

MS450\_020

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Interviewee: Maddox, James

Interview date: 1987-11-05

Transcription date: 2014

Georgia Institute of Technology Archives, Ron Bayor Papers  
(MS450)

RONALD BAYOR: Seven, eight, nine, ten.

(break in recording)

BAYOR: OK. What I wanted to talk to you about is, first, your early years, when you came on the department. When you (inaudible) black were first hired was the segregation of the firehouse itself, in this firehouse.

JAMES MADDOX: Yes. To a certain extent. This being a special case, I would say probably 16 years pr-- station 16, which at that time was located on Marietta, up here at Marietta High -- right above Northside Drive. And a month later, which was -- that was April 1<sup>st</sup> when we moved up there. And then May 1<sup>st</sup> we moved over here into the new station.

BAYOR: OK. Was this built especially to house an integrated unit?

MADDOX: It sure was.

BAYOR: Interesting. And how was it built? Any different, let's say?

MADDOX: Well, really just little subtle things. [01:00] Like this room at that particular time was used for the captain

and his -- and the truck driver -- in other words, the guy that drives the captain in this piece of equipment. The front room right down on the other side was used for a lieutenant and his driver, and all the blacks was located in the [bunk room?] (inaudible) side or the left side.

BAYOR: Did you have different duties at first, when you first came on?

MADDOX: Well, we always hired as firemen, OK. No problem with that because the (inaudible) was black. Job that we performed would be with black people.

BAYOR: OK. The jobs (inaudible) with the whites?

MADDOX: Not per se. When we got an alarm [out there?], which you would run into other companies, most of them would just stand around and watch you work. [We'd know?] we'd have to fight the fire by ourselves.

BAYOR: Well, I'm curious about that. I came across a newspaper article a few years ago that you mentioned that other white companies would [02:00] just quit fighting fires when you got there and let you do the job.

MADDOX: Right. Right.

BAYOR: Now --

MADDOX: Why? Why was it allowed?

BAYOR: Well, OK. (laughter) Let's hear that. Why was it allowed, yeah?

MADDOX: Well, the only reason that I could say was because it was a belief of the administration at that particular time, not so much in the city government, but the chief of the department, which was C.H. Hildebrand. He stood in front of us, our graduating class, and we went to school in 1962, in August. And he stood in front of the class and he made known to us, in his own words -- how did he put it? He say, "Don't misunderstand me," he said. "The reason you're here is political pressure." He says, "It's my impression that you [can't?] make a fireman out of a nigra..." He didn't say a nigger (inaudible) he said a nigra.

BAYOR: Understand.

MADDOX: It was one of those slick type way of saying it.

[03:00] And so when you got that kind of feeling coming from the top then there's no problem with anybody doing anything they want to. And I don't know about the rest of the fellows, because it was never really discussed between the guys that I know of -- at least I never was in on any conversation. I just made up my mind at that particular point -- there wasn't anything they could do to me (inaudible). I was going to be here.

BAYOR: When you got to a fire, when the 16 black firemen got to a fire, you worked as a unit?

MADDOX: Yeah. But see, we had two shifts, so that would have been split up. There would have been eight on each truck.

BAYOR: Yeah. OK. So let's say when you went to a fire that -- would the white firemen back you up at all? Even your - - and other people in this station? They'd back you up?

MADDOX: Now, those people were specialized. They were drivers and officers. So that, you know, their job was to drive us there and the captain was to direct it from the outside or whatever the case [04:00] may be.

BAYOR: But actually going into the building and doing the job?

MADDOX: Now, we had a couple here that would do.

BAYOR: Yeah.

MADDOX: But not too many. If they didn't want to, they didn't have to (inaudible).

BAYOR: How about when other companies got there? (inaudible)?

MADDOX: Oh, boy, the other companies, they just -- they just backed off completely because the feeling was that we weren't going to last long. And to make that happen -- to make that happen is to leave us out there by ourselves. You feel like... But you can imagine, you got 16 guys coming off the street, they're going to school for a few weeks at night while you work your other job, and then you

went to school in '62 and then you come home [in?] April '63, so the things that you learned in the school year just about forgotten. So they felt like they're not going to be able to hold up under the pressure. But we had what I considered pretty good officers [05:00] here at the station.

BAYOR: Yeah, OK.

