

Transcription of OH-00014

Emma Agnes Murray Middleton

Interviewed by
John Wearmouth

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Typographic Note

- [Inaudible] is used when a word cannot be understood.
- Brackets are used when the transcriber is not sure about a word or part of a word, to add a note indicating a non-verbal sound and to add clarifying information.
- Em Dash — is used to indicate an interruption or false start.
- Ellipses ... is used to indicate a natural extended pause in speech

Subjects

Education
Teaching
School librarians
Segregation
School integration
Catholic Church
Church schools
Transportation
Genealogy
Rural conditions
Piscataway Indians

Tags

Church integration
Charles County infrastructure
Piscataway Conoy Tribe

Transcript

Emma Agnes Murray Middleton [E]: Would you like a pillow to your back? Sitting like that chair will bruise your back, you really need something to help....

John Wearmouth [J]: This is John Wearmouth about to interview Emma Agnes Middleton who was born a Murray, was christened Emma Agnes Murray. And she's lived all of her life in Charles County. And in this neighborhood pretty much all of your adult life?

E: No, since my marriage.

J: Oh okay.

E: I lived in Waldorf.

J: Alright okay.

E: Before that I lived in Pomfret and La Plata.

J: Well traveled.

E: [Laughs].

J: In Charles County. Anyway the main subject of this interview will be teaching in this county. And Mrs. Middleton did teach here for nearly 30 years. I'm sure we'll find out that she's of what we call the old school and probably wouldn't be too excited about being back teaching today.

E: True.

J: Okay, let's see. So you were born in La Plata?

E: Yes in Hawkins Gate.

J: Oh yes.

E: On 48.

J: Okay, in 1914. Okay let's see. How many children were there in your mother and father's family? Where did you fit into the group?

E: I was the baby in the family. Third child. My father died when I was five. We moved from La Plata to Pomfret on my Uncle's farm, which was Robert Clemens's farm. And I lived there until we—.

J: Your mother's brother?

E: Yes.

J: I see.

E: I lived there until I married.

J: Okay. Where did your family live in La Plata? Do you remember?

E: Hawkins Gate.

J: Okay so that's what about five miles or six miles.

E: About from here or from La Plata?

J: From La Plata.

E: No I would say maybe about three.

J: Okay and how far from here?

E: About five.

J: We're not terribly far from this point. And that's just off Route 488. By the way did that route have a different name at any point that you can remember during your life time?

E: It probably did but I can't remember what it was.

J: Whenever we can I like to pick that up because there are so few old maps that show the names of these roads. Now where was your Uncle's farm at Pomfret? On what road?

E: It was near McDonagh school in fact it touches. It's the Marshall's Corner White Plains road. I don't know the number now.

J: Okay well.

E: It's near us in Marshall's Corner.

J: We call that now the Marshall Corner Road.

E: Oh do you?

J: Until it reaches a point near Pomfret and then it becomes Maryland Route 227.

E: Okay.

J: And I live on Rose Hill Road right there where Marshall Corner divides. Marshall Corner Road and Rose Hill Road. I guess I better say that this is another one in the series of interviews done in the past seven or eight years on the subject of education in Charles County. This is part of the Charles County Community College Oral History Program. I guess now I've probably interviewed at least 30 retired school teachers in the past seven or eight years including Jane—. Jane Grey.

E: Jane Grey.

J: And I missed a few too like her sister.

E: Right.

J: Just couldn't get there fast enough. How was life with your Uncles' family? Was it a pleasant affair? This was a two family house?

E: We lived in—. No it wasn't. He had a small house on his farm and we moved there. And we lived there on that farm until I married.

J: Oh for heaven's sake.

E: And uh—.

J: How far would you guess that house to have been from a present McDonagh High School?

E: Probably a half mile.

J: Toward Pomfret?

E: Toward Marshall—.

J: Toward Marshall corner. Must have been fairly near that road that went back to the Mudd house? The Henry Mudd.

E: Not Henry but William Mudd.

J: William Mudd. I'm sorry yes.

E: They were our neighbors.

J: Oh were they?

E: Yes. The farm touched theirs.

J: I remember seeing his two daughters many years ago, well 30, 32, waiting for the school bus out there on the road as I drove by going into Washington to work. And those children must today be 45 years old.

E: I'm sure they are.

J: [Inaudible].

E: Older, probably.

J: Yeah, even older. So I never did know the William Mudd's. Is Mrs. William Mudd still alive?

E: She's still living and she lives in La Plata now in an apartment.

J: I see.

E: After he died she sold the farm and moved to La Plata.

J: Okay, where did you go to elementary school?

E: I went to Pomfret Elementary school which was about three miles from my home and I walked there every day from first grade until I was seventh grade.

J: That was a long walk and I know where it is and you know it's recently been torn down.

E: Has it?

J: But not until I took pictures of it.

E: Oh you have pictures.

J: Quite a few black and white pictures which I took about three years ago. And I just noticed recently it is just flattened.

E: Is that right?

J: Absolutely nothing there.

E: Didn't someone live there?

J: Yes it had been turned into a home. A black mother and I think one or two children lived there.

E: Okay.

J: And I met them. She showed me around the inside, so. Have you seen any decent pictures of that school as it looked when you went there?

E: No I haven't.

J: I haven't either. I'd like to see one someday so we can take it over to the college and put it with the more recent ones. Who went with you to school your very first day? This is going back a wee bit.

E: Well my brothers. I had an older brother [Lorey] Murray and a younger brother, Stanley Murray. And my neighbors were the Hanson family. They lived in the Mudd house. And all of us walked to school together.

J: Was it a pleasant experience for you? Did the distance bother unless the weather was bad.

E: Well the weather would be a factor but the distance didn't bother us because I think we were accustomed to walking everywhere. Unless you were old enough to ride horseback.

J: How old were you your first day of school?

E: Probably six.

J: Do you remember that teacher?

E: I don't remember that teacher. There's only one teacher that I remember in elementary school and that was Abigail Mathews. And I remember her forever because I went there in the seventh grade and the first day of school I sat on top of the desk and she said, "Young lady sit down." Meaning I should sit in the desk. And I said, "I am sitting down." And she kept me after school for one hour. And we got to be such good friends after that because we, you know, understood each other.

J: Yeah, I suppose she felt that you were being a little sassy?

W: I was being sassy.

J: And did you—. You thought so too I suppose?

E: Well at the moment I didn't but I found out later it wasn't the thing to do from my mother. But anyway this woman found out what I had missed from first grade until seventh grade. Anything that I was lacking she went back and picked it up and taught me. And we got to be such good

friends that at the end of the year, towards the end of the year, she used to take me in her car and I would ride home in the car.

J: Now how old a woman was she?

E: I would imagine she was about 45 then. She's been teaching quite some time.

J: A rather typical career teacher—.

E: That's right, that's right.

J: Of that period.

E: And there's one interesting thing about Mrs. Mathews. When my mother found that she was going to be teaching at that school she made me repeat the seventh grade. Now I had passed with good grades. But she said, "You don't know anything. You have not had good teachers. Now you're getting a good teacher and you're going to repeat the grade." And I did.

J: Now do you recall Mrs. Mathews' maiden name? Was she a native Charles County woman?

E: She was a native Charles County woman but I did not know her by any other name but Mathew. Someone told me her last name was Garner but I can't be sure of that.

J: Okay and who was her husband? Which Mathews.

E: Hmm. I can't remember his name.

J: Well anyway that's not terribly important. What sorts of things had you missed in school? And how did the teacher find out?

E: Probably by giving standard tests and checking my work. She saw that I could sing and dance and do recreational things. I could read mostly because my mother was very strict about reading. I read a lot of books. And you know, I needed to be taught math. I was not up to level in math. All the other subjects basically, everything but reading, and anything recreational I was up there.

J: Do you recall whether or not they were teaching geography?

E: They were.

J: At that time?

E: I didn't know—.

J: You know they're not now?

E: No they're not. And I didn't know that either and she was bringing me up to date in history and geography and math and everything, just brought me up.

J: Was she a stickler when it came to the communication arts? Reading, writing.

E: She was a stickler for every subject and she had everything so well organized that during the day you knew that you were going to have it. She said, "tomorrow we will spell these words." You knew you better know how to spell them.

J: And you were ready.

