

Transcript of OH-00052

Julia Mudd Cox Totten

Interviewed by
John Wearmouth

on

Month Day, Year February 11, 1991

Accession #: 2005.160; OH-00052

Transcribed by Shannon Neal on July 23, 2020

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The Stories of Southern Maryland Oral History Transcription Project has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH): Stories of Southern Maryland. <https://www.neh.gov/>



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Format

Interview available as MP3 file or WAV: ssoh00052 (1:03:50)

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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

Rural conditions
Agriculture
Antique and classic cars
Education
County school systems
Office management
Charles County Board of Education

Tags

F.B. Gwynn
Ryon's Store

Transcript

John Wearmouth [JW]: This is John Wearmouth interviewing Julia Cox Mudd Totten.

Julia Mudd Cox Totten [JT]: Julia Mudd Cox Totten.

JW: Julia Mudd Cox Totten. Near White Plains at her home on US 301. How far are we from where the railroad crosses 301? The spur to Indian Head? We're south of that.

JT: Maybe a little better than a mile.

W: So we're in what has always been considered White Plains would you say?

JT: Right.

JW: And you were born across the road from here?

JT: No. I was born down in the Pomfret area on 227 called the Old Farm.

JW: Oh for heaven's sakes okay.

JT: But I only lived there three months. I was born in September.

JW: That's a development now isn't it?

JT: Yes.

JW: Called the Old Farm development.

JT: And then in January I moved up here and so I've lived here all my life except for this three months.

JW: Okay and your father's—your father's name was?

JT: Arthur Cox.

JW: Arthur Cox.

JT: James Arthur Cox.

JW: And he married a Ms.—

JT: Anna Cecilia Mudd.

JW: Okay. And there have been down through the years several Mudd families in this neighborhood.

JT: Right.

JW: Which of the Mudd families are still living here that you are related to?

JT: None of them.

JW: None of them. Okay and the Mudd's over in the Pomfret area, Ms. Virginia's family and Jerry, you're kin to them?

JT: Slightly.

JW: Okay slightly and way, way back.

JT: Way back.

JW: Okay how many brothers and sisters did you have?

JT: They were six from my Daddy's second marriage. He was married before he married my mother and he had three children. He lost his wife way back there during the first World War with the flu. And when my mother married my Daddy he had three children but they're all dead now.

JW: Okay was this your mother's first marriage?

JT: My mother's first marriage yes.

JW: Okay how many of those children are alive today?

JT: Five of us.

JW: Five. And the date of your birth is what?

JT: September the 26th, 1917.

JW: Okay so you were born practically during the flu epidemic.

JT: I guess.

JW: Yeah lucky to survive. Do you by any chance remember? Oh you can't I was gonna discuss when the spur was run into Indian Head from the main line here. Well you were you were so young then.

JT: No.

JW: Well the main reason that I'm talking to you today is your connection with the Charles County Public Schools system. I've been doing interviews with retired school teachers and principals and administrators for a long time. Black and white. And I've just—I'm well through one with Barnsley Warfield right now. And will go over to see him Wednesday at his home in Benedict and discuss at that time the history of Benedict. The first time I did—when I got started interviewing him we concentrated on his early life in Benedict and then his career in the school system. So I've got some pretty fresh memories of what he went through. And he was in the system at a pretty critical time. And you saw some pretty exciting things too didn't you?

JT: Yes that's right.

JW: Where did you go to elementary school?

JT: For several years I went to the little one room school here in White Plains.

JW: What was the name of that?

JT: White Plains.

JW: Just the White Plains Elementary?

JT: Just the White Plains, right.

JW: You never went to Winkler's [Shop]?

JT: No.

JW: On Turkey Hill Road. This would've been—okay.

JT: [This wasn't my time]. And then the tornado hit in 26, 1926.

JW: Right.

JT: And then they built the school in La Plata where the—it's now the government building behind the courthouse. And I graduated there under Mr. Milton Somers in 1934.

JW: Who were some of your best friends in grade school here at White Plains? Kids that you saw day in and day out.

JT: Gee I can't remember it was such a small enrollment at the whole school it was only a one room school.

JW: Yeah a dozen or so.

JT: I guess it was more than that.

JW: Who was your first teacher? Do you remember?

JT: No. Ms. Eunice Burdette taught here at White Plains.

JW: Okay and this is the grandson of hers next door to you is it? Or a nephew?

JT: They're related somehow. Yeah I think it's her nephew lives next door to me.

JW: Yeah I think you're right because I interviewed [inaudible].

JT: Mrs. Eunice Burdette and I believe Caroline Thompson Cooksey.

JW: Okay is that school—

JT: There was a Ms. Dickey.

JW: Ms. Dickey?

JT: Ms. Dickey?

JW: I've heard that name before. Did she end up over in the Indian Head area teaching?

JT: I can't remember.

JW: Is that school still standing?

JT: No.

JW: Okay what side of the road was it on in terms of today's highway?

JT: It was on the left of—

JW: Of the west side or north side I guess.

JT: The left side of 301. Right by the railroad tracks. It would be right up their behind Lowes.

JW: Okay that [narrows it] down. Okay it was just down there alright.

JT: To the right of the railroad tracks.

JW: Did you ever ride the train into La Plata?

JT: No.

