Transcript of OH-00085

Dorothy W. Barbour

Interviewed by

John Wearmouth

on

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Typographic Note

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

Subjects

Education
African American teachers
Segregation
School integration
Genealogy
Rural conditions
Farm tenancy
St. Joseph's Church (Pomfret, Md.)
Rural schools

Tags

One room school house

Transcript

[Tape 1]

John Wearmouth [J]: This is John Wearmouth interviewing Dorothy W. Barbour a retired black teacher of Charles County at her home on Maryland Route 227 just a little bit east of Route 210. She has lived in Charles County all of her life. Was born and raised in the Ripley area and retired in 19—

Dorothy W. Barbour [D]: 78.

J: 1978. So she's had time to sit back and look at things and we hope that this interview which will concentrate on the black community in which she lived during her teaching career. This will be part of the series of tapes done in the last couple of years with retired black school teachers in and of Charles County. This is part of the Charles County Community College Oral History Program. Just to set the stage for conducting this, may I call you Dorothy?

D: Yes.

J: You call me John.

D: Yes.

J: And anytime you want to stop and think about something let me know and we will turn this off and then pick up again when we're ready. So don't feel you're locked in to begin with alright. Okay and at this point I've done 14 interviews with this group so I feel I'm a little better prepared with Mrs. Barbour than I was when I started. So you were born and raised and you're a Waters. How many children were there in the Waters family? Brothers and sisters of yours?

D: Seven but four of us grew up to the age of 18. I lost a brother and he was the oldest of the living. Of course the other three I didn't know. They died when they were very, very young.

J: Okay and you were born into a Catholic family?

D: A Catholic family.

J: And you were all at that time members of which Catholic church?

D: St. Joseph's

J: Of Pomfret?

D: Of Pomfret.

J: Okay alright what did your father do to keep food on the table? How did he support the Waters family?

D: He was a farmer and he worked at the Naval Propellant plant, you know, Naval Ordnance station.

J: Okay right over here at Indian Head.

D: At Indian Head. He retired but they are just on disability. In 1933.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes. When did he begin working for the Navy?

D: No I'm sorry, 1936. 35, 35.

J: Wen did he begin working at the plant?

D: he worked there 30 years.

J: Oh for heaven—so he went way back.

D: Went way back.

J: To earlier than even World War I?

D: Yes. Yes.

J: Okay so between farming and being a regularly employed federal worker I would imagine the Waters family were better off than some of their neighbors in the [inaudible] neighborhood?

D: Yes we were because we had we helped—my father helped people.

J: So you knew who needed help?

D: Yes, yes with food, clothing, education. My mother went for miles. There was a little school that my father and mother provided for us to get an education. Because there was the white school we could not go to.

J: Where was the white school at that time?

D: Oh about a block from our house in Ripley.

J: In Ripley.

D: And Mr. Michael Stone.

J: Michael Robert Stone?

D: Stone was the principal of that school.

J: Okay, okay that's right. And he used to go all the way from Habre de Venture on horseback—

D: To that school.

J: To that school. I have interviewed his children—

D: Alright okay.

J: Now what was the name of the little black school?

D: Ripley School.

J: Okay and where was that located with respect to today's geography? What side of the main road?

D: Alright the right side of 225.

J: Going toward La Plata?

D: Going towards La Plata north.

J: Did Charles Woodland go there to school?

D: Yes he did for a while.

J: Alright he [inaudible] and I've been back there.

D: Yes.

J: There's a huge sycamore tree.

D: That's right.

J: Huge! I have a picture of it for the record with him standing by it.

D: The old well suppose should be there. It was an old building in which my father and mother provided for us to get an education. But [bet] it's not on the record at the board of education because I have checked it. When they took a survey—

J: It had a name but I don't recall it.

D: It did have a name.

J: Yeah.

D: [All I knew]—

J: Charles can tell you. Charles Woodland can tell you—

D: All I knew was—

J: But what they called. and there's still a good gravel road going down to that site and there's a sharp turn. Alright I know exactly where it is.

D: That was my father's property. My mom and dad's property.

J: How many acres did he own?

D: 38 acres.

J: 38 okay. Did he farm most of it?

D: Farmed most of it. He did dairy farming.

J: How many head of cattle at one time?

D: About 10 to 12. He did a little beef selling on the—butchering on the side. Oh he raised all kinds of produce on the farm, garden products. Where people are paying probably eight or nine or to 99 cents a pound for cabbage he was giving sacks of them away to the people in the community.