E: We'd be ready. And I hadn't had that before. You know, I—. It's unfortunate but I really did not have good teachers until she came along.

J: So in your day and in mine too, quality of education was spotty.

E: Yes it was.

J: In a lot of American public school systems.

E: Mhm. This is true.

J: Less spotty perhaps than some of the parochial schools?

E: See I went from public school to eighth grade at Sacred Heart.

J: Oh did you?

E: And if it had not been for Abigail Mathews I would never have been able to make it. I was ready when I went there. She had me right up to where I needed to be.

J: Do you know Mrs. Mary [Pugh] by any chance? Of La Plata.

E: Yes. She used to be the librarian over at—.

J: She's still at—.

E: Is she still?

J: I interviewed her about a month ago and she started out in the public schools and then I think in about the fourth grade she went to for the first time to Sacred Heart. And I asked her why and one of the things she said was that it had nothing to do with the quality of education at that time in the public schools. She felt that it was very good. But it was a matter of family preference. So that was interesting to find out too. And she went to the new La Plata school for the first three years.

E: Did she?

J: Of its existence.

E: My brother's did too.

J: Oh did they? And she remembered that those teachers there at that time were excellent.

E: They were excellent and they had an excellent principal. Mr. Sommers was there when they moved from the town hall. My brothers went there and they got a really good education.

J: Was Gertrude Ryan there at that time? That early?

E: I don't remember—.

J: Neil Wills?

E: I remember Mrs. Wright.

J: Oh yes.

E: Professor Wright.

J: The transferees from McDonagh. Really top notch professional well done. Everyone agrees that they were the—.

E: Excellent teachers that knew the subjects, knew how to teach. Professor Sommers was an excellent principal. I can't remember, there was a Mrs. Posey I think taught them. They got a very good background and they had an excellent business department. When the students graduated they could go and hold a job.

J: That was progressive at that time.

E: Yes they called it commercial department at that time.

J: And did not Mrs. [Rike] teach some of that?

E: She taught English and history, I believe, basically. I don't think she—. She may have taught that I don't know. Maybe commercial English or business English. I think basically she was an English teacher.

J: So you went into what grade now at Sacred Heart?

E: I went into the eighth grade at Sacred Heart.

J: And did you graduate from there?

E: I graduated from Sacred Heart and then went from there to Marywood College because it was taught by the nuns, Immaculate Heart of Mary nuns, who taught at—.

J: Do they still run that school?

E: They still run the school.

J: Okay so they've been there for a long time.

E: Yes.

J: So in your opinion—. I can almost guess without asking. You had as good an education as was available anywhere?

E: At that time.

J: In that, in that day. Maybe better than—.

E: I had no problem with the college after that.

J: Now you got a baccalaureate degree did you?

E: Yes I did.

J: Okay and that was significant too because not all teachers started out.

E: That's true.

J: With a BA or a BS.

E: And Marywood was basically training for teachers. Teachers—.

J: Where is that located now?

E: Scranton, Pennsylvania. Still the college there, still.

J: Okay now one of the former sisters from Sacred Heart just passed away up there. Mary Pugh heard about it the day I came to interview her and it upset her considerably.

E: Sister Mary Grace I believe?

J: Perhaps if she's passed away—.

E: I saw it in the paper. *Catholic Exclaimer*.

J: That must have been the one. I think Mrs. Pugh is going up there to the funeral as a matter of fact. Probably with some others. What were the hard core basic subjects that you were required to take in the public school system up through grade seven?

E: Well the usual things: reading, writing, math, art, science, spelling was big.

J: Math up through what level? What kind?

E: Seventh grade we didn't have advanced math. Seventh grade which would be general math I would think.

J: Any algebra?

E: Not at that time.

J: Did you get up to algebra?

E: I didn't get that until high school.

J: I remember getting as far as plain geometry and that just about—. That was too much.

E: You got that in elementary?

J: No let's see I got that in the ninth grade.

E: I got the math, advanced math in high school. I got geometry, trig, algebra. The Jesuit father's taught us and we had good background in math.

J: How large of a class was there that you went into at Sacred Heart.

E: We had 13 and we graduated 13.

J: Now that's a record. What was the gender break down? Half and half.

E: About three boys, four boys and the rest were girls. We were the first graduating class from Sacred Heart.

J: Did they have a young ladies sports activity? Schedule there?

E: We had, yes we played basketball and dodge ball. Yes we had—. It wasn't a structured thing but we had periods in the day when we did sports. We had field days and that kind of thing. We took part in the local field day.

J: Okay. In the county wide field days?

E: Mhm.

J: Okay I hadn't heard that before. Now what years are we talking about? 1929, 30?

E: Yes.

J: Okay. I remember covering the story of the transition from McDonagh to Sacred Heart in the La Plata Centennial history. Do you have a copy of that by any chance?

E: Yes somewhere around here.

J: Good okay. I wanted to make sure that that was covered properly because I thought it was very important. Okay so when you graduated you really were ready to go on were you?

E: Yes I was valedictorian of my class.

J: Wow [laughs]. You were ready.

E: So I was ready.

J: Yeah.

E: And anxious.

J: What was your grade average in high school? B and above?

E: Probably got all A's. I don't ever remember getting an—.

J: How did your education efforts compare with those of your siblings? Were you among one of the brighter academically?

E: We had the whole class was pretty bright. There were some who were bright enough but didn't apply themselves.

J: Yeah probably the boys.

E: Mostly because of social life. But they were pretty bright.

J: That didn't hold you back?

E: No I think what happens in those days, you know, if you could, if you were a good student and you would be able to handle Latin and math, advanced math then you were accepted there. If not you know they could tell you, "I don't think you'll make it here."

J: Oh is that right.

E: You were not encouraged to come if you were not a good student. Although they did have some students there who were not real bright but very nice people. One person I remember took care of the potbelly stove, you know. Put coal in and—.

J: Oh. One of the boys?

E: One of the boys and he did all the chores and he was just a wonderful person still lives in the county. But he didn't get there because of his academic skills.

J: Yeah, yeah well girls had to put up with boys like him.

E: This is true.

J: All, all the way through.

E: This is true.

J: I'm pretty sure it was very difficult sometimes even for the teacher to try and figure out whether a boy really could do better than he was doing.

E: Well this is true.

J: They're just too laid back and then when they got into the real, real world where they had to earn a living there was a terrible pay off sometimes.

E: That's right.

J: Some of them didn't recover.

E: But you know the discipline was very strong in that school. You didn't do a lot of things they do today.

J: You know it still is, whether or not I'd say pretty strong, I don't know, but I have recently had the opportunity of going into Arch Bishop Neal two or three times and also to spend six hours at McDonagh High School lecturing, one right after another, on why study local history. I hope above all that the teachers were listening.

E: Children weren't. What level now? If you were in the—.

J: All the way through high school.

E: If you were in the AP level of students I bet they listened. Because they advanced placement for college.

J: You know they may have folded that group into one of the larger classes, because the groups averaged about 50 in some [inaudible].

E: Oh see.

J: I'm sure they were there. But I wish I could feel that I had made some progress with them, you know. Trying to explain how in our society in this democracy, communication skills are the very foundation on which our government is built. And if you can't read the papers and learn something about the issues you're not going to be able to vote intelligently and you can see what's happening to us right today. The old ship of state is just rocking on precariously and fewer and fewer people are even voting because they are so turned off by what's happened and they themselves are responsible.

E: True.

J: They stayed away from too many elections. So I don't know what the answer is. I worry about it. I think something we all ought to worry about. Well when you were in college, what were you majoring in? Any particular subject area?

E: My major was English and Library Science.

J: Okay. And did that remain your forte?

E: Yes. [Inaudible phrase].

J: Your strong suit all the way through?

E: All the way through. I Social Studies minor. English and Library Science major.

J: So you have a daughter who's following along?

E: Right.

J: In your footsteps.

E: She graduated from Marywood.

J: Is that right?

E: Got her masters from Marywood.

J: Isn't that great.

E: We both went to Catholic University and took Library Science.

J: That is a good graduate school in that field?

E: Catholic University was excellent. I don't know if they still have their certification for Library Science at this point. It was certified but I don't know if it is now. I haven't checked it out.

J: It'd be a shame if it weren't.

E: Well I think it's a matter a lot of times of things like how many volumes of books you have in your library and you know when they do the overall [inaudible].