JW: From White Plains? Never did? It was running during all those years wasn't it? When you were in school there you must've heard it go by once and a while.

JT: I guess I did. I can't remember.

JW: [Inaudible] the old whistle made quite a noise. So when—what did your father do for a living? How did he keep the family going?

JT: Well he was a carpenter and a farmer.

JW: Which was the most important source of income for him? Did you ever know?

JT: I guess the farming.

JW: Did you ever help out on the farm as a little girl?

JT: Oh yes. I like outdoors better than indoors.

JW: Oh did you?

JT: Yeah I was a tomboy.

JW: Oh great. What chores did you get pulled into eventually? Did you ever milk?

JT: No I never did that.

JW: Okay did you help with the tobacco?

JT: A little, I'd pick up the ground leaves and plant a little bit.

JW: Okay did you help strip too?

JT: Only what was left on the stalk. We used to call them—what'd you call them—tale ends or something like that.

JW: Tailings was it tailing? Yeah.

JT: Tail something like that. I didn't know how to [cull] it to do that.

JW: Okay so it took a really knowledgeable experienced man to really cull out the good and the medium and the not so good.

JT: My dad and my older brother did most of that.

JW: Okay what were the names of the children in that family? Can you give them to me for the tape?

JT: My other sisters and brothers?

JW: Right yeah.

JT: You want the whole names or just—

JW: If you can yeah. Starting with that first marriage. Your half—

JT: Oh you want them too?

JW: If you can do it. If not we'll just go to the second group.

JT: Well his first marriage was his first one was a girl. Mary Eugenia. And she became a Notre Dame Nun. And her—she took her name of Sister Mary [Malisha]. And she was a teacher.

JW: How old would she be today if?

JT: She would be nearly late 80's. And then there was another one Holbrook. As far [as I know] Holbrook but he died with Pneumonia a little boy, a little boy of about six years old. And then there was another boy, Rafael Augustan Cox, and he died just recently. He was 86. Now the second marriage the oldest was Anna Cecilia Cox Gardiner. And the next one was Jesse Arthur Cox. And then I came third, Julia.

JW: Number three in the second marriage.

JT: I'm number three in the second marriage. Then the next child, James Dominic Cox. And then Mary Elmer Cox Edelen. And the youngest and the last is Albert Richie Cox. He was named after the governor of Maryland at that time.

JW: Oh yeah Old Richie Highway. Is he still living?

JT: He's still living.

JW: He's the baby?

JT: And he's the baby.

JW: Of the whole family.

JT: Now of the second marriage my sister Cecilia she's dead and the rest the other five are still living.

JW: That's remarkable. So most of the years that you were growing up were spent right here across on the farm?

JT: Right.

JW: Did the farm have a name? What did the family call it?

JT: I think the name of our farm was Cherry Grove.

JW: What—where did the family go for—where did they go shopping? Mostly in the Waldorf area? What was their favorite store?

JT: Waldorf. Waldorf and La Plata.

JW: Okay.

JT: Well we used to shop a lot for groceries at J. P. Ryon's store in Waldorf.

JW: Alright there by the railroad tracks.

JT: And then there was a store in La Plata. Cochran's store.

JW: Yes. Building just burned down.

JT: Yeah.

JW: [Very quickly. 88.]

JT: And there was Bowling's store where we used to shop a little.

JW: Which of those stores as you look back now was—had the most class to it? The most sophistication? As far as the merchandise and the service was concerned.

JT: Oh gee. I couldn't tell you—

JW: How about Mr. Ryon's was that kind of an informal county store?

JT: That was a typical country store.

JW: You could get just about anything there. From kerosene to [yard goods] to licorice.

JT: Right.

JW: Not much in the way of fresh meats.

JT: Yes.

JW: Did they once in a while sell fresh meats?

JT: Yes. In fact my dad used to butcher a cow and we would keep one hind of beef.

JW: One hind quarter.

JT: And we would sell the rest to the store.

JW: That's interesting. Now what years are we talking about? 30's? Were you 15 say years old and so on?

JT: I guess I might have been a little younger than that.

JW: So he had some refrigeration and ice. Probably just plain old ice in an ice box.

JT: Well I tell you the winter in those days it stayed cold. And we could keep that hind of beef—we had what we called a meat house. And it could stay out there the best part of the winter.

JW: Okay and we couldn't do that now. Okay so that's—

JT: But you couldn't do that now because you have two or three real warm days and then real cold—

JW: Oh yeah that's important. Did your father butcher hogs too?

JT: Yes.

JW: Okay now the stories I've been getting from older farm people is that not many of them butchered beef but nearly all of them butchered hogs and had poultry.

JT: Right.

JW: I don't know what there was about beef but maybe because it cost a little more to feed beef cattle and fatten them up but it was the prime, the favored meat in many families. If they were fortunate enough to be able to keep their own. There wasn't much of it available in the butcher shops. How about poultry? Chickens as usual?

JT: Yes chickens and turkeys.

JW: Did your father smoke any of the pork? How did he preserve it? Everybody had his own favorite way.

JT: No he didn't smoke it.

JW: Salt?

JT: I guess salt.

JW: Okay. Did he buy any fish to salt to keep during the winter? Do you remember ever seeing nay barrels of herring for example?

JT: No he didn't do that but he used to buy some at the store.

