

Transcript of OH-00047

Lillian V. Parks

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

Segregation in education
African American teachers
County school systems
Charles County Board of Education
Education, Higher
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Single-parent families

Tags

J.C. Parks

Transcript

John Wearmouth [J]: This is John Wearmouth interviewing Ms. Lillian Virginia Parks at her home near Bryan's Road on—is it Mathews Road right down here? She has the distinction of having the only house on Mathews Road really.

Lillian Parks [L]: On this section.

J: On this section. A very short section of road. What is it a quarter of a mile long would you say? Connecting 227 and Route 10. And I believe she's lived here all of her life.

L: Except the first two weeks.

J: Except the first two weeks. Okay and she was born in Charles County or in DC?

L: In Washington.

J: In Washington. What hospital?

L: Freemans

J: Freemans okay. And you were born jeez during World War II. July 10, 1944.

L: My parents were married July 11th.

J: Oh really? Of that year?

L: No. Two years before

J: Oh well alright. So anyway you are an honest to goodness native of Charles County. And the distinctive thing as far as I'm concerned about Lillian Parks is that she is the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Parks. And her dad Joseph C. Parks was without a doubt the leading figure in the Charles County Public Schools system for black education from 1919 roughly until when did he retire Lily?

L: 51.

J: 1951 so we're talking about a shade over 40 years and this man was in the saddle all that time during some pretty turbulent years. And during that same period I dare say there were at least six white superintendents of school that he worked with. Maybe you can even count them off beginning with who? Who was his—

L: I don't know was it [Gwynn Huffington]? I'm not—I'm not exactly—

J: Well Huffington was state level.

L: Okay I remember a Gwynn it might've someone been before that. There was T.C. Martin. There was Paul Barnhart. There was—

J: Gwynn before Martin but who before Gwynn I do not know.

L: I don't neither.

J: Okay anyways this is part of the series on black education in Charles County. And this is another one of the series being done as part of the Charles County Community College Oral History Program. The date is March 8, 1991. Lillian's entire public school education was here in Charles County and it was during the years of segregation and she is now teaching in Prince George's County. Temple Hill?

L: A guidance counselor not teacher.

J: They got—did you ever teach?

L: I taught for 13 years.

J: Okay. Okay. Where did your—where was your mother born? Newport News?

L: Mhm.

J: Where were your mother and Dad when they met?

L: I believe they met at Hampton.

J: Okay were both of them students at Hampton?

L: Both of them were students at Hampton but not at the same time.

J: And your mother was [Carlisa]? [Carlisa]. And your dad—and your father was born in Lexington Kentucky and was a veteran of World War I. An overseas veteran as a matter of fact. And came back home specifically to undertake this job in Charles County as Supervisor of black education in the Charles County Public Schools system. So—

L: Course the word was colored then.

J: Colored. Alright I mean that's part of history and I do want to get that down. And was that a broadly accepted term by both blacks and whites?

L: I don't know because that time period it might have been an accepted term. It's never been an accepted term during my lifetime.

J: Okay what was the most broadly accepted term when—

L: When I was coming up?

J: Right when you were coming along.

L: Negro.

J: Well we'll get into that a little later and again this is history. How close was your mother to what your dad was doing? Did he discuss problems when he came home? Did he sort of keep her up to date with the major goings on in his job?

L: I can't answer that. My mother passed away when I was seven years old. And she went in the hospital just about the time I was going into school. She was an educator herself so I would imagine that they did discuss it.

J: Yeah I would imagine. So you were their first and only child?

L: Mhm.

J: Okay so you had to be both son and daughter. Being an only child did you ever get the feeling when you were growing up or do you feel now that you were a bit pampered at all?

L: Well I was spoiled rotten.

J: Spoiled rotten. Well that's normal and natural. How had it affected you as an adult? If you run into any problems as an adult that can be traced to your having been an only child?

L: I'm not certain I'm pretty sure there might be.

J: Well you seem to me a pretty well-adjusted person. You wouldn't be doing what you're doing to earn a living. I'm sure as a school counselor every day you run into young people that have real problems at home. Yeah that's a real shame. Okay how close were you growing up to your dad's career? Did he ever confide in you? Did he bring problems home to you? Did he discuss successes with you? Because when your mom died you were the only one in the family that he really could talk to about certain things. What kind of a person was J.C. Parks?

L: He talked a lot. Now whether or not he discussed real problems I have no idea but he was a very busy person. It was hard to keep up with him. He worked 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

J: Would you say he was deeply committed?

L: Extremely committed.

J: Extremely committed. Okay now—

L: It was his life.

J: Now as you understand it he began working here in Charles County 1919 maybe 1920?

L: I'm inclined to believe it was 1919.

J: Okay let me—so when your dad retired he had completed 43 years of service and education in the State of Maryland. And say two on the Eastern Shore. What two years? What years was he there? Were these his first?

L: His very first two.

J: Even before going overseas?

L: Right.

J: Okay but 41 years were spent right here in this county.

L: Correct.

J: Do you have any idea when this house was built? Were your mother and dad married?

L: Oh no. Daddy tells this story. A good Kentucky gentleman did not ask a lady to marry him unless he had a home to take her to.

J: Oh that's interesting and he was a Kentucky gentleman. So he oversaw the building of this house?

L: Well my father went—had two college degrees one in building trades and one in education. And not only did he draw up the blueprints for this house and supervise the building he did that for the school too. I'm pretty sure if mice hadn't eaten them up I could probably find some blueprints for some old two room one room school houses around here.

J: Now they're important. Try and locate them. Seriously and we'll come back and we'll take a look at them. Okay so did your father ever...teach in Charles County?

L: No.

J: Okay did he ever substitute teach in Charles County?

L: Not that I know of.

J: And he was fully qualified. He could have couldn't he?

L: Yeah.

J: Okay where was his office? Do you know where it was first in the early 20's?

L: No. I'm not sure if he had an office.

J: Probably somewhere in the county courthouse in La Plata.

L: I haven't—no idea.

J: Where I know it was in 1934 because I recently interviewed Julia Totten.

L: Oh is she still alive?

J: You bet your right hand.

L: She's someone from my childhood—

J: She is a sharp looking—well I won't tell you her age but she—

L: I can imagine.

J: Yeah [you ought to talk to her]. She lives alone and over there at 301 [inaudible phrase].

L: Yeah still there her husband used to have—

J: The Christmas—

L: No. He had a beautiful train set in the—

J: Oh yeah she showed me it's not set up now.

L: I recall—

J: She has all that. It hurts you to talk about. So you knew her when you were a little girl?

L: Oh yes. Yes. You know if I were to pass her in the grocery store now I wouldn't recognize her.

J: Probably not because I saw photographs—well she showed me photographs that she looked 20 years ago. I wouldn't recognize her today if I had to go by those photographs. Where did you begin going to school?

L: At what's now that old J.C. Parks elementary school.

J: What road is that located on?

L: You know where Metropolitan Church is? The one behind that. It's still there I think they used it up as storage facilities.