J: And how many members of the faculty have published?

E: Yes. There are a lot of things that, you know. It used to be ALA certified. I don't know if it is now.

J: Going back just a little bit to grade school, do you remember the physical condition of that building at Pomfret? What did it look like? If you close your eyes and look back what was the appearance of the exterior for example? How well maintained?

E: It was maintained pretty well. I think it was painted every year. The inside the floor was pretty worn. The desks were not new. The blackboards were maintained okay. The little entrance was basically used for a bucket of water and you brought your own drinking cup. And then you had a little wash space and then you brought your own soap. And in hygiene class you were told you wash your hands before lunch and various things like that.

J: That little foyer was still there when I visited.

E: Was it? That was an important place because sometimes you had to stand—.

J: The mudroom.

E: In the mudroom. Sometimes it was the discipline room too if you didn't behave properly. But we had a big stove in the middle of the floor. And whoever got there first went out and broke little twigs and picked up dry wood and the boys basically had started the fire in the morning because it was cold when we came in.

J: Probably no insulation as we know it today.

E: Oh no the windows—.

J: Just an outside sheathing and an interior—.

E: That's right. Very cold.

J: Sheathing. Was it wainscoted with wood do you remember?

E: All I can remember it seemed like shingles one over the other. Do you call that wainscoting? They're kind of—.

J: Well it can be a type of wainscoting. A wood, double wood wall up to about maybe three, three and a half feet above floor level. Thought to be necessary in most schools because of the rough care that the schools got.

E: Well they had that.

J: Okay.

E: Yes I remember.

J: How about lighting? Did that school ever have electric lights when you were a student?

E: Not when I was there.

J: I would imagine not. Maybe not till late 40s as a matter of fact.

E: It didn't have electric lights when we were there and on dark days it was not very light.

J: Were there hanging lights or wall type sconces?

E: I don't remember ever seeing any kind of light in there. We did not have evening plays and that sort of thing.

J: No kerosene lamps?

E: If they had any I don't ever recall seeing them. It's possible they did. I don't remember.

J: Were there ever any evening programs? Christmas shows?

E: They had Christmas programs but the ones we had were in the afternoon and the parents came. I don't remember having any night performances of any kind.

J: And what was your last year at the Pomfret white elementary school? About 28?

E: Probably 28. 1928.

J: I would imagine from what you've said so far. Did any others leave when you did and enter Sacred Heart from that school?

E: I think the Hanson family did. I'm almost sure the older ones did.

J: Where did the Hanson's live?

E: They lived next door to us.

J: Were they related to the Hanson Hill Hanson's?

E: Yes.

J: Okay.

E: Ava Middleton is a Hanson.

J: Oh for goodness' sake. How was she related to John Hanson Mitchell?...

E: I—.

J: From Hanson Hill.

E: They were related but I don't know the exact relationship.

J: Must have been cousins of some sort. Because I think—.

E: Might have been cousins.

J: Yeah. Because I think the first John Hanson Mitchell to own Hanson Hill was John Hanson Mitchell's grandfather. Also John Hanson Mitchell. I think Johnny's father majored in agriculture and was not a lawyer. Did you know him by any chance?

E: I knew—. I didn't know him that well my brother's seemed to know more about him than I did.

J: So they would have been pretty close to your home there. How about [Highdermot] you weren't far from there either were you? [Highdermot] farm. I think a Diggs, a Diggs property in the early years of this century.

E: The Diggs property was across the swamp from us.

J: Across the swamp.

E: Mhm. I don't know if we're talking about the same Diggs family. [Inaudible]—.

J: Possibly not. I wonder who lived there.

E: Dudley Diggs.

J: It was the home of a Doctor Diggs oh I guess about the turn of the century and those Diggs's and Mitchell's married the late John Diggs Mitchell of MSI was descended from Diggs his mother I think was a Diggs from [Highdermot]. But when you were growing up there may have been another family in that house. The house still stands. It's still pretty decent condition. Do you remember who was living at the place now called Locust Hill? It's been restored in the last decade or so.

E: Who was living there when I was growing up?

J: Right yeah.

E: I don't remember.

J: Long owned by John Dudley Mitchell and that family and now of course in the possession of Mr. George Jenkins. So very handsome place. Have you seen it?

E: I've been there since it's been restored on a tour but.

J: Very good looking house.

E: I have forgotten most of that history.

J: Well we're going back a long way. How did you meet your husband and how old were the two of you when you met?

E: Well I was teaching over at Indian Head elementary school over on the reservation and he was working over there and I road over with him. So we met and then we started to date and then we got married.

J: Now was he a native of Charles County?

E: Yes.

J: He's one of the Middleton's from this neighborhood.

E: Right and—.

J: How was he related to Mr. Henry?

E: He was his brother. You're talking about Henry next door?

J: Yes.

E: They were brothers. Henry was the oldest person in the family. Oldest boy.

J: And Mr. Arthur?

E: Arthur Middleton was his Uncle.

J: Okay. I interviewed Edward Middleton.

E: Yes he's a cousin.

J: About three years ago with respect to boat building at [inaudible].

E: Yes.

J: So got a nice run down on—. Apparently a very interesting home that they built.

E: Mhm.

J: That Mr. Arthur the engineer built down there.

E: Right.

J: All the modern conveniences in the 1920s which were really most progressive for that neighborhood. Most progressive.

E: Edward is, was, second cousin to Liam.

J: I interviewed Mr. Henry about four years ago.

E: Did you?

J: In the produce stand on a very hot summer day of July I think.

E: He loved it out there didn't he.

J: And he kept right on working and I would turn the machine off when someone came in then when he had waited on them we would go back to it. So we got a little bit into farming and politics, and quite a few—.

E: Mostly politics.

J: Right. Took pictures of him there that day. Perfectly candid had his work clothes on and that's the way he looked. Quite an experience. I went back to see him shortly before he passed on. Wanted to interview him again but he couldn't. Just couldn't. What have your brothers and sisters done in life? How many are living now?

E: See I was the only girl in the family. And [Lorey] is living. He's 80 years old and he taught automotive mechanics in the county. Before that he worked for Mitchell Motor company. And then Ed Turner well I guess he persuaded him that he should go and—. He began the program at the vo-tech center [Vocational Technical Center], automotive mechanics. And he went to Maryland University and was certified and taught until he retired.

J: I think I've met him.

E: I'm sure you have. They used to live right in town. Now they live out on Clark's Run in that area off Route 6. And he's retired. Fishes and hunts.

J: How long was your mother with us?

E: She lived until she was 94.

J: Did she? Where did she live during the last decade or two of her life?

E: She lived on the farm there in the house until about six months before she died and she was in and out of the hospital. And when she died she stayed in the Charles County nursing home for 20 days and then she died. But up until then she lived on the farm and she had a companion stayed with her.

J: What was your mother's maiden name?

E: Cora Agnes Clemens.

J: Okay.... What was the condition of the road between the house there and the school? The one that you had to walk twice a day.

E: It was not very good. You know they used the horse and buggies and it got muddy in the winter and it thawed in the spring. And you know, you had the ditches and ruts and—.

J: So it wasn't easy. Not only did you have the distance but walking conditions were not pleasant.

E: Not pleasant. Because most people in those days excepting the last few years there most people went by horse back or by buggy. And the last few years they had cars and so did we but up until then we walked or we road horseback. I used to ride horseback from Pomfret to La Plata.

J: Oh did you?

E: When I was in high school and [Meena me and Stone street and Kitty Posey] and we used to ride together.

J: Oh for goodness' sakes.

E: Ride all over the place.

J: Well it was almost a necessity. I guess a girl didn't worry about being called a tomboy if—.

E: Oh no that—.

J: How else could you—.

E: That was the thing to do. You rode in parades and had a good time.

J: Move from place to place. What customarily would your mother make you wear to school in unpleasant winter weather? What kind of boots now?

E: Are you talking about in elementary?

J: Yes. In elementary school.

E: Okay we always had boots from Sears-Roebuck. We always had mittens.

J: A rubberized boot?

E: Rubberized boot.

J: The type called galoshes?

E: Yes you put it over your—.

J: The buckle.

E: And with the buckle.

J: Okay, I remember.