MADDOX: Now, I know they were doing it for themselves, you know, because I'm sure that (inaudible) was promised anything because, one, our captain, he was always instructor in classes and lieutenant, when we came on they made him captain so he'd be... Didn't nobody want to be captain of station 16, you know. So he took it. There was a driver for the chief. He took it also. He [even?] put up the lieutenant captain. So those were the two captains we had. They had a lieutenant and a driver. (inaudible). But either way, I felt like it was pretty good. So we would come in in the morning and we working (inaudible) board four days in the daytime, you're off two days, you go four nights [06:00] (inaudible). Anyway, they would come in in the morning. We would work in the day shift and we would work approximately till twelve o'clock, you know, cleaning up the station, provided we didn't get an alarm during that time. And then they would -- you would sit in

on the class, you know, firefighting techniques and things like that and we would stay the class until we got off at four o'clock. We'd stay in class till four o'clock, and then the other shift come in and they'd eat their dinner and everything, and at six o'clock (inaudible). But the most amazing thing to me is we had been on for about... Well, the following year they came around with what they call grading the cities by the underwriters. And they come out, you know, based -- it was -- at that time it was based on the water supply [07:00] and all this other (inaudible) stuff. And -- but they would come around each company, check the equipment, and see if it was kept -- kept up with anything used -- everything in order. And he would ask questions of me, and they even had us now -- no other stations but us -- they made us all (inaudible), all (inaudible) and everything. And they stood out there I bet you for four hours and asked us questions.

BAYOR: (inaudible) couple times, was that the whole point?

MADDOX: Well, what -- his idea was to make you miss a question.

BAYOR: Oh. And if you did miss a question, then what?

MADDOX: You didn't miss a question, you kept going. You kept going. He said he was just determined to make us miss the question.

BAYOR: I mean, what if you did miss a question?

MADDOX: Well, then, he was all over you, you know. And...

BAYOR: He would be what? (inaudible)?

MADDOX: Well, no. Just (inaudible) lived up to to that point.

You already had your mark. But he was just going on until he made us miss a question. So we finally missed a question and he stood right in front of the [same?] chief, just [08:00] said, "You couldn't make firemen out of -- out of those Negros." He stood right here in front of me and he told me, he said, "I've been in this job for 32 years and I've never seen a company with cleaner equipment and better prepared as firefighters in my whole entire career." He turned red and I never seen (inaudible) until he retired or died, whatever the case may be.

BAYOR: (inaudible).

MADDOX: Now that was really amazing.

BAYOR: That is, that is. When you got to a fire, and let's say the other company, a white company arrived, how much trouble would they allow you to get into? I mean, if you were really in bad shape would they come to help or would they let you just swim?

MADDOX: Well, now I -- and we never were in that situation I felt like we ran into a case where, you know, there was a lot of danger. Quite naturally, any time you go out

there's an amount of danger. I remember one time when we had this -- [09:00] Atlanta Steelworks. We were all in a line down the side of the building. That was the time, if you remember correctly, if you've been in the city for any length of time, that what was burning, it was burning so hot it was burning telephone poles right alongside the expressway. And we went down to the building. It was galvanized -- nails and bolts and things. And it was burning pretty good. And it was made out of this (inaudible) steel. And I was on the loading dock and I had a two-and-a-half-inch line and I had three guys behind me. And somebody said, "Look out." I don't know who said, "Look out." But anyway, all the rest of them [fell?] off and left me. I had (inaudible). Let me -- I can't turn it loose. So he pulled me off the (inaudible) beating me between the railroad track. And I can't turn it loose, you know. And that was actually a white guy that actually saved my life.

BAYOR: So in other words, if you were in trouble, the white guy (inaudible).

MADDOX: I felt like [they would?]. Some (inaudible).

BAYOR: When I spoke to the Chief [10:00] [Hamer?], he said that on a fire everybody forgets about race and all that crap; they just work together. Did you get that feeling?



MADDOX: No, I didn't get that feeling. No, I got a completely different feeling because I -- like I say, I had too many cases where it was just blatant. It was straight out, you know. They're really not going to do anything, just let you swim.

BAYOR: Yeah.

MADDOX: And I don't think that they would have allowed us to be killed over there.

BAYOR: You think they would have jumped in at some point?

MADDOX: Yeah, I think they would have. Because actually it was a white guy that saved me that time.

BAYOR: Yeah. So, I mean, they were going to let you stick your neck out --

MADDOX: I'd (inaudible) for a little while but he [was?] doing the best he could. He had to walk the line down so he could... You know, because, see, it has a lot of pressure (inaudible). And I couldn't stop it and I couldn't turn it loose. If I turned it loose it would beat me to death. You know, and it probably would have killed other people, too.

BAYOR: You also said that the reason the whites -- the other companies, all whites, didn't come to your aid right away is that they wanted to see what the black firemen could do.

MADDOX: Or what he was made out of.

BAYOR: [11:00] (inaudible).