J: Did you start out in Kindergarten? Was there?

L: No kindergarten.

J: Who was your first grade teacher?

L: Gladys Coleman. Old girlfriend of my dad's.

J: Oh really wow. Was she a Charles County girl?

L: No I think she was from—if I remember correctly Ms. Coleman was from Philadelphia. I think the last time I saw her was at [Minnie Ransom's] place and she looked the same.

J: [Inaudible] I missed [Minnie Ransom's] [inaudible]. I interviewed her before she died. About three years. When Minnie Ransom died there went a good chunk of history. A big chunk of it. Lillian how old were you when you began to feel that there was something a little bit out of kilter with public school education? As it existed here there were two systems each rather independent of the other. Were there differences in the white and the colored system that were apparent to you let us say in grade school?

L: No.

J: As far as you were concerned you were getting as good as an education as all of the other young people in this county your age? Okay now that's interesting. At about what point if any did you begin to feel just a little bit upset by what may have been considered an inequity?

L: When I was [post].

J: In education opportunity.

L: When I went to college.

J: Is that right? Now that's amazing and I would imagine. Your own father deserved a heck of a lot of credit.

L: But even so I still don't think I received a bad public school education.

J: When did you graduate from high school?

L: 62.

J: In 62 from Pomonkey?

L: Mhm.

J: So you went to school all of your public school days in that same [inaudible] area didn't you?

L: Mhm.

J: When was the new Pomonkey high school constructed?

L: What's now Lackey?

J: Mhm.

L: I don't remember. It was after I graduated.

J: Okay.

L: But see something happened in 1952. Daddy used to talk about it. I haven't bothered to prove it one way or another. It was written that you would have a separate but equal education. In 54 with the Brown decision the blacks started getting new schools. You had Malcolm over there. You had a number of new schools.

J: Port Tobacco was one of them.

L: Yeah so if you look at the physical facilities our facilities looked better than the white's.

J: That's true. That's true for that period.

L: And we had—. [Inaudible phrase]. So, so what am I looking at to think that I'm receiving—I mean I would have to be there to see what they were getting to know I wasn't receiving the same thing. Our books weren't—you know you hear about black children receiving books that were—

J: Second hand to say the least right.

L: [Second hand]. None of my books were second hand.

J: I wonder when the great change began to take place. Possibly after World War II. Because in the interviews I've done with retired black teachers in their 70's, 80's, and 90's they are still bitter about having to take what was left over. When the white schools got through with furniture, books, school supplies in general if there was any utility left in them at all they were passed along to a black school. But by the time you came along sounds like that was a thing of the past.

L: It might have been. There's two things that's going on. It could've been a thing of the past. It could've been that the teachers didn't share this with us. I mean they knew about it but they didn't stand in front of the class every day and say, "Children we just received this secondhand."

J: This is interesting [inaudible]. I am getting another perspective and I don't have much of that. I want to interview [Eva Tesley] one of these days. Was she a young teacher when you were still in school? Eva is your senior by I don't know how—

L: She's been retired several years now. So I guess there's a good 20 some years difference.

J: I would guess.

L: Although she looks awfully young.

J: She does. She does. Well you do too.

L: She was teaching at Pomonkey when I [inaudible].

J: What did she teach?

L: She taught second grade. If I remember correctly. I missed her in second grade but I—Daddy sent me one whole summer for tutoring with her so I could pick up what I missed.

J: Competent teacher?

L: Extremely. She was a brilliant lady.

J: Lillian who in your opinion was a half dozen or so most competent most professional black teachers who taught you?

L: Every single one of them. I mean I look at the teachers that I work with every day. I mean they might have gone through inferior facilities but they so were darn good teachers. My first grade teacher, Lloyd Johnson who was my math teacher in high school. I went to an all-white school. There was another black [student] and I got there. I waived my math courses. Now if he'd gone another step and persuaded me to become a mathematician that would've been great. I mean I was not lacking. I especially in the sciences I had science from [Sarah Cain] and a few others that went on to teach elsewhere. My last was in the field of maybe being able to write a paper, being able to research a paper. That was my downfall in school. But going off to a very liberal upgrade white college I made it through. I was making [great grades].

J: Where did you go?

L: Antioch.

J: You went to Antioch?

L: Yes.

J: You're right. Oberon, Antioch, Hillsdale, Carlisle, Beloit. My daughter went to Beloit.

L: Granted when I got there I couldn't write a paper. They did not teach me how to write a paper. I had to learn that and that was almost my downfall. But that was my only downfall.

J: What was the reason for that? Was it something that was not emphasized?

L: It wasn't emphasized. They weren't sending people off to college at Antioch either. People were going to school at Morgan, Maryland State.

J: How'd you happen to go to Antioch? What brought this about?

L: Well....

J: Did your dad have any say in it?

L: He had absolutely no say in it. It was my rebellion. I was not going to Hampton—

J: Rebellion against what specifically?

L: My father was very active with the Hampton Alumni Association. Several times a year we went off to [inaudible phrase] for alumni and people would always say, "Oh I know you're going to Hampton when you grow up." And I would say, "I'm not going to Hampton. I don't want to go to Hampton." And my father would make me apologize. And then he'd fuss all the way home, "They're going to think I'm putting the wrong ideas in your head. Of course you want to go to Hampton." And so my mother from Newport News, Newport News is right there at Hampton. In the summers she was working on her master's.

J: Am I looking at your mother and dad up here?

L: Yeah. And that's me in the middle.

J: Who's in the middle?

L: Me.

J: How old is your mother there?

L: I don't know.

J: How old are you there?

L: Five. My mother was working on her masters at Hampton and Daddy was [inaudible phrase] to take classes. But and then I was separated from my father. I was always my Daddy's little girl. I don't know. I loved my mother I'm sure but I always thank god that if he had to take one it

wasn't my dad. And so whenever I would see Daddy in the summer time was because he was coming down in my mind to go to a meeting at Hampton's. And so how some children had brother's and sister's to try to get the affection of their parents I was fighting against Hampton and so. I know it sounds weird but that's what was going on with me.

J: Okay you had a lot of choices.

L: But oh no [inaudible phrase]—

J: In schools like Antioch but why specifically Antioch?

L: The honor system, the co-op plan.

J: The co-op plan would've been very attractive.

L: Yeah the honor system. Well getting back to—I decided—I first of all on my father's side I was the only grandchild and my father's brother who was bachelor had passed away. And he let everything that he owned to me. A house and everything [inaudible phrase]. And it was understood that that money would be used to put me through college. So finance was not a problem. So I could choose any place I could into. And so between my junior and senior year I must've written 200 schools and gotten stacks and stacks of catalogues.

J: Who—which schools were in contention? Which half dozen or so appealed to you most? Other than Antioch.

L: Antioch was the only one I applied to.

J: Oh really?

L: That was the only one I wanted to go to.

J: Why? What had you heard about Antioch? So liberal. Very liberal school.