E: We had—. I used to have a raincoat like little red riding hood I remember. And my mother would make me take it with me in the morning even if the sun was shining because she thought it might rain before I got home. And I would take it and hide it in the cupboard somewhere with my boots. And then, you know, if we got caught in the rain then I also got punished because I got wet. But she worried about whether we would have a storm or whatever.

J: Was she fussy at all about you walking alone?

E: She made my brother's walk with me.

J: Okay. What'd they think about that?

E: They didn't like it because like all boys they used to fight and carry on and I'd get all upset about and I couldn't leave because, you know, I had to wait until they finished whatever scuffle they were in. They didn't particularly like having me tagged along.

J: Oh I suppose not. Not only were you a girl you were a small one.

E: And in those days you know schools were not integrated and we used to have a few little run ins with the black students. And they used to throw stones at us and we'd get into all kinds of trouble.

J: Oh boy. Did you pass their school? To get to yours?

E: We didn't pass their school. No we didn't. But they—. We passed—. I don't recall passing their school but we had to pass a group of them on the way home and they would stand up on this little hill and throw stones at us. But you know, my mother and my Uncle were good friends with the local black people and they went to the house and talked to them and they said, "You know this is not the way we should do things." And they settled it between them. There was never any big upset about it. They settled it.

J: Now were these children of black families or Wesort [a name for the Piscataway Tribe often considered pejorative] families?

E: Mostly black families.

J: Okay because now in that neighborhood a large community of Indian or Wesort people.

E: Yes that's right.

J: And they're quite different. I know my daughter Annie went to McDonagh and many of the boys and girls in her classes were from that community.

E: Yes.

J: And this was an entirely different group. As they say, "Wesort," and they really are a different group. It's a third demographic break down.

E: And they don't want to be called black.

J: Oh no they don't. And they hardly have resented down through the years having to go to black schools. I noticed.

E: That's right. That's true.

J: And in turn the black teachers I've interviewed have resented the fact that they resent it.

E: This is true.

J: Really. It was a confrontation I guess day after day after day. And it was only settled really through integration. Not sure if that's called settling it but.

E: Well, Salome Howards used to be going to school at that time and her mother was a really good friend of my mother's. They respected each other.

J: Mrs. Freeman?

E: Mrs. Freeman and her house was right across from the school.

J: That's right. That's exactly right.

E: And she was good to us. If we had any difficulty we could go to Mattie Freeman and she would take care of us.

J: So that was her name? Now one of her daughters passed away recently.

E: Yes.

J: The oldest one I think.

E: Yes. Mattie was a—. She was a really regal [inaudible]—.

J: What did she look like? See she wasn't all black at all.

E: She was a good looking woman. She was always dressed very neatly and she—. I don't know what her educational background was but she certainly was a very refined person and she had a nice home. And she was very nice to us when I went.

J: Well she had another ethnic facet in her background.

E: I think she did too.

J: Oh there's no question about it I found that out. And that's one reason that Salome is so unique. It carried through to Salome. But not so much to her sister.

E: No her sister was different. Salome was more belligerent.

J: She's aggressive.

E: Yes she is.

J: She's a mover, she's a fighter.

E: She was more aggressive and her mother was just a very refined lovely lady.

J: Was she a tall woman?

E: Very tall and not very heavy. I can never remember going there and she wasn't dressed properly for the day.

J: What did Mr. Freeman do for a living?

E: I thought he was a farmer but he seemed to be pretty—. I don't know what he did really to tell you the truth.

J: Well as I remember—.

E: He seemed to have money.

J: Yeah I interviewed Salome. And as I remember he did work for the government in Indian Head in addition to farming. As Salome's husband Herb now does. I interviewed her about two years ago.

E: I remember that he always had tobacco and something else planted straight across from the school.

J: Yeah he probably worked with the two jobs.

E: Probably did. But they had a nice home and they seemed to have money to do things they needed to do.

J: It's still a nice home. I got to take some pictures of it. Now right there at the end of the road after you left the school yard and walked down to the end, the T shaped end where you had to turn right to go back home, who lived in that house there almost at the very end of that road.

E: Robey.

J: Robey. Okay did they have any children?

E: If they did they were older they didn't go to school with us.

J: Did you know a student there named Azalea? Robey?

E: [Indicates no].

J: Okay I guess that's because Azalea is seven or eight years your senior. Now she's still living in that neighborhood by the way.

E: Is she?

J: Yeah I interviewed her and there were some marvelous stories of her going to school right there where you did.

E: She went to Pomfret too?

J: And the fair, right? The fair there in that neighborhood. When you were growing up was that fair an annual thing? Near the, near the church.

E: Are you talking about the carnival?

J: I guess that might have been it a carnival.

E: A festival we used to—.

J: That's right it was a festival.

E: The festival.

J: Later became more for the black people.

E: Well they had a white festival and a black festival.

J: Oh did they? In the fall?

E: When I was growing up in the summer. Always in August.

J: Oh how long did this last?

E: Well it—. What we had was a one day thing on a Saturday. Unless you're talking about the carnival?

J: No, that's the festival and I've heard very little about it but Azalea mentioned it and I didn't realize what it was. What sort of affair as it? All entertainment wasn't sort of a farmer's exhibit type thing was it?

E: The one I'm talking about was a church festival.

J: I see. Okay.

E: Where they had a dinner and had a—. We used to call it the fancy table everyone brought their crafts and—.

J: Sponsored by St. Joseph's?

E: By St. Josephs. And you did all the year you made—. Crocheted and did all kinds of crafts. And then my mother was the one who took care of the cake stand. And my job from the time I was that high was to sell chances on candy and cake for the festival. All day long you took chances on things. They had horseshoe contests. They had a dance that night. But it was and a chicken and ham dinner and all the trimmings.

J: And the church itself as far as services are concerned was integrated to what extent as you remember?

E: The black parishioners sat upstairs.

J: How was this handled? Oh, okay.

E: They had the—. They were in the balcony. They only after I was older and probably married they came down and sat in the lower part of the church.

J: And was there a section set aside for this third group?

E: You mean the Wesorts?

J: Right.

E: They didn't sit downstairs with the white parishioners they went upstairs and how they segregated themselves I don't know.

J: They must have, somewhat.

E: But they did go upstairs. They had balcony—. You've seen the church they had a balcony on each side.

J: Yes, recently went to the annual fashion show that my grandson participated in at three years of age. My daughter in law is very active at St. Joseph's and is a member and our son our first grandchild was christened there. A roman catholic. We are not. But we're very quickly getting all messed up in all.

E: You're mixed up in it.

J: Yeah. Well it's something that's never bothered us. My sister is a convert. Probably a better catholic than her husband ever was.

E: Right.

J: Okay so this was an annual affair a church money raising?

E: Affair.

J: Affair. So all the work volunteered?

E: All volunteered, worked all day long. The men worked as hard as the women you know they carved the meat and they cooked everything basically in the homes then brought it—.

J: And brought it ready to serve?

E: Yeah except—. I remember some of the black ladies frying chicken so that we would have hot fried chicken.

J: Right there at the festival.

E: Right there at the festival. And hot breads and all kinds of good cakes and pies—.

J: Marvelous aromas.

E: Was a potato salad and coleslaw just like you get today.

J: What was your mother's special contribution?

E: Basically she made cakes.

J: Oh yeah.

E: And my aunt used to come up from North Carolina and she would make the most delicious homemade candy. And wrap it in wax paper. And she'd have a five pound basket, box of candy. And that was what I'd have to raffle.

J: Did she make it here?

E: She made it at my uncle's house. My grandmother's house.

J: I see. How large a family did your uncle himself have?

E: He didn't marry.

J: Okay so he was a bachelor.

E: And his mother lived with him until she died and he lived on the farm until he died. He was like 88—.

J: Oh for heaven's sake. And he farmed actively?

E: He farmed actively until he died.

J: Was he ever involved in politics at all?

E: Not at all. Other than the usual voting. I remember listening to them argue about various candidates and things like that.

J: Do you recall a woman named Teresa Chase? Who lived somewhat across the road from you way back in the woods?

E: I knew the Chase's and the Green's but I don't remember a Teresa and such.

J: She now is about 90, maybe 92 or 3. Very active with the NAACP, very sharp.

E: They lived on the right going towards Marshall Hall. On Marshall's corner.

J: That's right. Nice—.

[Tape Breaks].

J: Now when you graduated from college—. We'll leave the elementary school thing for a while. Did you feel totally prepared to go out into the world as a teacher?