MADDOX: It could have been that. I mean, it could have been... Like I say, I felt like it started at the top. By them not really wanting the situation to come to pass. They passed [a rule?]. Because they had to allow the drivers and the officers to choose that station with the promise that I'll give you some for working with it for a long way. So I felt like that was (inaudible). Everybody that wanted to leave 16 that was at 16 was allowed to do so.

BAYOR: So they were pretty antagonistic then at first. I mean, they were really...

MADDOX: Oh, really. And they wanted you to bring your own food. And, you know, prior to that they would eat together and everything, and now they want you to bring your own food. You know, and things like that. Just little things. I mean, it's subtle but they were there.

BAYOR: Oh yeah, that's what makes (inaudible). [12:00] Do you think these fire (inaudible) for the black community improved once there were black firemen?

MADDOX: Well, I feel like it did because if you go out there and you go on yourself (inaudible) I'm going to do a good job because this is my neighborhood. (inaudible) based in terms of the people right around here, I knew personally

and I would do him a whole lot better job than a real stranger. I mean, I'm just being wholly human. Because -- definitely I feel like...

BAYOR: Do you feel the white firemen, you know, paid less attention to fires in black neighborhoods because it was the blacks?

MADDOX: Well, let me put it this way. The thing was set up and it -- up until -- I would give them around '70 -- little before '70, '68, '69 that this -- starting at your color line. [13:00] You're going this way. Really didn't have any -- I mean, this is all one, two -- two stations that were built after that time.

BAYOR: Yeah, in a black neighborhood.

MADDOX: Uh-huh. You had this company would answer -- our territory extended from Northside Drive all the way to the river. And there's only one company to represent the two of us and that's (inaudible) two that's over there on [Bankhead?]. They're saying, "Who's going down Bankhead?" (inaudible) which would have been 22 when I was [7?]. We had to come all -- from this point. Say you got (inaudible) in your car and you -- (inaudible).

BAYOR: (inaudible).

MADDOX: Yeah. And they didn't have -- number nine wasn't there. Number nine's over there by where they built the stadium at.

BAYOR: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MADDOX: And 38's the one on Bankhead that, just [285?]. It wasn't there. So this company, 23, is over there on Howell Mill. They had to come in [14:00] out there to cover that neighborhood. So that's how you had a black neighborhood that was covered.

BAYOR: In other words, 16 is really the first fire station in a black neighborhood, really?

MADDOX: Yeah.

BAYOR: And before that there were no fire stations in black neighborhoods?

MADDOX: Not at all, no.

BAYOR: And so there were fire stations --

MADDOX: Oh, yeah it was. There was one in what we called (inaudible) if you lived in the city. That's over where number six is.

BAYOR: Where what is?

MADDOX: Number six is over there on [Boulevard?], other side.

BAYOR: Oh, on the other side of Boulevard. Yeah. There were fire stations in white neighborhoods, though, I guess?

MADDOX: Oh, yeah. All over. And they was all set up where you had the best protection in the world in the white neighborhoods. It only changed around (inaudible) in '68.

BAYOR: OK. So you think that black firemen on the force helped to convince the city to build fire stations in black neighborhoods?

MADDOX: Well, at one time, Fire Chief [Hamer?] and some other people that was in what we called [15:00] -- we started a club called black -- Brothers Combined.

BAYOR: Yeah, I've heard of that.

MADDOX: And they went to the chief of the department to really complain about --

BAYOR: About the fire stations?

MADDOX: -- you know, all the fire stations being located where we -- see, at that particular time we had a national standard saying that the first (inaudible) engine is supposed to an alarm within three minutes time of calling, and the first ladder is supposed to be there within four minutes. And there was no way you could say when we were going to, say, Two Grant Drive on Bankhead, that anybody was going to be there within three minutes. There's no way.

BAYOR: (inaudible).

MADDOX: You see what I mean? Even going to [Adamville?], there was no way we could do it because we would cover up to Martin Luther King, and that station over there on Bankhead would go all the way down [16:00] up on [Bowler?] -- Bowler Park. Near Bowler Park and all the way down there.

BAYOR: So 16 was the first in the black neighborhood, then after that there were a few more that came into the black neighborhood?

MADDOX: Well, you got 9s and 38s going this way. Put it that way. Going this way.

BAYOR: And (inaudible), right?

MADDOX: Yeah. So going west.

BAYOR: OK. So going west.

MADDOX: And (inaudible) I would consider were some of the nicer black neighborhoods, like...

BAYOR: Yeah.

MADDOX: (inaudible) just didn't have any. You got 31s out there (inaudible), which is out there off of Putnam Road.

BAYOR: So areas like Crestwood Forest didn't have any station out there or...? Yeah, that's far from (inaudible).