L: It's a liberal, very liberal. I liked that. I'd written to [Penn] State and they had this little thing in there about, "Students will not be allowed to have a car on campus during their first two years." Course I didn't have a car my whole—well Antioch's a five year school—my whole time in college but the fact that they said I couldn't have one. My father—I was talking with someone about this today about how children define their parents—my father was not the type of person that, "You can't, you can't, you can't, you can't." There was this invisible line here that I knew I better not cross. I don't know where that line [came from]—

J: You know where the can't was.

L: Right. I never heard it. I knew that invisible line. I didn't grow up with someone telling me, "You have to do this, you must be in." And I didn't see going off to college having someone told me that. And so when I got the catalogue from Antioch and they went into their honor systems that really appealed to me. And so I showed Daddy. He didn't think too much of the place but we went out there during Thanksgiving to look the place over. Well he was terribly into [that]. here it is November in Ohio and you see these long haired people walking around with sandals on [inaudible].

J: What year was this now?

L: This would've been in 51.

J: What was the size of the freshman class? Do you remember at Antioch?

L: It couldn't have been over a hundred I think.

J: Now did you ever hear that there were any reservations with respect to your being accepted by Antioch? Did they have any reservations at all about your being qualified because of where you went to school? The conditions?

L: No. The only person that ever expressed a concern about me going to Antioch and that concern was expressed after I was accepted and that was by Debra Barnhart. The superintendent's daughter. Debbie said, "You really think you can make it?" See strangely enough Debbie played a bass clarinet in high school and I'd played a bass clarinet in high school. We both went off to All-State band. The first year she sat in the first chair. The next year I sat in the first chair. It was that type of thing. Bot that we were close friends but she's the only one who made a remark. I didn't know I wasn't qualified.

J: I have a hunch Debbie wasn't being unkind.

L: No I don't think she was.

J: She's very blunt. And her mother is. But I've known Debbie since 1958. When she was what 15 years old and was in the band during the Charles County tercentenary celebration and my wife and I were in it. That's when we met her parents and I've interviewed her mother recently as I'm interviewing you now. Okay that's very interesting. Of the children, the young people at this point, that you went to school with as you look back who were the most—who were the best prepared academically in your graduation class? Who could have gone on to just about any college they wanted to go to?

L: Alright I graduated at the top of my class. There was one other person that qualified to graduate at the top and her name was Elaine Jenkins. She went to Morgan for two years then she dropped out got married. There were a number of others because we had a big fight about this

before graduation. 86 people graduated in that class. The largest class in the history of Pomonkey at that time and only two of us qualified to graduate with any type of honors. But someone had offered a scholarship and some other things for a few others if they graduated with honors and the Principal wanted to lower the standards. I don't know if I should talk about this.

J: Let's—if it happened, tell it.

L: And Elaine and I went marching into his office and we fussed and we fussed and we lost that fight—

J: Who are—what principal are you talking about now?

L: Charlie Coke. And, well I'm not going to call names of other people who were in that class. But they received awards and they've gone on to do well. But we were the ones with the A's and B's. You know you had to have a 3 point something to get one award and over a 3.3 to get another.

J: A 3 point being what?

L: A straight B average on a 4 point scale.

J: So your 4 points is all A's? Still is isn't it?

L: Mhm.

J: And what was yours.

L: I don't know. I believe about a 3.5.

J: Okay well that's not bad. Not that bad.

L: No. As far as grades went and things like that. Well it was only because of my father that I took the college board. I almost missed out on that. Because that wasn't something that was required of high school students to get into college as much as it is—well it's a must now. The white schools were asking for that but the black schools weren't and so the guidance counselors weren't pushing us to take the college board.

J: Do you remember how important the guidance counselors were to you? Were they helpful?

L: I bless her soul she's gone on but I remember sitting there in an interview. I wanted to go to the University of Chicago for grad school and I said I wanted to be a guidance counselor. Guy wanted to know why and I said, "Because I think they need good guidance counselors." "Why do you feel that?" "Mine wasn't very good." I loved her dearly but—

J: We're talking now about Pomonkey High School?

L: Yeah. But she was not the one who geared me to go to where I went to. She didn't do much to help my self-esteem because she always made comments that my friend Elaine and Veera had more on the ball than I did but I worked harder. Which I didn't believe was actually true.

J: Okay. Before you finished grade school what grades were considered to be part of the elementary school set up when you were in elementary school? 7 or 8?

L: 6.

J: 6? And then you went to what?

L: Junior High.

J: Junior High alright [inaudible phrase]. High school was what grades?

L:I seem to think it was 10, 11, 12 instead of 9, 10, 11, 12. I think it was 6:3:3.

J: Alright now you finished school before the middle schools were sliced into the system. I wonder if that has been a good thing?

L: I think it is.

J: Okay what was the purpose of it anyway?

L: Well it's a whole different developmental stage. Children in that those grades are completely different animals than elementary children.

J: What grades now are we talking about today in those?

L: Well in Charles County the middle schools are 6, 7, and 8 and Prince George's County they're 7 and 8. I like the 6, 7, and 8.

J: Well did your father finally accept your going to Antioch?

L: Yeah I think when I graduated.

J: When you graduates?

L: [Laughs] No I think he learned that it was a good school. But I don't think he was ever—as he said he prayed me through that school. I don't think he was ever completely comfortable.

J: Did—before you graduated from high school had you tentatively picked out a career for yourself? What did you want to do?

L: I wanted to be a mathematician.

J: What happened there? You were turned off somewhere along the route?

L: I'm not sure what happened. I don't think I received enough push. Because at that time it was just before the beginning of everything. It was just before the whole civil rights movement, you

know. It was just getting geared up. It was just before the Vietnam war. But it was just before women were fighting for their rights.

J: Boy talk about turbulence. Did the turbulence of these times have any noticeable impact on your graduation class? Think about it now.

L: At that period of time? No.

J: How were these young people accepting this?

L: I don't think—

J: Not seriously?

L: Not seriously? I'm not aware of it being a big impact.

J: About what percentage of your high school graduation group remained in Charles County? To earn their living here and to raise families here?

L: Hmm we had a class—we had a 25th class reunion several years back and a fantastic number of us were there. And on Friday's usually if I go the right time I run into a lot of people down at the supermarket. I would say a fair number of us. Some have moved on to other places of course.

J: Half possibly?

L: No less than half.

J: And of those who did not remain in Charles County do you have—

L: Now some have just moved across into Prince George's—

J: Still Southern Maryland people. I wonder what percentage of the graduates ended up working for the federal government? ...How important was that as a means of getting—

L: I would imagine a number of them have. I don't have any data to work with. I'm only guessing. I'm not in close contact with members of my class.

J: Perhaps as many as 25 percent?

L: Yeah I would say at least.

J: That's been a big thing here. What was your opinion of life as you saw it outside the campus at Antioch compared to what you had known here in Southern Maryland? What were your observations? What differences people wise, customs wise, traditions wise? ...That's a toughie.

L: I had been exposed to life outside of Charles County before I left. One of the things I took with me when I went to Antioch was a Charles County accent. Consequently I didn't talk for two years until I lost my Charles County accent. I don't know if I got it back.