E: Yes because I did practice teaching for six weeks in Pennsylvania.

J: Oh did you?

E: I taught—. That was part of the requirement.

J: At what kind of school?

E: I taught in a Polish school in Dickson city.

J: For heaven's sake.

E: And we walked three miles or four miles to practice teach. But I did teach in the high school there and that was I would think about six or eight weeks. And they—. We taught under selected teachers. And then we had our own supervisors come in to see how well you taught—.

J: From the college?

E: From the college and you were graded. And if you didn't pass your practice teaching you did not get a certificate from Pennsylvania. I had my first teaching certificate from Pennsylvania. And it was as a result of teaching as a practice teacher.

J: That's nice to have even if you never used it.

E: Never used it.

J: And at that point you weren't sure were you?

E: I wanted to be a teacher from the time I started high school.

J: Is that right?

E: I've always wanted to teach.

J: What generated that feeling? What or who?

E: I think my mother she has always said. And I believe her firmly that her sister would've—. She graduated from McDonagh High School. And she said, "If she could've only gone onto college she would have been such a good teacher." And she always said, "To be a teacher as far as she was concerned was the really the best career that you could have." She just admired it so much.

J: And the highest calling.

E: As far as she was concerned. She [inspired] that was important.

J: Any responsible for mind building?

E: The only—.

J: Or for getting the most out of the intelligence that has been given by God to these people to do the most with it.

E: Well I think one of the greatest—. You mean an influence for me?

J: Yes.

E: The Jesuit Priest, they—.

J: Now who was he?

E: Father Hannas and Father Hennessy. Father Hannas taught math and he realized that we were in a community where there wasn't a great deal of culture. But he arranged for us to go to national theater. He arranged for us to take trips to Philadelphia. He arranged for us to go into the museums. Some of the best place—. We at the national we always—.

J: Now these priests actually taught at Sacred Heart.

E: Yes.

J: I hadn't realized that there were Jesuit—.

E: Father Hannas taught me.

J: Priests teaching there.

E: Very, very good teachers. Very strict teachers.

J: Were they young men or? Retiring from—.

E: Well Father Hennessy was rather old and he was not—. He taught religion. We weren't impressed by his ability but Father Hannas was a very brilliant man.

J: How was his name spelled?

E: H-A-N-N-A-S.

J: H-A-N-N-A-S?

E: Uh huh.

J: Okay.

E: He was from a very prominent Philadelphia family and he taught us religion but he also taught math. And, as I say, anything that was culture he would want us to be there—.

J: Well, being from Philadelphia he would know a marked, many marked differences between Southern Maryland rural society and what he had grown up in in Philadelphia.

E: That's true. But he was so interested in making sure that we had more than just the academics in class. That was so important.

J: And it was too in your opinion wasn't it?

E: Well I mean, I certainly would never have gone to national theater. Who was going to take me, you know? But he exposed us to all of these things, the museums—.

J: Do you remember some of the live theater that you had a chance to see in those days? Any particular production?

E: I remember the song "Sweetheart, Sweetheart" came from—. What was the name of that play at the national? I remember Nelson Eddy and Jeannette MacDonald—.

J: Nelson Eddy and Jeannette MacDonald, oh yeah.

E: And I did see them.

J: Oh did you? In the flesh.

E: Um.

J: "Indian Love Call".

E: "Indian Love Call," see all those songs we knew and loved.

J: How did he get you up there? What were the means [inaudible]?

E: He arranged cars. He arranged for cars to take us and probably the car from the rectory. I mean there were only a handful of us and he made arrangements for us to go.

J: Did Father Hannas do anything else other than teach at—?

E: Yes, he was the pastor for two—. He was the pastor for Pomfret and over at—. I would imagine he had more than one church but I don't know which ones.

J: How far back can you go in naming Pastors at Pomfret?

E: Father Christ and Father Hannas and Father Hennessy, [inaudible], and Father [Horgan].

J: Were any of those priests rather short men?

E: Father Hannas was.

J: I may have—.

E: Red head. Fiery temper.

J: How old would you say he was at that time?

E: Well it was hard to tell—.

J: Forty?

E: But I would imagine he was in his forties.

J: Well I may have acquired a picture of him recently officiating at what I think is a Wesort wedding.

E: Oh really?

J: And I got it from J.C. Parks' daughter, Lilian.

E: Was it at Pomfret? The wedding at Pomfret?

J: I've got to get it ID-ed. I don't know why I think so but I do. I wish I had it with me.

E: Nice looking man. Red head, very red head, nice like a very square chin. You notice this very prominent.

J: How tall would you say?

E: He was about my height, I guess. He wasn't really tall.

J: A little squarish?

E: Yes very squarish.

J: Oh this could be him. Wavy hair? Darkish maybe just dark.

E: No red hair.

J: Red hair well it's a black and white photograph.

E: Red hair and the temper to go with it.

J: I should get this over and let you take a look at it.

E: I can remember him throwing erasers at us when things didn't go correctly—.

J: Oh really?

E: In class I used to duck down. Albert Hyde and Will [Nally] sitting in class were ducking down. He would wham because you didn't do—. Didn't do your algebra correctly on the—. But he was—. I think the one person that really made me want to do a lot of things in academics. They had a library at the rectory there and we were permitted to go and read all the classics, which were not available to us because we had no libraries at that time. But by the time I'd gotten to Marywood I'd read [inaudible] and all these things because they were over in his library. And we were permitted to go and take them and when finished we took them back and got another one and that's the way we did it.

J: How long was Father Hannas in the county?

E: I don't know how long he was there. He was there the whole time that I was in high school. And then he left and went to Kingston. I think he was there—. He died there to tell you the truth.

J: Kingston New York?

E: No, no, no. Not Puerto Rico what is it? Jamaica.

J: Jamaica.

E: Jamaica he went—. He left and went there and that's where he died.

J: Okay. Who was your favorite teacher among the sisters at Sacred Heart?

E: Mother [Totska]. She taught me Latin.

J: Oh for heaven's sake.

E: And she was—. She was my favorite teacher. She was an excellent teacher. She demanded a great deal but she gave you credit for what you did. She was very fair. Very knowledgeable.

J: Where was her home?

E: I think from Pennsylvania.

J: Sounds like a Czech name or maybe Polish.

E: Mhm. She taught at Marywood I think for a while.

J: How large a student body was there at Marywood when you were there?

E: Probably about three or four hundred.

J: Was this a mixed?

E: It was a girls college.

J: A girls okay. Is it still?

E: Now it's boys and girls go now. But I think that's only happened since about 68, 1968. Not very many boys on campus.

J: How did you get from here up to college?

E: I rode the bus and sometimes train. The first years I rode the train. And we went to Trenton New Jersey and then we cut over to Scranton.

J: Where did you get on the train?

E: At Union Station. And we would ride all day long to get there. And then later before I graduated I used to ride the Greyhound bus down. And I suffered from motion sickness so I was sick from Scranton to Washington. But, you know, that didn't deter me. I kept on going.

J: That's quite a distance up there. Even in Pennsylvania that's a long ride.

E: Yes it is.

J: Sure. Now what year did you enroll for the first time at college?

E: Hmm. I graduated in 37.

J: Subtract, subtract four?

E: Yeah, 33.

J: What did you do during the summer? Were you able to come home?

E: I came home and I worked in Washington in wherever I could get a job. I stayed with my cousin. I worked in a dime store one time. You know, wherever as a clerk, whatever.

J: Yeah. Washington was a little different then.

E: It was different then and I walked a lot then too.

J: Were you able to get tuition help as a college student? Was this all on the family?

E: The college—. I went to Marywood on the McDonagh scholarship.

J: Oh okay.

E: And I was—. It was through Father Hannas that I was able to get to go to Marywood because the scholarship originally set up was supposed to be for Maryland colleges. And he thought that was ridiculous and he went to the board and he told them that he really didn't think McDonagh had that in mind. His idea was to have people go to college, have it paid for, and it didn't make any difference where they went as long as it was an accredited college. And he won out and I was the first one to go out of the county—.

J: Is that right? Now that's an historic item right there. Who were on the board? I can almost name them.

E: A Page.

J: Yeah, yeah, Henry Page.

E: Um, that's the only one—.

J: That's quite a Page. I believe.

