk about your own experiences?*

I can honestly say we didn't know. We really didn't know. We weren't caught up in that. It wasn't until 6 or 7 years ago we (Jimmy Osler?) were talking that we realized...we didn't realize we were probably a minority but we didn't know the difference back then. I can honestly say I really don't know why we didn't know. Maybe we just didn't know to notice. I think I had Miss Barker, one of my favorite teachers, pointed out my nose turned red too when it was cold. It was probably the first time anyone pointed out (I was different).

Some African American alumni I have interviewed noted that when they left ICS it was like a "culture shock" when they attended predominantly African American schools. Can you talk about your experience?

The culture shock was because it was the first time sitting in a classroom where the minority became a white person. (When I went to public school) We'd all have to say where we went to school and people would say, Immacu-who? I'd have to go through that each time I introduced myself. It wasn't another planet, it was just down the street.

Re:Nuns

They were very caring, but disciplinarians. You didn't play with them...they wore the full habit (1980 from 6th grade).

4. *Are you a Catholic? If so, how would you say school influenced your faith? If not, what was it like going to Catholic school? Do you feel it shaped your faith? If so, how?*

No, I was Presbyterian. It was really similar. The structure of the service was much alike. We sang the same cadences, stand up and sit down.

It has influenced me now, Yeah. I have one friend who attended lots of HBCUs, and when she got to the workplace, it was shocking. She found she related differently. It wasn't a shock to me. She pointed out, "you started mixed." I haven't found I related to anyone differently. ...But I know who I am and where I come from. It didn't bother me to feel less or above.

5. *In terms of your peers, what was it like to attend a Catholic school in Durham? In other words, what did other kids think about your attending Immaculata? When you attended, was there much interaction between the school and surrounding community?*

My peers were mostly non-Immaculata. They all went to public school. When I went to girl scouts, they were all in public school. I never realized the difference back then. I didn't even realize that most people who went there were Catholic. That didn't dawn on me I was one of the few that didn't go to Holy Cross.

Why do you think you didn't realize the difference?

The Christian beliefs...could just be the leadership. Sr. Mary Eliz didn't ever want kids to feel left out. That's how it usually happens—someone makes a divide., When the leadership doesn't make the division, then others follow.

6. *As you built your career, have grown older, do you feel your time at Immaculata influenced you in any way(s)? In other words, do you feel it has shaped who you are? If so, how?*

I think that open-minded feeling of inclusiveness. I've never stepped into any environment feeling less than. I never felt that way and that's carried me on through.

Excelling in education was important. They put some stressor to being good, being the best at what you do. You have that personal pressure to do well. I wonder if they put that sense of "you've got to be excellent, got to be right"-- I wonder if they put that in our spirit.

Re: Christian values:

I take doing the right thing to an extreme. It's right or don't do it at all. I work now with at-risk kids now and I see how sometimes they fudge things so well and so easily and say, "What's the matter with that?" I say to them, "Deep down in the bottom of your heart don't you think that's wrong?" (At Immaculata) We went to church every day. [Wendy attends Covenant Presbyterian on Cornwallis/Weaver St]. I think sometimes I take that to the extreme. I remember going to mass every day. You went straight to mass.

7. *What message(s) would you give the current, 100th graduating class?*

Their years at ICS have prepared them for life and they should never forget where they came from so they can continue to strive for greatness as they go through life.