J: I don't think so. It's gone it's a midwestern accent now.

L: There was this nice guy, I cannot remember his name, from Seattle, Washington. Every time I opened my mouth he said, "What did you say?" I was completely—

J: Seriously or just—?

L: Seriously. I was completely intimidated. So I didn't talk for a while. My first job, co-op job got a mountain top in new Hampshire. [A lot of people were] [inaudible phrase].

J: Mount Washington?

L: In New Hampshire right—

J: At the White Mountains?

L: Not too far up around [Peterville]. A little place called Greenfield, New Hampshire. We're up on Crotched Mountain rehabilitation center. I don't know I think that—I spent that whole quarter—wasn't anything else to do—trying to learn to talk.

J: And you really made an effort?

L: Oh yeah I mean I was completely embarrassed. I still my R's get mixed up. I know [inaudible phrase]—

J: I guess I should ask you this Lillian, but why were you embarrassed? Would you be now as a mature adult if you faced that situation?

L: Probably.

J: Well I can remember my grandmother a native of England when she was in her 60's saying how embarrassing it was for her to have this really wild north of England accent after all the years she spent in Canada and the United States she could not shake it off. And as soon as she opened her mouth you knew she was from some place in the British Isles. It was a very embarrassing thing for her but not to other members of the family. Okay that's interesting. Now what sort of speech patterns did your mother and dad bring into the household? Compared—comparing them with your contemporary speech, which is very good, excellent.

L: My father was a great speaker.

J: A public speaker? A lecturer?

L: Yeah. He had...from what I understand and from what others have said even while he was alive that he had a very—oh thank you—British way of speaking. But it's also a carryover from certain areas of Kentucky that still maintain a certain speech pattern. That coupled with the way he—like in college they called him Senator Parks and he was a member of the choir. But he his membership—he couldn't carry a note. He did all of the orations for the choir when they traveled around. He did the speaking. My mother I don't know how she spoke.

J: Where was your mother's background geographically?

L: Newport News.

J: Oh so she was a native of Newport News.

L: As far as I know. Her parents before that I think were from North Carolina. She spent a great deal of her growing up years in New York.

J: Do you have any idea Lillian, what the racial mix has been in your family on both sides?

L: Okay I can only guess. On my mother's side there's a lot of Indian blood. I have an uncle, he and his whole family have just moved over. They passed.

J: Oh really?

L: Uncle Nathaniel and his family. They—

J: And where do they live?

L: In a part of New Jersey. I think it was more his children. They passed over because I remember Uncle Nathaniel when I was growing up.

J: Now when you say passed in this case what do you mean?

L: They went from black to white.

J: Oh okay alright.

L: That's what I mean. I don't think people do that anymore. There's not a need for it but—

J: There's not the need but I think people still do it if they perceive a social economic advantage.

L: And on my father's side there is a branch in the family that passed also but those were cousins not in the immediate family.

J: Do you remember that Mayme Ransom had blue eyes? Do you remember her eyes?

L: Mhm.

J: Really something. And the Marbury's too.

L: I was—

J: Harold in particular.

L: I liked Mrs. Ransom, Ms. Ransom a lot but when I was getting ready to go into fourth grade and I know it now because some mothers have mentioned it to me. I was scared to death of her. Well Daddy sort of made sure I went to the other fourth grade teacher.

J: A disciplinarian was she?

L: Yeah—

J: [Demanding], no nonsense, straight down the line. For your own good.

L: Mhm.

J: Yeah I'm sure. I wonder how—

L: At the time I don't know—do you know where the parsonage is for Metropolitan?

J: No.

L: You know where the church is?

J: Yeah I do.

L: Well on the same side the road just further up on the other side of the old Pomonkey High School there's a brick house. That's the parsonage.

J: Roughly across from Alonzo [inaudible]?

L: Gerard Myers [account]. Alright right beyond that road. Her house was across the road from that.

J: I guess her family owned quite a bit of land along that road. So Lillian do you feel that your having being accepted by Antioch you were a success at Antioch and you graduated from Antioch with a pretty good academic record?

L: By the time I graduated I was making straight A's. I had some rough times in there. It wasn't smooth sailing the whole 5 years. I flunked a course in my first quarter.

J: But anyway during the final year you had pulled yourself up to a better than standard. How has that affected you? What did it do for your ego? Did you feel ready to do anything, go anywhere, be as good as anybody? What did Antioch do for you?

L: It didn't do that for me. I don't think anything has done that for me. I'm quite aware of the fact that I have a—and don't ask me where it comes from cuz I don't know if I could analyze all that. I would do my best as a counselor and I've been in counseling myself. I have a big inferiority complex.

J: Doesn't show.

L: No one else is aware of it. I think I was in counseling for about 3 years I think my counselor was aware of it. I don't know. I don't feel that I'm an original thinker. I don't feel that I'm anything like my father was.

J: And yet you know if he had taken the same path that you took he might have fallen flat on his face.

L: Maybe, maybe not.

J: Give yourself that. Give yourself that at least you know. And I've got to believe that somewhere up there he's a pretty darn proud daddy. He better be. He better be because that was a tough school and I'm sure that the competition you faced there was, is good as any in the liberal arts colleges.

L: It's no doubt [about that].

J: Of North America. My cousin went to Oberlin. I went to Michigan State. My daughter went to Beloit. So we have kind of a feel for education in that part of the country. If you had gone to Morgan State or Hampton do you feel you would be a different person today? It's a toughie and I'm trying to make a point.

L: I think so. I think my whole value system would be different.

J: I am inclined to agree with you but I can't say I can't.

L: I think I'm an extremely liberal person. I was half way liberal when I went there. But I think I'm an extremely liberal person. I think I'm a very well read person. Nah I take that back I read a lot of junk too.

J: Well [inaudible] strictly for advancement. But there's also the serious side.

L: And I think for a while there I felt that I was a very wishy-washy person because I could see this point of view and then on the other hand I saw this point of view. Now I'm finding a little bit as I get older I'm beginning to form a point of view.

J: Your peripheral vision is not quite so peripheral.

L: Correct.

J: You're zeroing in—

L: I find that there's some concept I'm having a little bit of trouble with and I'm beginning to wonder if I'm getting old and set in my ways.

J: Maybe. That happens I think. I think when we get older. Because I think as we go down through the years there's certain things we have looked at and thought about and tried that we've shoved aside as not being acceptable. And you finally reach a point in life where you're doing the comfortable things and you appreciate the comfortable things that have finally set themselves out.

L: My parents—

[Tape Interruption]

J: Okay Lillian who was this Hildegard that you mentioned a few minutes ago while the tape was off? What role did she?

L: My dead sister.

J: Oh really?

L: Yeah.

J: When did she come along what were the circumstances?

L: She was here before I was.

J: Is that right?

L: Yeah my daddy's [second] daughter.

J: ...Daddy's daughter [inaudible phrase]. In Charles County?