MADDOX: Yeah. See, so what I'm trying to tell you is it would seem like, to me, it was just -- (inaudible) just wasn't there.

BAYOR: Yeah. And, again, I mean, nobody -- nobody really cared whether there was a fire (inaudible).

MADDOX: Nobody ever said anything about it because nobody's never paid no attention. And (inaudible) and we would have our meetings and we just started trying to work. I [17:00] remember Chief Hamer, where he was president in time of the club, every time he would have a meeting with the chief and everything, he'd bring up that. And now another thing, too, is the company that was located where they could get in there had the oldest pieces of equipment.

BAYOR: Oh, really?

MADDOX: All your newer pieces of equipment went downtown or to Bankhead.

BAYOR: So you had -- you got old pieces of equipment?

MADDOX: When we opened the station?

BAYOR: Yeah.

MADDOX: Yes, we did. We had a 1952 engine.

BAYOR: And the old-- and the other --

MADDOX: The other one on the truck was a 1937. (laughs) So we had that same thing.

BAYOR: So -- and then the other black stations opened after yours, the other ones in the black neighborhood also had the oldest equipment?

MADDOX: Yeah. Was (inaudible) equip-- equipment that had been re-- what do you call it, refurbished.

BAYOR: Yeah. Yeah. So you got the junk.

MADDOX: We got the junk.

BAYOR: Yeah.

MADDOX: And the newest station running out there, we were pretty good. We saw 17 with 38s. And I (inaudible) 38 (inaudible). And [18:00] that was in '72. And we had two old pieces of equipment (inaudible) out there. Now, I mean, this is a brand new phase. This is like (inaudible). But it was... And it was '72.

BAYOR: So when the -- when the whites finally built some more fire stations in black communities, they gave you all the old equipment anyways.

MADDOX: Right.

BAYOR: So you -- in other words, the good stuff went to the white -- white communities?

MADDOX: Well, they called it higher -- higher risk districts. So it just looked like we don't really give a shit about out there. You can burn, but we going to keep the best (inaudible).

BAYOR: That's what I thought, yeah.

MADDOX: (inaudible).



BAYOR: And before 16 was built the station was even further away from the black community, I guess.

MADDOX: Right. It was over there on Marietta Street.

BAYOR: Which means (inaudible).

MADDOX: (inaudible) had to go even further.

BAYOR: And ultimately it was just whites, pretty much. I mean when -- this is the -- this is the first station that's integrated, right?

MADDOX: Yeah. This is the first station that admitted blacks in the city of Atlanta. Probably they had a black back during the change of the century. Used to keep the horses at the fire station warm. [19:00] But (laughs) he didn't fight the fire.

BAYOR: I don't -- yeah, I don't (inaudible).

MADDOX: That's what they always tell me. Said, "No, you're not the first." You know, I said, OK. So I don't know nothing about that.

BAYOR: It's sort of (inaudible). It's sort of... You know, it's what I found out in a lot of the other cases. In all the other city services, police, cleaning of streets, seems like everything, the black community got nothing or the very last of things to get. It's just the...

MADDOX: That's right.

BAYOR: Did you find it changed pretty much when Ivan Allen came into office? He was supposed to be a friend of the blacks, you know.

MADDOX: Yeah. Well, you see, for one thing, Ivan Allen being one man that we always looked at. Him being one man, there was just so much that he could do. And that's (inaudible) elected official. There's just so much they can do. And there's not -- going to get the feeling out of the people, then you really haven't accomplished... You know, you can come in there as the biggest liberal in the world but if everybody still had that same mentality about [the thing?], [20:00] it ain't going to change very much.

BAYOR: You had Chief Williams at that point, right?

MADDOX: Well, when you're talking about the bigger changes come along, I felt like we had Chief Williams, yes. Now, he fought it tooth and nail, too.

BAYOR: What was it?

MADDOX: Well, because he... Jackson was vice mayor to that --

BAYOR: Right.

MADDOX: Remember? And he really went in there and he said, "Well, if we don't do this, we don't do that." Just [kind of what it amounted to?]. Chief Williams fought it for a while but I worked for Chief Williams personally in that time when long-- he learned more about us, OK. He got a

chance to meet us on a one-to-one basis. And I felt like before he, you know, like his demise, he really had changed.

BAYOR: So --

MADDOX: From the time I went to work for him to the time I went to 38, I felt like he had changed a lot.

BAYOR: So when he first came in, though, he didn't like black firefighters?

MADDOX: Well, I wouldn't say that he would go out of his way to make it look that way but he just really didn't have anything, probably because he had never been [21:00] (inaudible). Anything you don't know anything about, you don't give a shit for it anyway.