JW: Okay. Do you remember how salty it was?

JT: I never cared for it much.

JW: If you get some of that salt out of there you're alright but boy it is salty. Where did the family go to church most of your teenage years?

JT: Well in the early years from the first marriage they went to St. Joseph's in Pomfret.

JW: Okay right down the road.

JT: But then when we moved here we've always attended Sacred Heart Church in La Plata.

JW: In La Plata. Okay. How would you get to church? Did your father always have an automobile?

JT: [As far back as] I can remember. I remember he had an old car called the Metz. A Metz car.

JW: Oh really?

JT: [It half ran by] chain or something I don't know how to explain it to you.

JW: Okay like the old [Mac] trucks. Almost like a big bicycle chain.

JT: It was a big old car.

JW: Yeah could you see the chain from the outside?

JT: I think so. I can't remember. I guess I was too young.

JW: [Inaudible phrase]. Yeah. That's a different—what was it [inaudible phrase]—

JT: [Inaudible] Model T Ford.

JW: Oh yeah. When did you learn to drive? Did you?

JT: Oh yes. Gosh I must've been young because I know I got my license as soon as I was 16.

JW: Where did you have to go to get your license? Did you take a test?

JT: Yes I had to take a test. I can't remember. It may have been the courthouse but I'm not sure.

JW: Well usually it was someplace close to the courthouse. Did your father having any qualms at all about letting a young lady drive his car into La Plata?

JT: No.

JW: Did he ever seem nervous about it?

JT: No. After his children started driving then he stopped and let us drive.

JW: Oh really? Well he must have had a lot of confidence in you. Did most—how many girls were there now all together?

JT: Including the first marriage?

JW: Right.

JT: [Inaudible phrase]. Four.

JW: Did they all learn to drive?

JT: Yes. I don't know about sister—the nun. I don't think she did.

JW: Do you know Mary Claire do you? And Marian Mathews? La Plata.

JT: Oh yes very well.

JW: [Inaudible] their sister Elizabeth who was a nun also and who has passed on she was supposed to be the first woman in the La Plata area to have a driver's license.

JT: I didn't know that.

JW: And her car of course came from her Daddy's place. He sold them and when the kids were going to school. I think three of them all at one time went down to Glasva. And they had to have some way of getting there so apparently she was sort of pushed into learning how to drive. And she later went up in an airplane. When there was a fairgrounds thing. A traveling aerial circus. And she was the only young woman from La Plata to have [nerve] to go up. And I get that from the three of them together. I interviewed all three of them. That was fun. They were something.

JT: Yeah I knew the whole family.

JW: Very devout catholic family. So by the time you started school in La Plata you already knew the town pretty well from going in there and shopping trips. Do you remember any particular thing that you bought in La Plata that was especially nice or a special treat? Anything that you wore or ate? Did you ever have a hat made in La Plata by a couple of the ladies there who actually custom made them?

JT: No [inaudible] had a millinery at Bowling's. I remember getting a hat there but I can't remember anything special.

JW: Had one at Farrell's and Bowling's.

JT: Farrell's yes.

JW: And that's a thing of the past. Nobody does that anymore.

JT: I used to buy dresses and things from Farrell's.

JW: Did the young ladies in the late 20's and 30's generally wear hats? they've almost gone out of style now for women. Was it a popular item of wearing apparel? For you as a young girl as a teenager?

JT: I never wore a hat a whole lot. I never particularly cared for a hat.

JW: Sunday only, church.

JT: Yeah you used to have to wear a hat to church. Now that isn't anymore.

JW: That's true. Were they pretty strict about that?

JT: No.

JW: When you were a teenager?

JT: Yeah.

JW: Keeping your head covered. Usually you had—

JT: And then when they stopped—when they stopped wearing hats then we had a little prayer cap.

JW: Who's your favorite all time Sacred Heart priest?

JT: Gee you asking me some hard questions.

JW: Everybody has one. Maybe you haven't really thought about it.

JT: No I haven't.

JW: Who did you admire and feel most comfortable about?

JT: I can't say. I can say there aren't many that I disliked.

JW: Was father Mathews active at Sacred Heart in the early years you were there? We're going back a long way.

JT: It's a little bit before my time.

JW: I—we—yeah we're going—but he was.

JT: But I heard my parents speak of him.

JW: An uncle of—right—uncle of Mary Claire and Marian. Very important leader in the building up of the Catholic church in La Plata and also in the building of [the brick] Bishop Neale's school. I think he passed away about the time the school opened up. We're going back now about 1828 or 9. If I remember the history of La Plata. So what year was it that you left the school here in White Plains? Was it a seven year school?

JT: Yes I think it had seven grades.

JW: Okay, okay so you would've—

JT: Let's see the tornado came in 1926 and it took what a year or so to build the La Plata school then I—then I went down to La Plata.

JW: That's right. The first year? Do you remember?

JT: As soon as it opened.

JW: Okay I guess that early 29. Because the kids from La Plata were going to school in the courthouse or in the city hall until the new school building was ready for them. So that's about 29 then. You started in what grade? Eight?

JT: That I started down there?

JW: In La Plata.

JT: No, no. I guess it was like the third or fourth.

JW: Oh okay alright. Okay what was the reason for sending children of that age from White Plains into La Plata? Did they do away with the school here in town?