J: So he worked a steady seven days a week?

D: Oh yes. He hired them. He hired them. Charles's brother Phillip worked for us for a number of years.

J: Phillip Woodland?

D: Phillip Woodland. That's Doctor Woodland's [son] who was my first cousin. Charles's brother.

J: Did you folks know the Butler's in that neighborhood?

D: Oh yeah.

J: A little closer to Marshall's Corner.

D: Clarence?

J: Yeah, yeah he worked at Habre de Venture, Clarence.

D: Clarence Butler.

J: For the Stone's for a while.

D: For a while.

J: And I recently interviewed a sister of his who's still living.

D: Lorene.

J: Yes.

D: Jacob Butler was his father.

J: That's right.

D: Who owned a number of acres of land. Owned a number of acres of land. And where once the post had been a school erected in that area. The board of education when they closed Pomfret School instead of placing the school in the Port Tobacco area they wanted to place it there across from the—what's the [inaudible] or whatever you call it now but the little club that they call it the bath. Right across from there was Clarence Butler's lands which because I was teaching at Pomfret School at that time. And they were really going to, the board of education, all the land that [states the deed,] the [records], everything was clear but Clarence did not want at that time to close. It was [inaudible phrase], which then it would land. I believe.

J: Close to Marshall's Corner?

D: Right close at the same spot where the [Inaudible] or whatever you call it nightclub or whatever that is.

J: Oh, oh what was the name of that club just until recently when it burned?

D: The Big [Bird].

J: The Big Bird alright.

D: The Big [Bird].

J: Okay, okay and Vincent Jameson is trying to get a barbecue joint behind it.

D: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and all that land of course was a part of the Butler [history].

J: Okay now how many brothers did you have?

D: I had—but I didn't [ever]—two brothers. Two brothers and two, two girls. Two boys and two girls. My brother, my oldest brother was killed and he was going to school in DC. We didn't have a high school in Charles County so he boarded. My mom and dad boarded him in DC to get the high school education.

J: About what year was this accident?

D: 1927.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes. About what year were your parents married?

D: Oh I've got all of that. I have to give you that later.

J: Alright.

D: I have the marriage certificate—

J: What was your mother's maiden name?

D: Mary Alice Blair.

J: Blair alright I've heard that name in interviewing Charles Woodland, the name Blair—

D: They owned that piece of property. It's adjacent I guess to the Port Tobacco Road that's the 225, the 227, it's behind the fellow who has—I think he's [Inaudible]—who has that little house and a big truck [usually parked there]. That was all my grandparents property—

J: Right at the [corner]? Right at the corner.

D: That's right. Right at the corner. Right at the corner.

J: Okay and near what was called the Marshall Corner [inaudible]—

D: Marshall Corner. Yes it was.

J: Okay so you had coming up Rose Hill Road to where Marshall Corner close to Marshall Corner on the left was Jacob Butler's, the Blair's—

D: Then Blair's.

J: And then next to Blair's coming toward the west who was next to Blair's? Between Blair's and Waters were there other—

D: No, no you mean Blair and Butler.

J: Blair and Butler, yeah.

D: Harry Marshall.

J: Harry Marshall.

D: That's where it got its name.

J: Oh okay.

D: [Aubrey] Marshall is the son of Harry Marshall who owned that property. So you ought to interview [Aubrey] I think he could give you a lot of information.

J: He still alive?

D: Yes he is and soon because he's fading.

J: Alright okay.

D: He is in St. Joseph's Church and lives in on the Middletown Road in a two story green house.

J: Okay before I leave I'll get more directions—

D: Alright okay alright.

J: Okay now what were some of the chores of the girls in the family as you were growing up? Primarily in house or did you get to work outside the house?

D: I got a—I was an outside [girl]. I helped with the hay and the tobacco. I loved that.

J: Did you do any of the milking at all?

D: Milked cows yes I milked cows.

J: And that never stunted your growth in any way or hurt you or set you back doing all that?

D: No, no [inaudible phrase]. Liked to load the wood after my brothers would cut and on the little cart that we had, you know, wagon that my father would make.

J: Your father would make these carts?

D: Right. Made these carts.

J: Two or four wheel?

D: Four wheel.

J: And what pulled them?