BAYOR: Nineteen sixty-nine is the -- (inaudible) Chief Hamer, those complaints to the city that black firefighters -- had a lack of black officers, full hiring levels. When they hired they only filled a black vacancy, inequality of assignments, (inaudible) duties, generally poor treatment. This is from 1969.

MADDOX: Right.

BAYOR: What was happening (inaudible) by then? And this is now, what, seven years, six years after you've been hired?

MADDOX: Right. Well, we had -- went to the [Harbor?] Strike situation and everything. And now, to mention that, we had a strike in '66.

BAYOR: Right.

MADDOX: And we were 100% on the first strike. Blacks (inaudible). We went out just like they did. And, you know, you still had this going in and going in and going in. And, like I say, Jackson was one that [22:00] brought about the officer, myself and -- I don't know where he is now, but I think he's a deputy now. Bolden was the first black (inaudible).

BAYOR: The vice -- vice mayor objection was that it could bring up -- help bring up some people into -- in the fire department?

MADDOX: Yeah. Because he was on that board of fire masters (inaudible) sitting on it.

BAYOR: OK. OK.

MADDOX: And that was [William Powers?] who (inaudible) that room down there.

BAYOR: So basically, though, they hired the -- I got the impression they hired the first 16 blacks. They said, "OK, we've done our duty. That's it. That's all we're going to do for you."

MADDOX: That's right. In the end they decided they was going to integrate that station that I tell you about in another black neighborhood. Sixes was the next... So they had to hire some, so he'd move the guys from this station that he already had trained to sixes and put the new ones in here. We were more or less a training station. Got to be a training station. And then they got over there, said, "Well, we need some more." So they put one in each other's station.

BAYOR: More (inaudible).

MADDOX: [23:00] Yeah. and see, we had it easy compared to some of them because we had numbers.

BAYOR: Yeah, right.

MADDOX: We had each other. You get one guy out on a shift with all white -- without other black men, they'd (inaudible). They really (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yeah. And that was -- one black put in a lot of different stations? Was that...?

MADDOX: Yeah. The one black to a lot of different stations.

BAYOR: (inaudible) one black (inaudible).

MADDOX: Yeah. I think 16 was first and 11 was next. There's one of them on [North Avenue?] and you know, and then just sort of spread it out.

BAYOR: So at what point did this change at all in terms of this, you know, lack of promotions [or?] the hiring, you know, the whole business?

MADDOX: Oh, now, this all come about between that strike date --

BAYOR: Yes.

MADDOX: -- and 1970, where they start moving them out.

BAYOR: OK. So basically got better infrastructure in terms of them?

MADDOX: It's probably getting better but, you know, like I say, you got (inaudible). And, like I said, when you move a man into a situation, when you put him in there by himself, and everybody there got a little animosity, telling you, "You don't know that," [24:00] they don't really want to accept you, (inaudible) got to really hit it hard then. (inaudible). Now, I'd have hated to been over there. I don't know whether I could have took that or not.

BAYOR: The guy that's put into -- in one situation?

MADDOX: Yeah. In one.

BAYOR: (inaudible).

MADDOX: One-oh-nine or 107 (inaudible).

BAYOR: How do you think this affected morale in the department, of blacks and white working together?

MADDOX: Well, very surprisingly enough, it didn't really do enough to say you changed it one way or the other because, see, the blacks, they felt like, "Hey, I'm going to make..."

BAYOR: Yeah.

MADDOX: They had to otherwise they couldn't stay here with some of the things that were done to them. And the white felt like, "I'm superior, you know. As long as I feel like I got somebody under me, I got it made."

BAYOR: Yeah, (inaudible).

MADDOX: So really you still had a balance there. So I think that (inaudible). You didn't really -- the morale didn't fall out like they said it was going to, that the white was going to [feel?] bad and quit. [25:00]

BAYOR: Did the whites still backup black firefighters at all during this time with the strike and all the bitterness about the move?

MADDOX: No. After the strike now, [we finally knew it was a place where?] you still have some old pockets (inaudible). They wouldn't (inaudible) around after the strike.

BAYOR: But you didn't have any problems with a predominantly white fire company showing up and saying, "Well, let's let the black fellows (inaudible)."

MADDOX: No.

BAYOR: That had died down?

MADDOX: That had died down. Yeah. Like I said, you had some officers -- and I put it a lot on the officers -- that would allow this to go on. And you had some [that wouldn't?], and at that point they got to -- when they got to the point where (inaudible) they going to make (inaudible). We're not doing anything to help ourselves so let's go on in there and (inaudible).

BAYOR: Do you think anything changed when Mayor Jackson became the mayor at all?