E: I don't know his first name. Was Page, gosh I think—.

J: How about Neil, Neil Hamilton?

E: Don't remember Neil Hamilton.

J: James Neil Hamilton.

E: Wasn't there [inaudible].

J: Yeah, yeah.

E: [Inaudible] I think. I don't know how many were on the board to tell you the truth. I know one thing. That my report cards had to be sent to them. And if you didn't make—.

J: Oh is that right?

E: If you did not maintain a B average you did not get the next semester's scholarship money.

J: Now did that—. Was that enough to cover room and board?

E: It covered room and board but the college didn't seem to realize that so the first three years I worked in the library and I served in the dining room there. And when I was a senior they said, "Your scholarship has been paid why are you working?" And I said, "Because I was told I had to work."

J: By people there at the school?

E: By the people at the school. And somehow now though the money was sent to them, but somewhere there was a mix up. And I remember they sent 500 dollars, which was a lot of money in those days, in September. And then they'd send 500 the next semester.

J: Were you ever—. Was it ever made right?

E: I guess they put it in the scholarship fund up there. They never gave it back to me. I mean.

J: Oh for heaven's sake.

E: But I used to work every Saturday morning in the library which was a plus because I really enjoyed it and I could get all of my homework done. I knew all my reference books and you know that was—.

J: In the long run you made the most of it.

E: I got my money's worth.

J: Great. Now when did you decide you wanted to teach in Charles County? Had there ever been any question about it? Did you feel you wanted to come back home to teach?

E: Yes I wanted to come back to teach. And I did teach. I taught at Indian Head. The first year I came back there were no openings in high school and I was certified for high school. So I taught at Indian Head elementary under Mildred Rice.

J: Oh did you?

E: She was my first principal. And I helped her to set up a—.

J: When she was still Mildred Rice?

E: She was Mildred Rice. And I helped her to set up the library there in the summer. And she invited me to spend the summer in Alaska with her and I didn't go for some reason. I think I was in love with Leo and didn't go.

J: Oh dear.

E: And I thought to myself what a wonderful opportunity that was because her sister lived there or someone in her family.

J: True, yeah. Where was the school located physically?

E: It was on the right as you entered to go up the little hill and go into Indian Head. And now I think it's a community center. I think the old building is still there.

J: Okay.

E: On the greens or whatever.

J: It was on the green? Alright. Just before the main gate?

E: Yes. And Ruth Chandler taught with me.

J: I've interviewed Ruth. Ruth Hickey Chandler.

E: And let's see. Harold Chandler was teaching there and she was dating him.

J: And that was what grades now? One through—?

E: I taught—. It was one through seven. And I taught seventh grade although I was not certified to teach seventh grade but it was on the reservation and they made some—. I guess they gave me the opportunity to do it. If I'd been in the other part of the county I probably couldn't have.

J: Now who paid you?

E: Charles County Board of Education.

J: Okay not the Navy Department.

E: Not the Navy.

J: Okay. Who was your immediate supervisor outside of the school?

E: Lucille [Buoy].

J: Okay. Wouldn't it be great to have her here to talk to? Did you know her well at all?

E: I, I know her now. There was uh—. Not Lucille but who was the other? Wasn't Buoy, what was her name? Not Lucille is still living.

J: Yes and I do want to interview her by the way.

E: I can't think of—.

J: I know who you mean.

E: What is her first name?

J: I think she was in the school at La Plata that was hit by the tornado.

E: I think she was.

J: She was there and Ethel Graves.

E: Mhm.

J: [Her] was there. Mabel Buoy. Mabel Buoy?

E: Not Mabel.

J: That's not quite it either.

E: Anyway we referred to her as Ms. Buoy and I used to be quite upset when she would come to supervise me. Number one because I was teaching in the seventh grade which meant you taught all subjects. Art, everything, whatever—.

J: And you were certified for high school teaching.

E: I was certified to teach in high school for the social studies and English. Certainly I wasn't certified to teach spelling and all the things that you do there, the art and all of those. But anyway I survived that first year teaching at Indian's Head.

J: Who were some of the students that first year? Do you remember?

E: The Jenkins. Eugene Jenkins his sisters. I remember them because they were such good students.

J: How about Joseph [Roe]?

E: There were some [Roe's] there.

J: Okay....

E: They're the only ones that—.

J: Any Robey's? Mattingly's?

E: I think we had some Mattingly's.

J: [Sladen's]?

E: [Gareheart]

J: Oh yeah. Any [Gehrings']?

E: Oh maybe it was Gehring—.

J: G-E-H-R.

E: George, George Gehring.

J: Alright, yeah.

E: He was one of my students. His mother came to me the first day of school, rapped on the door, and I came to the door and she said, "I'm bringing you my son George. He has given every teacher a fit from first grade." You know, all these things about him and then I made up my mind that day I was getting along with George. And we were the best of friends. And [inaudible]—.

J: How old was he at that time?

E: In seventh grade. Whichever, I forget when—.

J: Twelve.

E: About twelve.

J: Roughly.

E: And I made up my mind that she did not do him a service by coming in telling me before he had a chance to relate to me—.

J: Yeah that's true.

E: And giving him a black name.

J: And she felt that she was being kind to you.

E: She thought a first year teacher she was being kind. And George and I came to an understanding and I said, "George, I don't care what you did last year. We are on a clean slate this year and we're going to work." He had the lead in the play—. We had to put on a play too.

J: Was he a bright enough child?

E: Bright as he could be. And he invited me to his house for dinner. And I thought well I've made it. In spring I went to their house—.

J: Where were you living at this time?

E: I was living at home in Pomfret.

J: Right in Pomfret.

E: Driving a little um—.

J: Marshall Corner Road.

E: Yeah driving a little—. I guess you call them Ford. Those little Fords Coop I'd bought from somebody.

J: Did you buy it new?

E: No, no I bought it from my cousin.

J: Oh okay.

E: And I—.

J: Was it what they call the Model A?

E: Model T.

J: Model T really?

E: Model T.

J: With the three pedals?

E: I don't remember about three pedals but I know you had to shift. Had to hold the, what was—.

J: It was just a clutch pedal.

E: Clutch you had to—.

J: And a brake pedal.

E: Hold the clutch down and the break down.

J: And the, and the shift.

E: And the shift. And I remember going to work one morning I went down the Pomonkey hill and the universal joint broke. And I ended up in McPherson's farm. Didn't go in the ditch. [Laughs].

J: Now what Pomonkey hill is this now?

E: It's been cleared. When they put the new road in there they leveled it so you wouldn't know there's a hill.

J: Oh cuz I wouldn't recall—.

E: You go down across the railroad track and go up the hill and McPherson farm was there on the right.

J: Was that near the dairy? The Bluebird dairy farm?

E: I don't where the Bluebird—.

J: Emily Cox.

E: I don't know the Bluebird—.

J: Now going toward Glymont today. You go through Mason Springs.

E: Alright.

J: Cross the railroad.

E: Right.

J: And just across there's a nice driveway that leads off to the right up to the old Dairy. That was the Bluebird Dairy. Now where would this farm have been located? With respect to where the railroad now crosses.

E: The one I'm talking— The one I'm talking about is the one where you would go past Pomfret school and go back to Pomonkey.

J: Oh, oh I see.

E: I don't even know if that road is still existing is it?

J: Yeah.

E: That's the one I went.

J: Yeah the road that went by the white Pomfret school.

E: Right and then you went—.

J: Is still that is part of 227. That's Maryland Route.

E: Is that 227? Then that was the route I went to school on.

J: Alright so you crossed the railroad track.

E: And then you'd go up a little hill—.

J: That's right okay. It's quite a hill.

E: [Inaudible]—.

J: That's right, yeah. Yep right down the [pen].

E: And then you'd turn left and go.

J: Yeah.

E: My brother was killed at that intersection—.

J: Oh is that right?

E: In an automobile accident.

J: An automobile accident?

E: He was driving with somebody worked at Indian Head and the man didn't make the turn and he was killed right there at that intersection.

J: That's Old Livingston Road at that point.

E: That's what it was called.

J: Old Livingston Road from Pomfret to Mason Springs.

E: Mason Springs—.

J: The Chicamuxen and on down to Riverside if you want to go that. How old was he when he was taken?

E: Gosh I don't remember.

J: 20s?