L: In Charles County [inaudible]. I think it was over around La Plata visiting this little one room school house and a teacher was teaching something to the sixth graders, you know, everyone was in the same room. And this little third grader kept putting a hand up and the teacher wouldn't call on her. She kept trying to answer the question and finally daddy sort of got the teacher's attention. "[Call on the little girl]." And she did and the child answered the question and did the work. Daddy took an interest in her and kept track of her progress. Then I guess he talked to the family and everything. She was the youngest child in the family. Her father had passed away.

J: A La Plata area family?

L: Yeah the Johnson's. And I think there's still some relatives over there. The Wallace's, the Johnson's, and all of them.

J: Yeah you're right. I interviewed one of the Johnson's.

L: Well anyway Dad took this interest and well by the time they built the Pomonkey High School. I don't if it's the one that burned down or what. But he made sure at that time he had to find some place to live and made sure she found someplace to live so she could go on and complete her education. And I think she finally was able to go to [Bowie]. And she was out teaching and daddy was over in La Plata one day, well no one had a telephone so messages were just passed on by word of mouth. Someone stopped and said, "Mrs. Johnson's very ill and wants to see you right away." And so Daddy made it over to the Johnson's house wherever that was and he happened to get there just about an hour before she passed away. And she said to him something to the effect of, "Mr. parks you've always taken an interest in my baby. I want you to continue to be a father to her." Well Daddy of course said, "Sure will Mrs. Johnson and everything." Well Hildegard took that word seriously. Daddy said in the very beginning he didn't take it that serious. But Hildegard did and she always referred to Daddy as "Daddy Parks." He—

J: About how old was this child when her mother passed away?

L: Oh she was grown. She was out. I would put her in her early 20's. But she always had this affection. She always went to him for guidance and things that—in fact before she got married she came brought the guy over got Daddy's permission. He always said, "I don't think my junior daughter's gonna do that." But by the time I came along which was a long time after that. Hildegard had been married quite a while by then. Before Daddy even got married. And of course when Daddy got married that was "Mommy Parks" and so I was the baby sister. And she most definitely was a sister. She watched over me. The last time I saw my mother, you know they have these silly rules children are not allowed in hospitals. She took me to the hospital and my mother waved to me out the window. Hildegard was always there and we were very, very close.

J: What did Hildegard do with most of her life?

L: She was a Principal in Prince George's County.

J: Oh, oh so she stayed with education.

L: Oh yes she retired soon after Daddy passed away.

J: Those Johnson's if I remember right and if she is of that family lived over near where the La Plata nursing home is today somewhere near that old radio communication—

L: Yeah somewhere around in there.

J: I remember one of the Johnson men. I guess he was 80 when I interviewed him 5 years ago. He went to that school in La Plata. Dropped out early and I said, "Why, why." He said, " I reached the point where I just think they were teaching you [inaudible phrase]." Got a job and hired himself out as a chauffeur to Mr. Bowling who was running the hotel in La Plata. And this goes back to the late 1920's a pretty good picture of what it was like to be a young black person in La Plata with very little education. But he made it. He did very well. He did very well so. And his children today have really done well for themselves.

L: Good.

J: The whole Johnson clan.

L: Well she was a principal and her husband, well Martel was still alive. He started the only black undertaking establishment in that part of the county.

J: Do you recall did your dad ever discuss the possibility of integration becoming reality here in Charles County? Did he discuss such things with you?

L: No. But I'm pretty sure that was utmost in his mind. I know he had his name written into a bill. I think at the time he was the only person in the state that had ever had his name written into a bill that passed the assembly in Annapolis. When they formed the human relations committee it

stated that he be the first chairman. He was quite an integrationist. And I think as far as talking about integration goes—I he many times, you know, before he passed away. Dr. King's marches and everything he always expressed a wish that he'd been able to take a part in those. But he had his own little slice of the pie here.

J: Yeah, yeah he must have. What year did your father pass away?

L: 69.

J: In 69. I'll get that down later. And how old was he at his death?

L: 73, 74, somewhere in the area.

J: Okay was he ill long? He must've been a pretty durable person? Did he have any ill health at all?

L: Only at the end.

J: Pardon?

L: Only at the end.

J: Oh okay.

L: He had cancer of the pancreas.

J: Where is he interred? At Metropolitan?

L: No, no he's in Newport News in Hampton. His cemetery's in Hampton next to my mother.

J: I see. He could've been buried in Arlington couldn't he?

L: Maybe.

J: Did he ever discuss his overseas experiences with you?

L: No.

J: No war stories for a daughter.

L: No.

J: Do you know what he did in the army at all? What sort of—

L: He went in I guess as everyone does as a Private. Three days later he was promoted to a Master Sergeant. He was in charge of supplies. I had a little newspaper article around about [Dad that's mentioned in there.] Don't know where it is right now but.

J: Find it if you can. [Inaudible phrase].

L: Anything I picked up—I had a picture of him in his uniform. [Things that I] picked up he was quite a pacifist. I don't think he—I did have an uncle on the other side who was a conscientious objector during World War I and spent time in prison because of it. He wasn't—he would not allow a gun in the house. Not even a toy gun.

J: Did your father go into the service from Hampton?

L: No. He was at teaching principal job over on the Eastern Shore.

J: Oh okay alright. At that time how much college background did he have when he started teaching on the Eastern Shore?

L: He was a college graduate.

J: Okay. A regular baccalaureate degree?

L: Mhm.

J: Okay well they must've done a darn good job down at Hampton.

L: Oh yeah in fact one of the stories he told of the dedication, and Mr. Cain was supposed to be taping that speech but something happened to the tape so there's no record of that speech and probably the one speech I really listened to him. He was offered the presidency of Grambling. You know the black school down in Louisiana? What happened was—

J: I might of heard of that?

L: Well football maybe. That's how Grambling was—

J: Probably.

L: Booker T. Washington graduated from Hampton. Hampton sent him out to [form] Tuskegee. They wanted Daddy to do the same thing with Grambling. But he by the time—it was way back in the early 30's—he decided no that he would stay here in Charles County. [Inaudible phrase]. I tell Daddy that I probably never would've been born.

J: True. True. How'd he feel about Charles County as a whole? Was he comfortable here? Contented pretty much?

L: Dad said [inaudible] had to be third generation before you were accepted around here.

J: [Oh yeah I can believe it].

L: I don't feel that. I never—I was 12 years old before I heard anyone who referred to my father by his first name. I—my mother even called him Mr. Parks. I always felt my father—his job was his life. I don't remember anything social about my father besides what he did. Of course there was the Elks, the Masons, the American Legion, church on Sunday type thing. But the school

system was his life. I can remember him getting up from the dinner table on Sundays going to pick up a teacher, um.

J: Mary Neal ever tell you the story of his meeting her at the train station?

L: Well he met everyone who came here.

J: And taking her to her first school over on Jacksontown Road?

L: No she hasn't told me but I've heard the likes of it from Minnie.

J: Yeah that old gal from Pennsylvania who I guess had never been out of the state before. Her first view of a Southern Maryland black school way out in nowhere and still is. [I think she cried a little bit].