MADDOX: Well, he had -- he had really now a good head start. I [26:00] think his biggest change come about when he was elected vice mayor. I think that was when the big change started. But it continued on into that era. But I'd say the biggest change come about then.

BAYOR: OK. So the general feeling really was that integration wasn't moving very fast during the '60s, that it was just...

MADDOX: No, it wasn't.

BAYOR: Just kicking along.

MADDOX: Right. And, you know, keep that tokenism going.

(laughter)

BAYOR: Yeah. How about the formation of the Brothers Combined? Why was that created back in the late '60s?



MADDOX: Oh, we felt like we was being unfairly treated and wasn't given an opportunity to become officers in this job. You know, and... See, you had in place a promotion board and you had this training center out here and they had it sewed up to the point where they would give you a test, quarterly test. And your grades on that was counted against you when you went up [27:00] for a promotion. And then you had to go out there also twice a year for yard work. You know, go out there and actually perform the duties. And they're marking you, so what do you think you going to make? You know, all you have to do is have one out there that don't like you. He marks you. He's going to mark you low (inaudible). And I bet you didn't have... Because I felt like, and a lot of other people do, too, that we have one of the better companies in the city because we were trained harder than any other company in the city. We were (inaudible). And we would get low marks. So...

BAYOR: To make sure you wouldn't be promoted.

MADDOX: Right. So you didn't get a chance to take a promotional test then -- because it was five years between the time, anyway, when you could take one anyway. (inaudible) driving (inaudible). And we [28:00] finally got that in. Myself and Chief Hamer and a couple -- two or

three others -- made driver. I then started making -- looking at the lieutenant's exam. We got -- through the hard efforts of Maynard Jackson, we finally got some black lieutenants.

BAYOR: This is when he was vice mayor?

MADDOX: Right. I was even actually -- I -- they put me on -- not being but two blacks as officers on the fire department, they put me on the promotion board. And I had some of those antiquated things that they had on there changed. Like that was 25% out there, of your final grade, which was an awful lot when you're talking about personal feelings falling into it. Anytime you got the human factor in there, you're not trusting it with somebody that you don't like.

BAYOR: [29:00] So somebody could (inaudible) on your promotion right there, right.

MADDOX: Right. And so that yard grade should never be used against you. Got that kicked off first.

BAYOR: What do you mean? It was no longer used?

MADDOX: No, as --

BAYOR: As a testing thing?

MADDOX: As a test.

BAYOR: So what -- I guess they had just the written exam and the oral exam. So that's --

MADDOX: Yeah, a written and an oral. And it took me two years to do that. And after we got that down, things start, you know, (inaudible) a little bit and then they filed a suit. And when they filed that suit, that's what opened it up and that's what you see there.

BAYOR: That's when the promotion (inaudible).

MADDOX: Yeah.

BAYOR: (inaudible) before then it was very -- very hard for a black to get promoted.

MADDOX: Still.

BAYOR: Still.

MADDOX: Right. Because we kept to black -- we (inaudible) what is it, Deputy Chief [Bolden?], whatever he is now.

BAYOR: Whatever his position now.

MADDOX: He has [30:00] changed it.

BAYOR: This isn't -- what year do you think (inaudible) blacks to get promoted (inaudible)?

MADDOX: Right up until they had the promotion after this -- the [suit was settled?].

BAYOR: OK. So this was '75 maybe? Was it that late?

MADDOX: No, it wasn't settled that -- that early.

BAYOR: That early, oh. It may have been like '79 or something like that. I think it was...

MADDOX: Yeah, yeah. Whenever all those officers [made it?] the one time, that was it. And now that come in and (inaudible). First of all, if you stop and look at it, by that time the city had hired over 300 and something blacks from the job. And during that time we had a good number. Because, see, we were having deputy chief of Atlanta going around to different cities explaining to them how they would get blacks on the -- I don't know, like Buffalo, New York. [31:00] They had some [blacks, about three?]. And, you know, as far as recruitment is concerned, Washington, DC.

BAYOR: Yeah. Well, by that time, though, you also had a black mayor, which must have, again, also helped.

MADDOX: Oh, yeah. Well, that helped. So [I'm thinking?] that was the contributing factor, other than the fact that they had filed a suit and they had to... They had a consent decree, right, saying that they have so many blacks and so many whites.

BAYOR: OK. So it was the court that really began to push...

MADDOX: The court broke it wide open.

BAYOR: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Your feeling, then, I guess, if it wasn't a federal suit, there wouldn't have been any - - hardly any blacks promoted at all within the department, so...

MADDOX: Well, it'd be just like -- it'd be a hard fight to the top.

BAYOR: Yeah. And they would have -- the whites would have gone up anyway.