E: He was married so he was probably a little bit older. Probably closer to 30. Left two children.

J: So that's, that's the way you got to Indian Head along that road.

E: Right.

J: I pictured you coming up to Marshall Corner and turning right on 225.

E: Mhm. When I taught over there I went that way but I think when I road with Leo I did go to Marshall's Corner and go down.

J: Where was Leo living when you were courting?

E: He lived here in Waldorf.

J: Okay right over here in this?

E: Piney Church Road. Their [home] is still there.

J: Okay. What did your husband do for the Navy Department? What was his skill?

E: He—. I'll tell you what he did. He went there and worked in the during the war in what they call the ether building.

J: The ether building?

E: Mhm he always came home smelling like ether. But in the night time he went to [Strader's] College and he got his degree and then he got his master's degree in accounting. So he only—. That was a stepping stone. When I married him he was still going to college and working at Indian Head.

J: Okay now what year did you get married?

E: Got married in 1939.

J: Okay and both of you were working at the time?

E: Both of us were working.

J: Well that was a blessing a few weren't working in those years anywhere.

E: That's right.

J: Now how many children did you and Mr. Middleton have and who are they from the oldest to the youngest?

E: Okay. The oldest is Barbara Anne. And the next one is James Edgar. And then Corey Lee. And then Francis and Muriel and Michael.

J: How many is that now?

E: That's six.

J: That's pretty good size family.

E: Mhm yeah six children.

J: You beat your mother.

E: I did.

J: Yeah but you did not beat Mr. Henry.

E: Oh no he had 15.

J: That's something.

E: Wasn't that something? 14 still living.

J: Now that really is remarkable. It really is.

E: Mhm, 14 living.

J: So what was your—. What was your next charge after Indian Head Elementary?

E: I went to Hughesville because there was an opening in the high school there and I taught under T.C. Martin. And there I was the—. I taught social studies—. This really bogs you. I taught social studies, I taught typing, I was the athletic director for the girls. So I taught field ball and basketball and we won county championship at field ball that year. I was young and could run—.

J: That was exciting for Hughesville.

E: That was exciting yeah.

J: I'll shut this off a minute I'm going to have to use your—.

[Tape Breaks]

J: Did you ever walk to Port Tobacco?

E: No never.

J: Pretty long.

E: Well, I rode horseback there.

J: Oh did you?

E: Mhm.

J: Along the road we live on now, that Rose Hill Road?

E: I don't recall how we got there but probably did.

J: While you were living there in the Pomfret area could you still follow the old road that passed through the Hanson Hill property?

E: Yes.

J: You could.

E: You could it was still okay.

J: Okay that was very important because it marked the boundary of an election district.

E: Is that right.

J: Yeah.

J: And part of it I guess is still there.

E: It's covered more or less with the woods now—.

J: Yeah it's getting—. It's getting more and more difficult.

E: Yes.

J: To trace as—.

E: But we could go from our place on that road. It was, you know with the carriage or horse and buggy or whatever you'd do.

J: What businesses were there in Pomfret when you were growing up there in the neighborhood? I mean grocery stores for example.

E: We had one—.

J: No gas stations of course.

E: One grocery store. And the post office. And that was it.

J: When, when we moved into Charles County there were—. There was one little grocery store type building right on that corner across from the Robey house.

E: Yes but I can't remember who owned it.

J: And Azalea Robey remembered that being open and they would stop and buy candy sometimes on the way home if they had money. You would enjoy talking to her.

E: She would be interesting. I can't remember—. I remember going in there and getting candy on the way home from school but I can't remember who was, who owned it or who....

J: Because it was closed when we moved into Charles County. The building was there but it hadn't been used for a number of years. I remember a lady would sell—. Was selling farm produce in an older house across that road. And that house must have been there when you were walking down to the school. I would say 1958, 59, 60. In the summer and she had a large garden and she sold produce and she was right on that corner where if you turn left you'd go down to the post office.

E: Mhm. I don't remember who owned it though.

J: Now was the post office located in the grocery store or a general store building?

E: If you could—. Instead of turning left like you're going to the school. If you kept straight there was a large yellow building. [Wheatley].

J: Yes.

E: On the store there and one section of it was the post office that you went in the front door on the left would be the post office. Now the store and the house was all one building.

J: Alright now I remember that I guess it burned about 20 years ago.

E: It did. It did.

J: But for the first ten years or so that we lived where we do now that building was still there. I couldn't see much paint on it but.

E: Yellow?

J: Yeah.

E: Sort of a mustard yellow building I remember.

J: Have you been back to St. Joseph's recently?

E: Since they've remodeled it yes. It's lovely.

J: How do you like it? Is it nice?

E: It's beautiful.

J: Yeah they spent a lot.

E: I was married there.

J: Oh were you? Oh for goodness' sakes. By whom?

E: Father Smith.

J: Father Smith.

E: Jesuit Priest.

J: What did he look like?

E: Very tall and very distinguished looking.

J: About how old would you guess?

E: Father Smith might have been in his fifties when he married us.

J: Did he wear glasses?

E: Not when he married us.

J: Was he a wee bit on the portly side?

E: He had a little tub I guess but he wasn't really that big. He died of cancer.

J: See there are two priests in this photograph. And in the middle is the wedding party of about seven or eight people who I think are Wesort people.

E: It probably was Father Hennessy and Father Hannas. Father Hennessy was tall and older looking and the shorter one was Father Hannas I bet.

J: Well I'll bet that's who they are. I'll try and get that over here next time we come. Very good. What was your experience like teaching at Indian Head? You had a unique mix of students at Indian Head. You had a few children that had begun their educations elsewhere.

E: Right.

J: Did you find them on the average to be up to snuff academically?

E: I think the biggest thing that I— They were very knowledgeable because they had traveled. But the biggest thing was that they were transient. And you might have a student sitting here today and his father would be transferred and he would leave and somebody else would be in—. So you didn't feel the roots that you would feel teaching other children in the county.

J: Did that impair your teaching in any way were you forced in any way to redirect your instruction to accommodate the newcomers and those who were short timers—?

E: Yes you had to yes because some were more advanced and some were not. And so you were constantly juggling. Particularly in math and some came in with very strong math backgrounds and others came with very poor math backgrounds.

J: Did you get a feeling, Mrs. Middleton, for what parts of the United States prepared their young people best?

E: The northern ones did. The southern ones were not quite to snuff. I don't know why.

J: Well I don't know they just refuse to admit it I guess.

But generally speaking they were poorer communities.

E: Right.

J: And I suppose if there had been much more federal assistance.

E: They—.

J: The whole thing would have evened out but I'm not sure it is even now. Are you?

E: I doubt it. My daughter teaches in—. Is working in Mississippi and the school system down where she is until maybe five years ago they didn't require them to go to school. I think they could quit it, eight or nine—.

J: That's unforgivable—.

E: When she first went down there was no requirement for them to go. She works in [inaudible]. And then they said they had to go to school until they were eight and now I think they go until they're twelve.

J: Regardless of race?

E: That didn't matter. So the system was very poor. And they didn't seem to care.

J: When did you first encounter your fully integrated school? When and where?

E: 1968. I will remember it forever.

J: Oh I'll bet.

E: I was teaching in La Plata High School. And they decided to integrate the schools and there was this terrible upheaval. Outside black students came in and people who were not students came in they took over the auditorium and the stage they'd made—. They had a signal everybody came out of the classrooms. They took out trays at lunch time and dumped them all over the place and—.

J: At La Plata High School?

E: At La Plata High School and the principal said, "we will not close down the school. We will not let them close the school."

J: Who was the principal?

E: Let me think who was the principal.

J: Not uh—.

E: It wasn't—.

J: It wasn't]Barnsley Warfield] was it?

E: No, no, no.

J: John Gee?

E: [Groat] I believe was in there.

J: [Groat] yeah I don't recall.

E: Anyway they did close the school that day because every step was blocked, the food was all over the place. I mean it was just a mess. And they closed the school. I remember some of the children coming down. I was in the library there and some of the children were frightened. And one little girl came behind me and caught hold of my dress and she would not let go. I mean she was so scared she just stood behind me. Everywhere I went this little girl was hanging on to me she was petrified.

J: Black or white girl?

E: She was a white girl. And Claudine O'Bryan did you know her? She was teaching there.

J: No.