L: I can imagine.

J: And Bertha Williams.

L: Oh yeah, yeah.

J: She came from Ohio, near Columbus and she tells on the tape the story of when she felt she wasn't getting enough support from the school system. After school she walked from her school there in La Plata and went to the county building and demanded to see Mr. Gwynn. And she thought by seeing Mr. Gwynn she was going as far up as she could get. And apparently she was not intimidated at all.

L: Nothing intimidates Bertha. She would intimidate God.

J: Yeah she's really something I'll tell you.

L: Course you talked to her before her stroke.

J: Yeah and Mercedes I talked to her before she fell. Broken ankle?

L: She's fine now.

J: Good. And I talked to Lena Dyson before she—there's just not too much left of her now.

L: Well Hildegard and Mrs. Key were best friends so they were contemporaries in that age level. But Hildegard was something else. They used to tell me about how Daddy used to have his teacher's meetings on a Saturday and she would always—he was always long with it. And got to be about 3 o'clock in the afternoon they want to get out of here and he's say, "I'm just going 5 more minutes." And then he'd talk another half hour and he said one time someone snuck an alarm clock in that's going 5 more minutes so the alarm went off.

J: Where were these meetings held?

L: Oh I guess at one of the schools.

J: Did he ever have an office over here at Pomonkey?

L: Oh yeah when I was there his office was down the hall. [Inaudible phrase].

J: Now what did the kids think of—did the relationship between you and the other students suffer any at all because of your being his daughter?

L: I'm sure it did. Yeah to a degree.

J: You think they were a little more deferential?

L: No, no, no, no. I don't think they were anymore. I probably—I was basically going through school somewhat shy around my peers. And I'm sure—in fact I know it was—the shyness was sometimes interpreted as being stuck up.

J: It can be.

L: Because my mother had passed away we always had a house keeper which some people interpreted as having it made. We never thought of it that way but you know. That type of thing. But I don't think I was ever snubbed or anything and I had friends. But I was always shy around my peers.

J: And you may even have intimidated them a little bit just because of who you were. You know, gee Mr. Parks' daughter. Without lifting a finger without opening your mouth.

L: You know sometimes I know I sent a—and that's probably why I'm not teaching in Charles County now—I spent a great deal trying to get away from being Mr. Park's daughter. A new teacher would come into the system and I'd wind up in her class. "Oh are you Mr. Parks' daughter?" And things like I always eat—I go off to [inaudible] down at Maryland State [inaudible]. "Oh are you J.C. Parks' daughter?" That type of thing.

J: Do you find it a little bit discomforting?

L: Yes. Very much so. I ran into once at Antioch. I thought I'd got away.

J: How could that be?

L: There was a black family that was connected with the college and we got to talking one day and they said, "Oh by the way are you any relation to?" See before integration there was this whole network of blacks that traveled around. They knew everyone everywhere because there were no motels so you stayed with so and so down in Greensborough and you stayed this place with so and so and you went to eat here as you were travelling. There was this whole network of people.

J: That's interesting. Yeah I have heard about that before with—

L: Oh you have?

J: I can see how it came about.

L: Yeah. I remember Daddy went to something in Atlanta and we stayed with this family for a week. You know it was all done through....

J: What experiences did you have as a child in Charles County that you found disquieting to say the least in dealing with the white community? Any ever that upset you, made you mad?

L: I didn't deal with the white community.

J: Okay.

L: They didn't exist.

J: Okay. Now—

L: And the ones that I came in contact with were always [inaudible phrase]. The Barnhart's, or the Martins, or what have you. Mr. Martin [growing] a business [inaudible phrase]. But everyday life I didn't run into whites.

J: Was this a conscientious thing?

L: No.

J: Your paths just didn't have a cross?

L: No. We didn't go to school together. We didn't go to church together. We didn't [inaudible] together.... The [Shies] lived across the road. Take that back. And they came over used the phone. She was a seamstress and so she sewed for us. And then Mr. Murphy who had the Post Office up the road. He read your mail before you got it. But you know he was just a character [from] and then you mentioned the cabin on the corner. I just remembered there was a black only door and I wasn't going in there anyway.

J: That's right. That place has been there all of your life.

L: Yeah.

J: It's a historic place. I took pictures of it.

L: With the colored only door on the side?

J: I didn't see that is it still there?

L: Yeah the door's still there but I don't—I think—I've been in there once. There was this man that wanted to play chess with me one time. And [we] had a chess—

J: Oh okay. [Inaudible phrase].

L: Nah every time I've [sat there] I just think about that door. [Inaudible sentence]. Nor have I been in that other place that—across from [inaudible]—because I remember that was a white only place. And of course it's a different store now but for some reason I just don't go in there.

J: So way back there there is a—you reject maybe even subconsciously.

L: Yes. Of course my first two years of teaching was at Walters Mitchell in La Plata. It was during an election year and all the kids in my class had a [Wallace button].

J: Oh really?

L: That was [an experience].

J: Yeah. Yeah you would've been pretty [inaudible]. Gee. And you don't mean Henry Wallace though?

L: No. George.

J: Oh the other Wallace. I don't know why I—that shows you where [I came from].

L: No you was back too far.

J: I went back too far. I was thinking—

L: No George Wallace.

J: Well he's done a couple of bad [inaudible] too.

L: But he hadn't done them at that point.

J: No.

L: But no I didn't—I never felt discrimination when [I've lived here]. So it wasn't something I felt. I was quite comfortable in my society.

J: That's interesting and Lillian it's not a new thing. I've gotten this several times yes from a few of the retired black teachers who were so tied up in the black community and so busy as teachers because their responsibilities really went far beyond the classroom. And that's something that a lot of people don't realize today. In the 20's and 30's and 40's your average black teacher was expected to play a pretty significant role in that neighborhood. In the black community.

L: [Inaudible phrase] and Sunday school—

J: Yeah and every one of them was a counselor and every one of them was a, an aide a family friend and I would guess that the average black teacher knew more about what was going on in some of those homes than even the families themselves. When those children came to school there was a communication right there in how they dressed, their attention span, the condition of their health, and a lot of things that told that teacher what was going on in that child's home. So when you have talked to a couple of dozen of the elderly black teachers you get a pretty dog

gone complete picture of what life was like. Now yours was different. Your life was as far removed in every way from the majority of black household practices, philosophies, and procedures. You may have had as much of a problem fully comprehending what life was like for the average black family as some of the white people. So that's something else again. That's a whole new world. How many—and I'm beginning to see something else here Lillian too and that is this: that here in the Pomonkey Marshall Hall area there was a segment of black society in Charles County that was unique. It was self-contained pretty much. They had a heritage. They had a history here. These families were solid. Most of them were agriculture people. They did not move around very much and I would say for at least three generations a half a dozen of black families in this community remained here and became the core of the type of society that resulted in the Pomonkey High School just among other things. And you have going way back Mayme Ransom's family on both sides. I forget what her mother's name was. Thomas maybe?