JT: Yes.

JW: Lack of students?

JT: Well I guess they wanted to fill the school so they closed all the little small schools around [Newburg]—

JW: What transportation was available for you?

JT: I think that's when they had the school buses. Because I know Dad didn't transport us.

JW: Must've been.

JT: I think it must've been the beginning of school transportation.

JW: What teachers did you study under there at La Plata High School? Or grade school.

JT: Grade school.

JW: Who were your teachers in grade school?

JT: Well it was [as you say you told me] before that you knew [Neal Wills Turner].

JW: Yes she's still alive.

JT: And Jane Grey Wheeler. And Elizabeth [Chatom] Wheeler. And Ethel Hearn Cooksey. And they were elementary teachers.

JW: And Ethel had survived the tornado in the La Plata school.

JT: Right.

JW: I interviewed her. Ethel Graves Erin Cooksey.

JT: Right.

JW: That gets them all in there doesn't it.

JT: That's right.

JW: How was she as a teacher? Do you remember her?

JT: I don't remember her as much as I do the others that I just mentioned.

JW: And then on in high school who did you meet there in the way of teacher?

JT: Oh dear. Well Laura Reese Morgan from Port Tobacco.

JW: Okay I do want to interview her. She's near us.

JT: Professor Somers taught me.

JW: Did he? What was his course [inaudible]?

JT: Well he taught me problems of democracy.

JW: Okay. Sounds like him.

JT: Professor [Rike].

JW: Right from McDonough.

JT: And Mrs. [Rike]. I can't think who else. Ms. [Emberger] was my commercial teacher. I lost track of her.

JW: Yeah she's a new one I haven't heard her name mentioned. Were the [Rike's] thoroughly professional teachers? Did you like them? Did you have a feeling that they were accomplished experienced?

JT: I thought so.

JW: I should think so they had good backgrounds.

JT: I believe they taught at McDonough too.

JW: They did both of them. He was so to speak the principal or headmaster at McDonough. And I believe they joined McDonough about 1913 and she taught there all those years. And they taught a number of things. Both of them taught. And I think she taught foreign languages and she taught the girl's home ec. But in those days teachers taught more than one thing. Did you ever have any desire to teach yourself? What did you want to be when you started high school? What were you headed for?

JT: Well there were two things I thought about being. A teacher and a nun.

JW: Oh for goodness sake's. Well you have any regrets now?

JT: I guess not.

JW: Okay. You found the slot that was comfortable for you.

JT: Well when I went to work at the school board I didn't intend to stay 47 years.

JW: Oh for goodness sakes. So you graduated with what class?

JT: 1934.

JW: Who were some of the young children—the kids in that class? Don't worry about all of them. Those that just kind of pop into your mind.

JT: I think there were about 18 or 21 in my graduating class. Charlotte Turner Ed Turner's sister. Emily Ray Wilhelm. Winnifred Dyson. Got some boys. George Hicks and Lewis Swann and Samuel [Fallon]. Eliza [Padgett]. Helen Robey. Edna [DeMann]. [Georgarine Hardy]. I can't think of any more.

JW: That's a good group you did very well. Was Calvin Compton in school at that time? A senior?

JT: I can't remember whether he was—

JW: Or Margaret Wade?

JT: No I think they were more far ahead of me. I think they were out of school.

JW: Well what—how did you happen to look for this job? What steered you in that direction? How did the word get out that there was an opening anyway?

JT: Well it was on a Sunday and I had gone to the movies. The only place that had a movie house was in Indian Head at the Naval Powder Factory over there. I had gone to the movies and while I was at the movies. Mr. Gwynn, Bernie Gwynn was a superintendent then, he came up to my home that evening and I wasn't there. And he told my mother that I had been recommended by Mr. Somers and my commercial teacher and he would like for me to come down and help him out for a couple of weeks.

JW: Where was your home at that time?

JT: Right, right here.

JW: Still across the road here [quite nice] okay.

JT: Because the lady there was on vacation, two weeks' vacation.

JW: Who was she?

JT: Naomi Richmond from Waldorf. She came after Mr. Billingsly.

JW: After Billingsly.

JT: After Billingsly.

JW: What was the title of the job at that time?

JT: I think it was clerk. So when I came home from the movies that night my mother wouldn't tell me because she knew that I wouldn't sleep any that night. And she got me up early the next morning and said, "Mr. Gwynn came last night and wants you to come down to the office and help him out."

JW: Were you surprised?

JT: Yes I was. I really was surprised.

JW: I should think. Yeah I should think.

JT: So my oldest sister Cecilia, she was married and living in La Plata and she worked for Mr. Ed Sander's insurance, so she came up that morning and got me and took me down there to work. Well I was so nervous to be working for the Superintendent of Schools I was shaking and [inaudible].

JW: Big jump for you. How old were you?

JT: 16.

JW: Oh no wonder you were nervous.

JT: So at the end of the two week period he told me that she had, Mrs. Richmond, had resigned and taken a job in Washington for the government with the government and that if I wanted the job he would employ me. So I sort of halfway had in mind going to business school to further my education in the fall. So mother said, "Why don't you take it and stay through the summer. Give you a little experience." So I took it. And I just stayed with it.

JW: What were your—what were your first duties there? Did Mr. Gwynn discuss your responsibilities with you in any detail at all? During that first day did he just lay it all out and this is what we're going to expect of you?