E: She was something else. She was there in the hallway and she said to me, "I'm going out there I'm going to stop this foolishness." And she went out and she said, "What in the Sandhill are you all trying to do?" And they just pushed her aside you know like she was a match stick. And she came back in and then the troops, the State Troopers came in and—.

J: What was the date of this? Do you recall?

E: It was in the spring of 68. But I don't know the exact date. I don't remember.

J: Had integration already started in the elementary?

E: I-. They had started and it was being integrated gradually.

J: Initially it was pretty quiet wasn't it?

E: We—. It was pretty quiet—.

J: At the elementary level.

E: We integrated the faculty and then we were integrating the high school people. And it was a very difficult time I can remember that vividly. I thought if I'm ever gonna stop teaching this is the year to do it.

J: Yeah. How many years did you have in at that time?

E: Well let's see I started teaching in 37 and it was 68 so it'd been long.

J: Well you could, you could've been—.

E: I'd been there for quite a while. I could've been yeah.

J: What year did you retire?

E: I retired in 78. 1978.

J: Stuck it out for another decade?

E: Mhm yeah. It you know it got better as we went along. And after a while you didn't even notice.

J: Yeah that's amazing. Did you ever think you would reach that point?

E: I didn't think it would ever—. I didn't think so at the beginning. No I did not. And some of the black teachers said they had never in their lives worked so hard as they did on a white faculty. One, and Salome was one that said that. She was a gym teacher.

J: Is that that's right she—.

E: She came up from Bel Alton.

J: And she has good memories of that?

E: Yes she does.

J: As I remember in my interview with her.

E: It was very difficult. She said, "I have never worked so hard in all of my life."

J: Isn't that something.

E: Because I think we were—. We were told that we had to produce, you know.

J: And did they as a group live up to whatever expectations white teachers may have had? What reservations did some of the white teachers have about the ability of black teachers?

E: I think they were worried that they would not teach the children as well. And some didn't because they were not used to being supervised that much. I think basically that was what we worried about.

J: And I'm sure a lot of the black teachers were as they say just uptight at the whole idea.

E: It was difficult for them.

J: And probably there was a lack of confidence there too.

E: That was one of the problems. Feeling that they weren't really accepted. And even though on the surface it seemed okay. You know how you feel like you're outside looking in?

J: Oh sure. And then too so many of the older black teachers I would say those over 50 at that time really hadn't had the benefit of top notch academic preparation.

E: This is true.

J: And they knew it.

E: Basically—.

J: They knew it.

E: Basically because they were not permitted to go to the white colleges.

J: That's right. And that for everybody. They really did.

E: But later we had top notch black teachers let me tell you. They came in and they were good.

J: That's good. There was a superintendent of black education for the State named Huffington. H-U double F-I-N-G-T-O-N. And his name has come up over and over again in my interviews with retired black teachers. They respected him and one of the great things that Huffington did was to recruit outside of Maryland preferably in the northeastern states because he knew darn well—.

E: They were better.

J: He couldn't get the caliber of black teacher he needed here.

E: That's right.

J: So I thought he overcame a lot and then of course he worked hand and glove with Joseph C. Parks.

E: That's right.

J: And, you know, 50 years that man supervised black instruction in this county. And that's why my wife and I are working with his daughter Lilian to pull together his memorial collection. That's a thrill.

E: That's really good.

J: That's a—. And that'll be a year. It'll take us, it'll take us a year to do it.

E: That's true.

J: It's all up in the attic of her home right now. And she's the only survivor of that family.

E: And she's gonna give it to you?

J: She's gonna give it to the college. She didn't know what to do with it really. What was your most rewarding grade in Charles County? Where did you feel you were doing the most as a teacher for your students? At what grade level?

E: Probably senior high.

J: Okay.

E: The first year that I taught at Hughesville I taught history and you know I really enjoyed that.

J: That's great.

E: We had good students and I enjoyed it.

J: Who were some of those kids that you remember that you really liked? And it was a nice feeling between you and the class?

E: Rolland's, Long's, Johnson's.

J: Any Dyson's?

E: I don't remember any at Hughesville.

J: Okay.

E: I don't remember in my class. But when I went back to La Plata to work I was the first full time paid librarian in the public schools here in Charles County.

J: Oh were you? Now that's historic.

E: I was the first. And I set up the library program in—.

J: In the La Plata High School?

E: In La Plata High School.

J: And that was where at that time? Milton Sommers?

E: That was the old Milton Sommers [inaudible] it is now the government building. And I set that library up and opened it and ran the program there. And I did not teach classes then. I did the library. But my first year teaching was at Hughesville and I taught, you know, academic subjects.

J: How many years were you at Hughesville?

E: I was only there one year and one year at you know the seventh grade over at Indian Head. And then the rest of my time had been library work. And after I had my children I took off twelve years and I went back to Catholic University and got re-certified in library science. And then I was the first full time librarian.

J: Well you must have been a pretty unique teacher to be able to fit right into a professional library, librarian slot at that time.

E: Well see there were no librarians. I was trained in Pennsylvania where they had libraries in all the schools. Came down here they had books in each classroom but they did not have a central library. They did not have a library program and I set up the program and began it in this county.

J: What kind of formal structuring were you able to do? Was there a state wide program that—.

E: We had state—.

J: Guided you a little bit?

E: Guidance yes. We had state guidance and we had state supervisors and we were told how many books and what types of things we should have and the only thing restricting us was the budget. Back then, even then.

J: Like now.

E: Worse than now, but bad enough. And also the community college library was also in the high school library there. And Bobby was the first librarian for the community college. And she operated in the evening in the library that I had in the day time. And we were very fortunate because the budget for the college was better than the high school one and they provided books that we could also use—.

J: A nice spin off.

E: So we were in good shape that way.

J: How many volumes did you end up with in the La Plata High School library?

E: The final one down here?

J: Yes.

E: Ooh I can't remember.

J: 20- 25,000? That many?

E: Probably.

J: Okay well that's pretty darn good.

E: It was pretty good. We were pretty well told how much to have in each discipline.

J: What percentage of those were fiction?

E: Maybe about a third.

J: Okay. The classical and semi-classical.

E: Basically because before the public library could supplement we really for reference we had to have a pretty good reference section and that's where we had to put our money. But we did have a certain percentage of fiction but it wasn't as much as they recommended, I can tell you that, because we needed to have encyclopedias and good references and they were expensive.

J: Did you have a decent reading room there eventually?

E: It wasn't too bad. Actually the summer school right now it's the same library that I worked in there [inaudible]. And the one of in the government building was just a small room like this off from the office. Wasn't very big. But when we went to summer school we had—. In fact you were in there you saw the library. That was the library I worked in.

J: For heaven's sake. And that's where your daughter is?

E: That's where she is.

J: Okay, yeah we had a nice talk with her. [Inaudible] was in November. And I think she said something then about you should interview my mother. So here we are. I suppose that you and your daughter from time to time kind of compare notes do you?

E: We do a lot.

J: I would think so.

E: I volunteer down there when I first—. When she first stated working over there but it got to be, you know, I did not want to go back and do that kind of thing. I do other volunteer things but I used to go down there and do travel presentations.

J: Oh did you?

E: And because I've traveled all over and I have slides. I used to do that a good bit.

J: Is old Dewey Decimal system still in use?

E: It's still down there instead of LC. Yes I'm surprised they haven't gone LC.

J: What has replaced that at some places?

E: Well the Library—.

J: And is it an improvement?

E: Library of Congress is a more exact classification.

J: That's a [wall to break down].

E: Yes but they don't use that in the high schools. They use the Dewey Decimal system. Which is simple.

J: What experience have you had with the new regional library set up? Do you like it?

E: I like it.

J: Good okay. Because we work with them—.

E: I was on the board of trustees for five years.

J: Oh were you?

E: For the public library.

J: I suppose you met Mr. Paul Dennis Brown in his day and his wife?

E: Oh yes. Oh yes.

J: Sort of the godparents of the—.

E: Of the library.

J: Of the public library in this county.

E: [Inaudible] a very farsighted.

J: Yeah, yeah we've been trying to give them credit in the La Plata history. Certainly do deserve. So what—. What do you feel are some of the advantages your daughter has now that you did not have? Professionally, academically, and the physical set up for example?

E: For one thing she has an aide. And—.

J: How well qualified?

[Tape Ends]