L: Was it Mayme's middle name? [Inaudible phrase].

J: But anyway you know think about it. The Keys, and the Slater's, and the Marbury's, and I guess Thomas's, and what were two or three of the other prominent?

L: Butler.

J: Butler's and where else in Charles County did you have as active a masonic lodge? Black masonic as the Beehive. So there was that and it was the church.

L: Dad was one of the founding fathers of that.

J: Yeah so over and over again you see the same half dozen to 8 black families deeply involved in education, the church, and the lodge. And that Eastern Star group there was a very active women's organization. But I have to be careful when I'm interviewing someone like [Harold Marbury] and I found out who his first cousins were. It's a good thing I've already talked to him. Like Pearl [Purey] who taught our kids at Port Tobacco and the Keys. They are really pretty closely related. Only you Parks can't claim any kinship with these local families. [Inaudible phrase].

L: [And the Washington thing].

J: Yep and the Cain's.

L: The Cain's.

J: Yeah that's right.

L: Have you talked to Mr. [Garrett]?

J: No.

L: He's in and out of the hospital so [you ought] [inaudible].

J: Where is his home?

L: Right next to James Washington.

J: Oh is it? I wonder why he didn't mention him.

L: Could be he was [in hospital back then].

J: Oh what's his background?

L: He taught at the old Bel Alton High School. He went to [inaudible phrase]. He came here from—he grew up in Oklahoma. Went to Hampton and came here.

J: Garrett I'll try to keep that in the back of my mind.

L: He probably came a little earlier than Mr. Washington. You notice there're a lot of people who either went to Hampton or came from Kentucky. You know, Mr. Washington's wife's father and my father were classmates back in Lexington. Mr. Garrett went to Hampton. Do you know Anna White?

J: No.

L: She taught at the community college for a number of years. In the business department. She was my father's secretary.

J: Anna White?

L: Mhm.

J: She still alive?

L: Oh yes. She just—she retired on disability about 2 years ago. And—

J: How long was she his secretary?

L: I don't know several years. Maybe 2 or 4. Then she went on to teach at the community college. Well I don't what she did between that and the community college.

J: Did she teach in the public school system too do you know?

L: I can't remember her teaching. I'm not saying she didn't do it but that doesn't ring a bell with me.

J: [Inaudible phrase].

L: He taught in [college] all the time. I keep telling her that he doesn't remember it.

J: Do you remember your dad's attitude toward the first months of the first couple years of integration? How did he feel about it? Was he a very [introspective] person?

L: [Introspective] he never shut up. He talked his head off. I mean—

J: Well was there some exuberance there?

L: Now you have to realize when the bulk of it happened I wasn't here.

J: Okay yeah you would have missed—

L: I missed all the fun.

J: You would have missed it yeah.

L: I went away it wasn't integrated. I came back it was.

J: Yeah. Did he correspond—did he write to you at all when you were at Oberlin?

L: At Antioch?

J: Yeah I mean Antioch yeah.

L: We started writing then I stopped writing to him because he would share my letters.

J: To whom?

L: Well I knew he shared them with Mr. and Mrs. Cain and I didn't appreciate that. 'Cause he was upset about something I wrote him. See I went through a whole world explosion when I went to Antioch. I was exposed to ideas. That was the first time I read what was it? First quarter on campus I read Freud's *Future of an Illusion* or *The Illusion of the Future? Future of an Illusion* and in that book he had this one concept that God was created in the image of man. I had never heard anything so outrageous in my whole life.

J: Well I guess not. Did your dad know what you were reading?

L: My father was very well read. I would bring people home from college and wondered how in the world am I gonna make it. I'd bring them through the door and I didn't see them again till it was time to go out because Daddy kept them entertained the whole time. He knew everything about everything. I don't know anyone who knew as much as my father. You know on the phone he would say, "Tell me about these friends you're bringing." He'd want me to tell him if they were white or black. And I would say, "What difference does it make?" It didn't make any difference but he wanted to know. And it never made any difference and they would be up till 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning talking with him. I'd fall asleep.

J: Yeah. How'd they like it?

L: They loved him. He knew about stuff I didn't even think he had any concept of.

J: Did he do quite a bit of reading that had nothing to do with his job just a broadening type?

L: Yeah because he didn't sleep very much. He would do a lot of reading.

J: What did you and your dad do after your mother passed away to have fun? Did he take you places? Did you take him places? Were there outings and things that the two of you did together that were fun type thing? Did you go to the theater together? For example. Did he ever take you to the zoo?

L: I don't remember. You know, you think of—you think of parents taking their children to nice children type things. I don't remember. I do remember going to the movies with him several times. I remember movies I saw. I saw *Imitation of Life* with him and I saw one movie about the Holocaust. It was way back in the 50's and you know that wasn't a very well accepted concept of what had happened in Germany during that period of time. But I don't remember doing fun—my father wasn't a fun type person that I remember like that. We didn't go to the zoo and things. But he took me—

J: There was nothing he did to sort of unwind?

L: No.

J: Huh.

L: He worked 24 hours a day. He was a workaholic. Course you know there was always the—I'm pretty sure you know there was a side of him I didn't know. my father was quite determined that. I'm sure he was a normal person. But I did not see that side of him. And I'm pretty sure he received some pressure from maybe my mother's side and maybe even some relatives on his side, "What are you doing? No man like you trying to raise that little girl?" But he was determined he was gonna raise me and there wasn't gonna be an evil stepmother in the house. But I'm sure that he had companions and I know as I got older that he had companions.

J: Was there any other romantic figure in his life after your mother passed away?

L: Yeah.

J: Anyone that he could've been serious about?

L: Yeah, yeah. Could've been but I don't know. There were ones I tried to hook him up with and then ones he seemed to be interested in. And of course it was always a standing joke where's he leave his pipe. He was a cigar smoker and a pipe smoker and every now and then the pipe would come up missing and then two days later it would show up again. And so we always would speculate with [inaudible] who was one of the housekeepers where'd he leave his pipe this time. I know ladies chased him because he would always fuss about that. "I don't see what they see in me you know chasing an old man." But from what ladies have since told me now that I'm an adult that he was a—they found him fascinating. He had a lot of them. And there was, you know, others I knew about once I got out of high school. I guess he was a little more open about things. There was this one lady in Connecticut that he correspond with and one in Indianapolis. In fact the one in Indianapolis I was a little jealous of her because he took his first plane trip out to see her. For some reason I just didn't like that lady she looked too old.

J: You did meet her?

L: Oh yeah. And she knew I didn't like her so she played up to Hildegard. Now but his social life and my life did not. You know it used to be that parents didn't argue in front of the children. Well he was of the age where you didn't socialize in front of the children. That would not have been proper.

J: How did your dad get along with most of the Superintendents of Schools? Did he have a favorite 1 or 2? Was there any way of you telling how he was getting along with people that he had to work very closely with?

L: As far as I can tell he got along. I did notice and maybe you can help me out because somewhere I don't remember exactly who was superintendent when he retired. It must have been Barnhart. That would've been about the—

J: In 60?