JT: No. He knew I was young and he knew I was afraid.

JW: Yeah okay.

JT: And he just—he was like a father to me. He took me under his wing and he often told me over the years that he thought as much of me as he did any one of his daughters. So he just taught me the running of the office. I grew up with it like [inaudible].

JW: How old was Mr. Gwynn when you first met him?

JT: He was 48 when I went to work.

JW: And how many children did he have at that time? Of course his family was at least half grown I suppose.

JT: There was Margery and Polly and Dee and Elmer and [inaudible] and Junior.

JW: That's a good size.

JT: And Edwin. I don't I named seven right off but I may have left out one or two.

JW: Okay where exactly was your office? In what building?

JT: In the original courthouse.

JW: Okay the courthouse is 1896 or 7. What floor toward what corner? Where was the Superintendent of Schools' office?

JT: On the first floor totally in the middle.

JW: Okay.

JT: As you go in the front door the second door on the left.

JW: Okay. How many rooms were there?

JT: Just one large room and a great big table.

JW: Was it a well-appointed comfortable suite of rooms? Austere, plain?

JT: Very plain we had a coal stove.

JW: Wow no steam heat?

JT: Not at the beginning no. We finally put in steam heat.

JW: In the summer when it got a little warm was there any relief for you at all?

JT: Just put up the windows.

JW: Was that a fairly comfortable building though on a hot day? Pretty thick brick walls.

JT: Yes. Well, being young I guess I didn't mind the heat. It wasn't too bad.

JW: Can you describe your first desk for us? How big, how fancy, what kind of wood? Not plastic no doubt. Heavy oak?

JT: Let's see they remodeled the courthouse and then we moved upstairs on the second floor.

JW: Shortly after you started there?

JT: No not shortly. And then that's when I had a desk. I guess it was a metal desk. I think it was a metal desk.

JW: With—before you started working were you told what—

[Tape Interruption]

JW: What were some of the major problems that Mr. Gwynn faced while you were working with him in the courthouse? What sorts of things were upsetting him most? Most demanding? Budget?

JT: Well that was always one of the main ones, budget.

JW: Personnel, administration?

JT: I think parochial transportation.

JW: So the children going to the catholic schools were not always did they find it easy to get there. Was there much pressure put on Mr. Gwynn by catholic families to provide transportation?

JT: I guess that was part of it. I know he used to read that law over and over and he couldn't—he couldn't decide which way to go.

JW: who—what counsel did he have? What lawyer would give him help from time to time in ironing out things like this? Did the school board have a retainer at some point?

JT: Oh yes.

JW: Okay.

JT: I think James Mathews, the Mathews girls?

JW: Oh yeah okay.

JT: I think he was at one time.

JW: Okay and his office was very close to the courthouse. I think.

JT: Right. Rudolph Carrico.

JW: Right yeah.

JT: Robert Barbour. And Edward Diggs.

JW: Okay these were all rather young attorneys at that time.

JT: Right.

JW: How long were you there with Mr. Gwynn? What year did he—

JT: I was with Mr. Gwynn for 17 years.

JW: So 34 through what about 60? 34 well—

JT: What's 34 plus 17?

JW: 34, 44, 50 oh 52 or so.

JT: and then he retired. And then came Mr. T.C. Martin.

JW: What troubles did Mr. Martin inherit? Were there things that Mr. Gwynn had wished that he could resolve? Did you ever hear of him utter any remarks about disappointments in the way things had gone for him? These things never get into the record.

JT: Well I can't recall.

JW: Okay to what extent did Mr. Gwynn confide in you as time went along and you became more and more capable and mature did he place more and more responsibility on your shoulders? Management type?

JT: Well I guess somewhat.

JW: What parts of that job during the first ten years were difficult for you? Anything at all that you found especially nerve—wracking?

JT: No.

JW: Okay what kind of equipment did you have at your disposal when you began working for Mr. Gwynn? A typewriter? Did you have your own type—

JT: An old manual typewriter.

JW: And were you able to use it? Had you taken a typing course at school?

JT: Oh yes. I took the commercial course.

JW: Okay.

JT: I took typing, shorthand, book keeping.

JW: What kind of a typewriter was it?

JT: Underwood I think.

JW: An Underwood okay.

JT: And then we had a matting machine. You'd pull the lever.

JW: Oh yes the [burled] type?

JT: I believe it was. And then we had an old duplicating machine. You had to type a master and you would put it down and use some jelly or something I've forgotten.

JW: Nothing terribly modern but it was alright for that day wasn't it. It's all it was—

JT: It made copies. Right. And the telephone, I think the telephone was a phone on the wall.

JW: In using the duplicating machine did you sort of cut a stencil? [inaudible].

JT: Well there was a time you know we had to cut a stencil.

JW: Okay. When did you get some help in the office? At what point did the job get so big that you needed an assistant?

JT: I can't remember when she came. But it was—oh she was one of my classmates too. Cecilia Goldsmith Farrell. And she was a home economics teacher at Hughesville. And she—

JW: Which Farrell was her husband?

JT: He's living now. Charles Farrell.

JW: Charles.

JT: F. Charles Farrell.

JW: I don't know him. I know only Leo James Farrell.

JT: Well he's kin to Leo.