MADDOX: That's right. Every time you move... They had (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yeah, yeah. Do you think having the Brothers Combined into the black -- black sort of union, it wasn't actually a union but it was sort of like a union.

MADDOX: Yeah. We named it a social club, [32:00] but it was union, believe me.

BAYOR: A black one and a white one. Do you think that hurt firefighters when it came time to negotiate with the city about wages and (inaudible)?

MADDOX: Yeah. Because they had to separate it.

BAYOR: Right, that's what I mean.

MADDOX: And I do believe that. That it was... See, our -- our thing was done in defense.

BAYOR: Oh, yeah.

MADDOX: You know, we couldn't really worry about that, you know, non-negotiating with the city. (inaudible) they got you separated on two fronts: they got to separate on black and white, and they got you separated on old and young.

BAYOR: So that's still the organization today, right? I mean, there's still -- there's still Brothers Combined today?

MADDOX: Oh, yeah. We still have it. It's not as active as it was during that time due to the fact that you don't have the things to fight for like we did. When we had everything, we had to just start from the bottom and fight up when we started it.

BAYOR: That's interesting.

MADDOX: And since that time, [33:00], they're all over the country now. They have --

BAYOR: (inaudible).

MADDOX: Yeah. They have black professional firefighters associations all over the country.

BAYOR: Yeah, I think the chief was telling me about that, yeah. When all this was going on, all the promotion fights, and all the obstacles to blacks getting promotions, how well did blacks and white work together during that whole time?

MADDOX: I felt like we worked pretty good. I really do.

BAYOR: So you (inaudible) just slide when it came time to fire-- to fight a fire?

MADDOX: Right. I mean, it was mostly... You know, when we first came on we had the situation where it was all right,

you would leave [him in there?] and fight the fire by himself. You know. And then that sort of used up. And where I was stationed, you had a few guys that felt like, "Hey, I'm better than he is, you know, and I want him to know it, you know." And he tried to let you know it in his way. But, see, like I told you, we had (inaudible) for this station [34:00] because there was so many of us.

BAYOR: Yeah. And how about all of the -- you know, I you get complaints from the whites that the blacks were being treated, you know, better these days (inaudible).

MADDOX: Oh, yeah. Well, after the federal decree came down, of course they did. You know, wouldn't you? (laughter)

BAYOR: I don't know.

MADDOX: Yeah. They're going to jump up and say that you going to have just so many of them and no matter what their qualification was, they (inaudible) qualification.

BAYOR: Well, that must have -- that must have caused a lot of friction between black and white firefighters.

MADDOX: It really didn't (inaudible) surprising between -- not to me it didn't. I don't know. You know, because at the time the first two, myself and Bolden, when we got promoted, see, we got kicked from both sides. First of all, the black fellows felt like we [could turn?] (inaudible). We were just lieutenants. There wasn't

nothing we could do that we wasn't told to do. So you was getting it from both sides. You're getting it from the top and the bottom. [The guys?] say, "Why don't y'all do something?" and the guys on top said, "You better not do that." (inaudible) [35:00] thinking you had to hire a representative number of blacks in these different positions. Well, things sort of eased up.

BAYOR: Yeah. In other words, there was a promotion freeze for a long time, though.

MADDOX: Yeah, there was. See, that helped out when they got ready to make the promotion because you had enough to promote so many blacks, so many blacks.

BAYOR: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MADDOX: You know, it hurt the department. I feel like the department lost a lot in that.

BAYOR: Lost in terms of...?

MADDOX: Well, as far as leadership is concerned.

BAYOR: Oh, yeah. You didn't have any... I guess you were really short of officers for a while, I guess.

MADDOX: We were short of officers. In this particular station we only had two officers that run the whole thing and we had (inaudible), including myself and Captain Baker.

BAYOR: Is this station mostly black, white, or what?



MADDOX: No. I don't think the racial was nowhere -- it's  
nowhere near like it was. You know...

BAYOR: There's a mix now.

MADDOX: There's a mix. Yeah. Mostly it's [36:00] designed  
that way.

BAYOR: Yeah, yeah.

MADDOX: They do try to keep so many blacks and so many whites,  
if possible.

BAYOR: Station by station?

MADDOX: Yeah.

BAYOR: They do?

MADDOX: Yeah.

BAYOR: At different jobs and, you know...?

MADDOX: Yeah. It just (inaudible) naturally, I believe, on  
that. But it is -- they still have what they call  
(inaudible). Said, "Well, we got..." Because what they'll  
do is they get ready -- you get ready to ask for a  
transfer, and they'll say, "Well, there's no black  
positions open." "I'm a fireman, I'm not a black." You  
know, that's...

BAYOR: They still think in terms of black and white when  
they're...

