Curtis Parrish begins by recounting his earliest memories about his family. As one of thirteen children, he notes that his family engaged in “truck farming” and they were fortunate to be able to grow enough food for their own needs. Although neither of Curtis Parrish’s parents were educated past the fourth grade, he remembers the emphasis they placed on their children’s education. He attributes this to the fact that his mother was unable to go any further in school due to her responsibilities to her own family as a young girl. After graduating from Central, Curtis Parrish served in the Air Force for four years and was deployed for a year during the Korean War. Although he did not personally experience racial discrimination while serving, he recognized this to the fact that his mother was unable to go any further in school due to her responsibilities to her own family as a young girl. After graduating from Central, Curtis Parrish served in the Air Force for four years and was deployed for a year during the Korean War. Although he did not personally experience racial discrimination while serving, he recognized that it was there and he emphasizes that the awarding of military rank was a means by which discrimination and segregation were enforced. The military also served as the impetus for his future career and shortly after leaving the service he chose to attend embalming school in Philadelphia. After graduating from the embalming school, he stayed in Philadelphia to pursue his career and did not return to Goochland County for fifty years. Curtis Parrish also recounts memories about his earliest years of school in Goochland. He remembers the small layout of the classroom and being forced to sit attentively while older students were being taught. Curtis Parrish’s father was an active member within the community and often held meetings at their house with other parents and the school superintendent to discuss issues affecting the education of their children. Much of this activism seems to have stemmed from individuals involved with a masonic lodge in Goochland County. Although, Curtis Parrish cannot recall the name of the lodge, he does note that A.G. Blakey and G.W. Hayden were members of it. He recalls his teachers fondly and also recounts that he was taught black history in school and was required to write book reports about famous African Americans. This did not include a discussion about the Civil Rights Movement however. Although he knew about the Brown v. Board of Education decision, he explains his belief that the significance of the decision was never adequately explained by his teachers. The end of the interview includes Curtis Parrish’s thoughts on the current state of education in Goochland County compared to his time as a student there. He also details the story of his children and the difficult school environment they encountered in the
Philadelphia public school system, along with his decision to have them educated in a private school.