JW: Maybe his brother?

JT: No I think he's like a...well he's closely related.

JW: First cousin. Okay.

JT: And she came in to take over transportation and school lunch.

JW: And who had done this prior to that? You?

JT: Me.

JW: Yeah. What on earth—list all of the jobs that you got involved in until she came with you. What did you not do?

JT: Well I did most everything but of course it was on a small scale.

JW: You scheduled meetings for Mr. Gwynn? Did you contact people to be invited to meetings for example?

JT: Well I guess I did.

JW: Office manager.

JT: In a small way. I did all the bookkeeping. I did all the secretarial work. Typing and gee I ordered books I ordered coal. Everything all by hand.

JW: When it came to the books who made the determination about what books were to be ordered? Did that word come down from Annapolis?

JT: I can't remember that.

JW: You got the instruction to order books directly from Mr. Gwynn?

JT: Yes.

JW: Then maybe he had. What was his relationship with Mr. Joseph C. Parks? Did they have an office near each other?

JT: His office was located at Pomonkey.

JW: Oh okay. At the school over there.

JT: Pomonkey High School.

JW: What sort of a person was he?

JT: He was a real nice man—

JW: Easy to work with okay.

JT: Yes.

JW: Conscientious and knew what the problems were and just wrestled with them as best he could.

JT: Right.

JW: Did Mr. Gwynn ever express any dissatisfaction with the segregation set up? Did it cause him any particular grief at all? The dual system.

JT: Well I don't know if I'd call it grief or not. I don't think so.

JW: Okay so when he left did you get the feeling that he felt he had done a pretty good job? Did he seem contented down deep that he had given it his very best and succeeded as best he could under all the conditions?

JT: I think he did. And I think he did—

JW: Okay well that's important because you're able to measure his accomplishments with those of—

JT: He really was an educator.

JW: How many Superintendents of Schools did you work for or with?

JT: Six.

JW: So Mr. Gwynn, Mr. Martin and who next?

JT: Paul Barnhart.

J Paul C.—C. Paul Barnhart.

JT: C. Paul Barnhart.

JW: Right.

JT: Clarence Paul. I don't think he liked Clarence.

JW: Oh apparently not. He was the only one I knew. And who followed him?

JT: Dr. Fred Brown.

JW: Okay did he last very long?

JT: He was only there two years. And I think he went to the state department.

J And then who?

JT: Dr. Bruce Jenkins.

JW: Okay and how long was he there?

JT: Four years.

JW: Four years and who was next?

JT: [Jeffy O.] Starkey.

JW: Okay I knew him too. Went to Sunday school.

JT: 12 years.

JW: 12 years. So of that group which superintendent held office the longest period of time while you were with them? Mr. Gwynn was—

JT: Which one held the longest?

JW: Right.

JT: Mr. Gwynn.

JW: Mr. Gwynn. 17 and then Starkey would you say?

JT: Mr. Starkey 12.

JW: Okay and I guess Mr. Barnhart was six?

JT: Mr. Barnhart eight.

JW: Eight okay.

JT: Mr. Martin four, Mr. Jenkins four, and Dr. Brown two.

JW: Okay what were your impression of Mr. Martin as an administrator? Did you have or build up confidence in him? He came from what background? Had he been a principal?

JT: He was principal at Hughesville.

JW: Okay. Was he ready to take on that job?

JT: I guess so.

JW: Because I've heard nothing at all about him. And did he turn out to be in your opinion an able administrator of the school system?

JT: Yes.

JW: About half way through his term what was the staff like? There was you, Mr. Martin, and who else?

JT: And Mrs. Farrell.

JW: Mrs. Farrell.

JT: [Judy] Farrell. And Dr. [Bowie], Lucille [Bowie].

JW: Oh yes, yes. So she was involved too.

JT: And then of course—

JW: Was she a PhD at that time? Was she a Doctor?

JT: She wasn't a Doctor then. And then of course Mr. Parks and Mrs. Georgia Butler Lucas. She's now married I forget what her married name is.

JW: And she was a black woman right?

JT: She was a black lady.

JW: Was she a teacher of principal?

JT: I think she had—yes she had been a principal I think at the Pomonkey Elementary school.

JW: Okay I've heard several times about her she was much respected.

JT: And I don't know whether we had Mrs. Genevieve Bran then or not. She came along in there somewhere.

JW: What did she do?

JT: She was the supervisor of the high school.

JW: For black people?

JT: Yes.

JW: Okay and where was her office?

JT: They were over at Pomonkey.

JW: Okay. About what time did your quarters situation change? When were things upgraded for you? When you moved upstairs was that an improvement?

JT: Yes.

JW: In facilities? More space for example?

JT: More space. Right.

JW: Okay. And when did you start getting in ever more modern equipment? Year by year? You added gradually?

JT: I guess it gradually.

JW: Do you remember the first electric type writer coming in to the office?

JT: No I can't remember—

JW: Could you handle it? Did it take you long to transition?

JT: It didn't take me long no.

JW: Okay good. [Inaudible phrase].

JT: Had the same keyboard.

JW: True. My touch is too heavy I just can't control it. I started out with a Woodstock I guess and then went to Underwood [in] my career. I still type.

JT: I think I still have the old Underwood that I started with in the closet here.