MADDOX: Of course.

BAYOR: For promotions (inaudible) still think in terms of  
black and white?

MADDOX: Last promotion was not given on that -- on those  
percent.

BAYOR: No. OK.

MADDOX: So just on the last three years, I think it  
(inaudible) last three years. And after that (inaudible).

BAYOR: [37:00] Last question: how did they pick the first  
16 black firemen? What was the, you know...?

MADDOX: It was a hard process. I think something like about  
maybe 300 (inaudible) two or three hundred, four hundred  
black people applied.

BAYOR: Oh, really, that many?

MADDOX: And probably, I'd say, 200 and some of them moved to  
the physical. And out of that they had 35 [go to school?]  
and out of that they got 16 firemen.

BAYOR: OK. So it's interesting. A lot of the ones that  
applied, a lot of the blacks who applied had gone to  
college.

MADDOX: A lot of them.

BAYOR: And they were coming into firehouses where the whites  
could hardly read and write.

MADDOX: Right.

BAYOR: So, I mean, you people were really a lot more qualified educationally and yet you were being held back in terms of those exams.

MADDOX: Right.

BAYOR: Yeah.

MADDOX: (laughs) So that's how that went.

BAYOR: Yeah. So in other words, when the promotions really were forming (inaudible) keeping [38:00] blacks down, you eventually came to the top because you were more educated in the first place.

MADDOX: Right. Yeah. And provided you could keep his finger out of [tea?], because you got to... See, remember, you had that promotion board down there. Because I was on that board, and I told them the only way I would be on the board is one man, one vote.

BAYOR: Yeah, sure, sure.

MADDOX: And when the (inaudible) they had this one guy that come in and he answered every question we asked him wrong. And (inaudible) Chief Williams say, "That's a good Christian man. He's a good man." You know, and I said to the chief, "What has that got to do with it?" (inaudible). I said, "I'm going to mark him off myself." Everybody else on the board marked him up. I marked him off because he -- that was what they said to me when I went on. "OK, if he

answers the questions, he gets (inaudible), and if he don't answer the questions, he gets so much." And that's (inaudible). You know... And I thought that was awful, you know. So [39:00], you know, the slowly people start coming around. We had a lady from personnel. We had a captain on the board, a lieutenant, and two chiefs, and director of personnel. Well, the lady from personnel, she didn't know nothing about firefighting, the director didn't know anything about firefighting, and then the lieutenant and the captain were [supposed to have been free?], prior to the time I went on the board, because I felt like, "(inaudible) on the board no way. No way. Put me off." But I'm not going to sit up here, let you tell me he's a good Christian man just because (inaudible) and he didn't answer the question. That's exactly what he got marked as. Because, see, for so long I had asked for fairness and it wouldn't be within my nature to go against that, you know.

BAYOR: Right, right.

MADDOX: So Chief Williams, he was talking to me. Well, I was his driver at the time. And he was going home. He said, "You really believe in what you do, don't you?" "Yes, I believe it wholeheartedly, Chief," I said, "because, see, you haven't been there on the bottom. [40:00] I've been on the bottom. I know how it feels to go out there and bust

your brains out and try to make a good score, and some guy come in here because he knows you personally (inaudible)."

And I said, "That's just not fair."

BAYOR: This is not the same board that Jackson was on, Maynard Jackson? This was a...?

MADDOX: No, this was what they called a promotional board.

BAYOR: And he (inaudible).

MADDOX: He was board of (inaudible).

BAYOR: And they control (inaudible).

MADDOX: They controlled everything as far as the fire department was concerned.

BAYOR: They didn't control promotions, though, did they?

MADDOX: At the time, yes.

BAYOR: They did? They did.

MADDOX: (inaudible).

BAYOR: That changed later on?

MADDOX: See, they were -- not promotionals but what it was is the (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yes.

MADDOX: It was made up of all the --

BAYOR: Oh, OK.

MADDOX: They controlled --

BAYOR: They controlled promotions (inaudible).

MADDOX: Everything.

BAYOR: And that changed later on, I guess.

MADDOX: Yeah.

BAYOR: OK, OK. OK. That's very interesting.

MADDOX: Yes, some weird things.

BAYOR: It's quite a story. I mean, you really were a pioneer  
back then (inaudible).

MADDOX: You had to be pretty thick- skinned to...

BAYOR: I was -- I'm talking also to [41:00] some of the first  
black police hired. Same deal. Same -- same thing you  
went through.

MADDOX: Yeah.

BAYOR: All the way down the line.

MADDOX: They couldn't even arrest whites at all.

BAYOR: I know.

MADDOX: I know. (laughs)

BAYOR: And --

END OF AUDIO FILE