L: [6]1.

J: [6]1?

L: Debbie was still around—

J: Yeah, yeah see yeah Clarence Paul Barnhart would still have been—

L: Okay I—

J: Until I think 64.

L: I picked up—Daddy didn't know this but I wouldn't mention it to him. My father had a certain way of carrying himself that—did you ever meet him?

J: No. No I never did.

L: You were around.

J: I well we moved here in 58. And I don't recall—I must have seen him somewhere.

L: He ran for county commissioners in the early 60's.

J: Well I'll [bet you that's when we ran into him]. Well we—

L: But he had a certain way of carrying himself. He wasn't a tall person. He had a certain dignity about him. As I said everyone called him Mr. Parks. I remember once a Mr. McDonnell—

J: Mr. [Cheverly] McDonnell from La Plata.

L: Yeah. He had this garage and one of the mechanics was working on Daddy's car. And Mrs. McDonnell was talking to Daddy and, "J.C. this, J.C. that" and a mechanic came up and said,

"Mr. J.C." to Daddy. You know he was that type of person. I started this conversation I forgot what the question was. I lost my train of thought.

J: Well how your dad was getting along with—

L: Oh, oh now I remember. I—

J: [And your figures] [inaudible]

L: Okay now I know what I was—what the point I was trying to make. My father always came across to me as a very strong individual. But I began to notice, I guess maybe a year or two before he retired, when he would be talking to Mr. Barnhart on the telephone, "Yes sir, no sir, yes sir, yes sir, uh huh, uh huh, uh huh, yes sir." I said, "Daddy why are you afraid of Mr. Barnhart." He says, "I'm not afraid of Mr. Barnhart." And I know we went through this several times because I kept picking up, "Yes sir, yes sir." And that was completely out of character for my father. And I think finally after I brought it up so many times he stopped and looked at it. I think he retired pretty soon after that.

J: Did he ever mention Mr. Gwynn at all?

L: Mhm.

J: Who [it] was superintendent of schools.

L: But I can't remember particulars about that. Yes his name is a part of my, you know—

J: Oh yeah it must be. I'm just wondering who the very first superintendent of schools was that your dad worked with or for. And I just—I don't know. Somebody like Mayme Ransom—

L: I wanna turn that off just a second.

J: Yeah sure.

[Tape Interruption]

J: Lillian we agree that your dad's life was a very difficult one here and to be successful in it he did not dare align himself clearly with any one faction or other in the county. Whether we're talking about politics, economic differences, or racial differences. As I understand it he had to be his own person. And probably the fellow lived a rather lonely life. And was inexpressive even within the bounds of this house. How would you describe your father as a father as a human being and a school system administrator? What sort of made him tick? Whatever it was it helped him do a very difficult job very well for 41 years.

L: Well my dad was a workaholic and he believed that you had a job to do you did it and you did it to the best of your abilities. I remember he was still alive my first year and a half of teaching. Somewhere along about the middle of my first year of teaching I wanted to take a day off.

J: Here in Charles County?

L: Here in Charles County. [Nice] how I got this job in Charles County. [Big disaster] of my life. But anyway I remember waking up that morning and I faked a cold like I never faked one before because I knew dad in 43 years had probably taken off two days and he very seldom ever took a vacation. One day I came in [reeling] about something that happened in school and he looked me straight in the eye and said, "Are you trying to teach those children something?" And what he meant was no matter what they're doing it's your job to impart knowledge to them. [That's what you applied for]. I think he had his eyes on the goal. I think he stated that in one of those papers he had originally he worked toward it and certain things happened in between but—

J: How would he feel do you think about the way things have come about to where they are now?

L: I think he'd be somewhat disappointed. I think—I don't know. He was an integrationist. I think he also grew up in a segregated society and he managed to function through it. But I think now we've sort of gone beyond integration and coming back to something that wasn't half as good as segregation was when we had it. I think he would be a little upset.

J: Broken hearted.

L: Might be.

J: That bad.

L: I think but he struck me as having the ability to change with the times. I don't think he was in 1961 the same person he was in 1950 or the same person he was in 1930 or 1919 for that matter. And I'm not sure when I first left him—when I left him in 19—when he left us in 1969 that if he had continued to live if he would be the same person he was then. So I don't know. He never struck me as being rigid. I mean when I came into his life he was old enough at that point to be set in his ways but he never struck me as ever being set in his ways. He always seemed to be open to new ideas except maybe in certain areas. And I think he was a very moral person. I think he would be terribly upset with the moral of today's society.

J: [Disorderly society].

L: I know there was even back in the 60's certain things coming on TV. And things weren't that liberal on TV during those days but anything hinting that sort of liberal attitude towards sex everything like that it's best to turn it off.

J: What was—what were his political leanings or affiliations?

L: He was Republican.

J: And had been for some time?

L: Yeah. But see he also grew up in the era when the Republican party was the party of Lincoln. This is also I guess close enough to the south where southern democrats that wasn't necessarily a party for blacks either.

J: No. That's the way it was then. That's the way it was. So he was a pretty strong person but not inflexible.

L: No he was not inflexible.

J: And able to discern the temper of the times so to speak. And at least meet them half way.

L: I think so. I think in some ways he might have come across as being very rigid and very opinionated and stuck in his ways—

J: Was that maybe because he appeared to be.

L: Yeah.

J: The way that you say he carried himself with some rigidity and with dignity.

L: Mhm. He was a very kind person. He loved children. Children seemed to love him. Little children.

J: Was he a religious man?

L: I think he was. He got on his knees and prayed every night. We read the bible every Sunday. Together we went to church. However there was a period of time in my self-righteousness I felt sure he was going to hell. I can't exactly remember why but then—

J: Yeah why? How on earth?

L: That was during the period when I thought I was gonna grow up and be a missionary. But—

J: How'd you stray off that narrow path? What woke you up?

L: I went to Antioch. No but Daddy was a staunch Baptist going to a Methodist church. It sort of irked some of the Methodist ministers at Metropolitan. They always wanted him to convert.

J: Oh he didn't join?

L: No he was an affiliate member but he remained a Baptist. He promised his mother he would always be a Baptist and so he died a Baptist.

J: Who were some of you father's closest friends in the county?

L: It's hard to think of the, you know, dad as having friends, buddies. I would say Mr. [Hull] was a close acquaintance.

J: What did [Hull] do what was his job?

L: He was the county agent. It's hard to say—it's hard for me to visualize the social aspects of my father. I don't remember. I can't—most of the dinners we had here when company came in they were professional acquaintances.

J: An extension of his business day?

L: Yeah and the Butler's around—Daddy lived with the Butler's for I guess 10, 20 years.

J: Here in the Pomonkey area?

L: Yeah right around. Eddy Butler and Leonard Butler. That whole family. I don't know if you ever—if you knew Mrs. Lucas.

J: No but I wish I had.

L: Yeah she's now moved to Ohio. Daddy lived with the family and I guess they came as close to being social friends.

J: How did your mother—

[Tape Ends]