JW: Oh yeah that had such a heavy movement to it when you shift it.

JT: And when I retired they gave me the electric typewriter that I finished up with. I have that downstairs.

JW: What make was it? IBM?

JT: IBM.

JW: Okay, They were one of the earliest. What—what was the next step for Mr. Martin in his career? What happened to him?

JT: When he retired? I can't remember what he did.

JW: Did he leave the school system entirely upon retirement?

JT: Yes. As far as I know he never taught. Had any type position in the system.

JW: Okay. What were some of Mr. Martin's major accomplishments while he was Superintendent of Schools in your opinion as you look back? Anything really notable?

JT: I can't think of anything outstanding right now.

JW: Okay did he have any transportation problems? And who was handling transportation under him?

JT: Mrs. Farrell.

JW: Okay. Alright. Were there contract school bus operators then?

JT: Yes.

JW: Did the school system own any of its own?

JT: I don't think at the beginning.

JW: Okay. Who were some of those early school bus contractors do you remember?

JT: Mr. [Beebe] Compton, Calvin's father.

JW: Oh Benjamin? [Inaudible].

JT: Mr. Lynn Craig.

JW: Okay from over that way yeah. [Inaudible phrase]. Were Keller's involved early?

JT: Keller's was fairly early. I think that's three early ones.

JW: Do you remember roughly how many school buses were doing the job in the 19 oh say 50's when Mr. Martin came in? Quite a fleet of them? I don't even know what it is today.

JT: I don't know either. Don't remember but naturally it grew.

JW: Oh yeah. When did the state began measuring the accomplishments of students as they do now? Was that being done under Mr. Gwynn at all? Did the state set certain standards that the students had to meet? Certain kinds of studies or courses that they had to take?

JT: Well I know we had to have so many credits. So much math and—but you're getting a little out of my line now.

JW: Okay. I was just wondering if the state in those years brought any pressure to bear on the local school systems to upgrade the quality of instruction? Not apparently nothing really significant.

JT: I can't think that far back.

JW: Okay who took Mr. Martin's place now? Who was next?

JT: Mr. Barnhart?

JW: Mr. Barnhart. What sort of a system did C. Paul Barnhart inherit in your opinion? A going steady one? Were there any problems, pressures, or tensions that he had to deal with right away? Anything out of the ordinary at all?

JT: I can't think.

JW: Were there any major differences in managing style comparing Mr. Gwynn and Mr. Martin and Mr. Barnhart?

JT: Well—

JW: From your point of—

JT: They were all different in different ways. Like, like your children, your children are all different.

JW: Yeah. Which one gave you the most pleasure to work for? Your job—

JT: Well I enjoyed working or all of them but Mr. Gwynn was more like a father.

JW: Kind of more from the old school of a gracious—

JT: Right. But Mr. Barnhart he was very nice to work for. I remember when I had my surgery in 1959 I was at Doctor's hospital in Washington and Mrs. Barnhart was there at the same time.

JW: In the hospital?

JT: In the hospital. She had—she was in traction for her back or something. And it seemed like I hadn't been away from work because when he'd come every day to see her he'd come to see me.

JW: How long were you there?

JT: Well in those days they kept you so long I was there 12 days. He'd come almost every day.

JW: Where were you living at that time? How did you and your husband meet now? He did—he was not a Charles County boy was he?

JT: Well he moved to Indian Head when he was a young a boy. And I had relatives, my uncle Hampton Cox lived in Indian Head and I would visit there in the summer. And I met him at Indian Head in the summer. In fact my aunt Kate Cox was a friend of Mrs. Totten and we would go visit the Totten's. And that's how I met him.

JW: Oh for heaven's sakes. What was the year of your marriage?

JT: May 1948.

JW: So you'd been with the school system a fair length of time then. What 14 years or so. And when did you build this house here?

JT: We started building the house before we were married.

JW: Oh did you? Oh for heaven's sakes.

F And then when the house was built we got married and moved in. And the contractor was so slow. You know they would work on our house a few days and then they would work on another house. So finally I told them, "If you don't have that house completed by May well we're getting married and moving in anyhow." He completed it.

JW: So for quite a few years you drove to La Plata from this place?

JT: Right.

JW: Okay and what year did you retire?

JT: End of June, June 30 or July 1, 1981.

JW: How'd you feel about that? Were you ready to go?

JT: I was thinking about going but I couldn't make up my mind when to do it but then when Mr. Starkey retired. So he was gonna retire at the same time I thought now's the time to make the break. I didn't want to stay—

JW: Rather than have to break in a new superintendent.

JT: Right. Because I knew John Bloom—

JW: Risk different management style.

JT: But I didn't know who it was gonna be.

JW: That's right.

JT: So that helped me make up my mind.

JW: Okay. What were some of the differences Mrs. Totten between the responsibilities of your first few years and those of your last two years? Let's say the first five years and your last five years in that job. How had things changed in the system in the office that might have made your work more demanding and so forth?

JT: Well you knew the office grew. And a lot of the duties, the things I used to do we employed other people and they did it and I was relieved of—

JW: So it wasn't a matter of things becoming more and more difficult for you?

JT: No not really.

JW: Okay there was a natural leveling out and redistribution of responsibilities.

JT: Right.

JW: Okay. Did you miss any of those older jobs as they were turned over to other people?

JT: A little while at first but I didn't regret losing them.

JW: Did you have supervisory responsibilities over other staff members?

JT: Somewhat. Not too much supervision.

JW: You didn't have to worry about keeping payroll or worry about hiring and firing practices.

JT: No not that.

JW: Who was your first full time person in charge of personnel management?

JT: I guess it was Mr. Bloom. Mr. Farrell and I—Mrs. Farrell and I had to show Mr. Bloom the running of the personnel office.

JW: Well okay that tells a story. About what year might that have been?

JT: Well it was in the late 60's.

JW: During Mr. Starkey's early years?

JT: No I think it was before his time. We had moved down to the old hospital building where there's now the health department. We moved there in January of 65. And I know Mr. Bloom came to work at that building then and took over personnel. And then I think after Mr. Bloom it was Mr. [Levinger] and then Roy Yonish.

JW: I met Yonish and we know Bloom fairly well. Who was the first full time budget manager? Was there one?

JT: I think there was one. I'm afraid to name anyone, I might name the wrong person.

JW: Who was the first one placed in over general supervision of curriculum? Maybe there wasn't one before you retired. There is now. Mr. [Levinger] ended up I think in that position for a while.

JT: And he was he was head of personnel.

JW: He was head of personnel?

JT: Mhm.

JW: Okay. About four, five years ago he got involved somehow in curriculum. I know that.

JT: I just can't think right now.

JW: When—when you retired about what was the size of the staff, the management staff, of the Charles County School System? Any feel for it at all?

JT: You mean just in the central office?

JW: Yes.

JT: I'm taking a wild guess. I think 50?

JW: Okay and when you joined the system how many? In 1934. You Mr. Gwynn and who else?

JT: And Ms. Jane [Bowie].

JW: Ms. Jane [Bowie] okay. Now she had been a teacher had she not?

JT: She had been a teacher.

JW: And a native of La Plata I believe?

JT: Right. And then there was Mr. Parks and Mrs. Lucas.

JW: So a total of five in 1934.

JT: Seems to me like I can remember further back than I can more recently.

JW: [Inaudible phrase]. Well you were more in touch with things then. You could go to work and look around and from one location just about see everybody.

JT: Right.

JW: And during the day you would meet everybody there. When did things begin to get just a little bit tougher to control as a manager? When the population started jumping in the county?

JT: Right.

JW: So from my own observations I would guess about 1950 things began to perk a little bit. The incoming people and more demands on the—on the system. About how many school teachers did we have in 1934? Do you recall at all?

JT: No.

JW: As many black as white? Were there as many black schools as white schools in 1930—in the 1930's?

JT: I guess maybe half and half.

JW: Okay. And in 19—about 1980 about how many school teachers were teaching in Charles County?

JT: That's just before I retired.

JW: Yeah. 200 or so?

JT: I didn't—I didn't work with that end of it. I really couldn't say.

JW: Okay. Did you get into the beautiful new building at all? By Radio Station Road.

JT: No, no. It was just a year or two later. About two years later I think.

JW: Have you been there? You've visited haven't you?

JT: Oh yes I've visited—

JW: What do you think of that?

JT: It's real nice.

JW: When you compare that with your courthouse days world of difference?

JT: Oh yes. I visit—I kid them I tell them I'm coming back to keep them straight. Straighten them out. They—

JW: [Sounds] like you're starting out. How would you like to be 21 years old right now and put into a similar job?

JT: No I don't think so—

JW: Life's a little different isn't it?

JT: I don't think so.

JW: A little different now.

JT: I told you earlier that I thought one time I might like to be a teacher but I wouldn't want to be a teacher now.

JW: No they have problems that were unheard of you know 45, 50 years ago. Incredible.

JT: And another thing I used to do. I used to the all the minutes for the school board meetings. And then that got too much. Then that job was gradually assigned to someone else.

JW: How important was the school lunch program down through the years? And what—how did it change? What did it—what was it like in the 1930's?

JT: Well the government used to send a truck with big cans of orange juice and a big thing of cheese. And Mrs. Farrell used to have to dole it out to the certain schools and she'd have to take some to the schools. Sometimes the schools would come in and get it.

JW: Were the children charged anything at all for lunches from that source? Was this free?

JT: I don't think there was any charge. And the small schools the teachers would make a big pot of soup. Got to teach and make a pot of soup.

JW: In the little grade schools, the little elementary schools.

JT: In the little schools.

JW: I've had retired black teachers tell me that in quite a few cases that was the only decent meal of the whole day that some of those children—

JT: That some of the children—that some of the children had.

JW: There was some real poverty in that. People [back there pouring out].

JT: Right.

JW: What were some of the major changes in personnel requirements? Did you find them getting gradually more strict when they were hiring people? Asking more and more in their background and in their academic preparation?

JT: Yes at one time but I believe in recent years they're not as strict.

JW: They get more education but that doesn't always mean they're better qualified as a person.

JT: Right. Right.

JW: Well I guarantee you that anyone starting on a job like you had today they would be asked to show proof of having graduated from college and having majored in certain subjects too. And they probably would have to work just as long as you did to get a feel for the job. What things

gave you the greatest feeling of gratification down through the years in that job? What pleased you most? It was a steady work wasn't it?

JT: Steady work.

[Tape Ends]