D: We pulled them. You know my brothers pulled them. And we loaded—I would do the loading. And especially my brother called Carlisle James. We called—his name is James Carlisle Waters. Okay he owns [this piece of property]. He owned all of this here. This is how I got my property. [He gave it to me]—

J: Where we are right now?

D: Where we are right now.

J: And we're right next door to what church is this now?

D: Free Gospel Church of Pray.

J: Free Gospel Church of Pray?

D: Yes.

J: Alright. It's been there for what 30 years or so? Anyway we're diagonally across from the fire department.

D: That's right. It wasn't a church when I moved in here. It was just an underground [hospital] [inaudible phrase] purchased this land from my brother.

J: What did your mother do in the way of preserving food? Now I presume that most of your food came from your own—

D: Can. Canned and made jellies and jams and I'm doing it today.

J: Okay Now what—

D: Cured the meat.

J: Okay in what, what systems of preservation or curing did your family prefer? Everyone had his own [inaudible]—

D: The smoke, the smoking.

J: Alright. You had a smoke house?

D: Yes we had a smoke house.

J: More smoking than salting and sugaring them?

D: Yeah. Sugar—sugaring with the smoking. Okay and we had horseback riding. We rode horses. Each one of us had a horse, you know, by name. And we also—our dad would give us a cow when it was born. So we had that responsibility to take care of. And we had to get—We had—we rented I guess you would call. [Four] large acres of land called the Johnson farm adjacent adjoining our property.

J: Okay to the west?

D: He—I know what he called that place. Didn't you say that was the Diggs's property up there near the school. But it wasn't called the Diggs's school. It belonged to an old fellow by the name [Deacon] but the house was called Diggs's house but—

J: Okay that's what Charles called it. Yeah the Diggs.

D: [Inaudible phrase]. Okay alright but it was the Ripley school.

J: Have you ever seen a picture of that building?

D: No I haven't. Do you have it?

J: No, no, no anyways something to keep in mind. Charles would have one.

D: That's right. If they had one.

J: Okay anyway the girls helped the mom, your mom in the kitchen at canning time?

D: Yes, yes,

J: And who did the butchering? Was butchering done outdoors by a hired man or did your father?

D: My father [and the men did]. My father—Neal. The Neal's had a farm adjacent out there. [Inaudible phrases] sold vegetables. Robert Neal was almost a professional butcher. My father was very good too. My grandfather [did say he was a black priest] but I haven't—I'm trying to find that information. My father's father election board but I don't think that he got [inaudible].

J: That was the problem. Alexander maybe?

D: Yeah that's what I've been trying to find and my brother we've been researching and researching.

J: Have you checked the St. Joseph Church records?

D: They say he was the first, [St. Thomas].

J and D: [Inaudible phrase].

J: Oh I see,

D: Was the first black blacksmith in Charles County.

J: Oh well that's going now that's going way back.

D: I would love to...don't worry about that because it [comes up].

J: You're gonna have to go way, way back—

D: Yeah I've got to go way—I've got to go way, way back [inaudible].

J: Okay so about how many hogs would be butchered there on an average year?

D: I guess about eight. Eight to ten.

J: And did your father sell some of that meat?

D: [He gave it most away] because see I had grandparents. We had—my mother had sisters in the city in DC. See she was one of 12 children. One boy and 11 girls. She was educated in DC. She went to the old M Street High School because she left and went to live with an Aunt in Anacostia.

J: What were there any modern conveniences in the Water's home while you were growing up?

D: No.

J: Your own well?

D: [Only] we had our own well electric in the later years after my father died my mom had the house wired. See my father died the first year that I was in college at Bowie. And my mother took over the farm and sent me to school. There was no such a thing as a pension then.

J: By the way how did your father come into possession of that property? Was it inherited? Purchased? Did you ever know?

D: Well yes it is. As far as I can recall he lived there with his brother several brothers after his father died but he went to work for the Lawrence's, Robert Lawrence family.

J: Robert Vincent Lawrence.

D: You know Robert Lawrence.

J: Right up the road.

D: Right across the road. At a very early—something like nine years old to help to take the uh of his mother. See his mother was married twice. There were two sets of children on both sides. And how he acquired that place: it formerly belonged to his father but a lot of his brothers were alcoholics. And they—

J and D: [Inaudible].

D: Father's brothers. He never smoked or drank. Not that he'd see any alcoholic beverages. We never heard him even use any profanity. Okay so he kept working and then went to Indian Head. He was something like 30 when he married my mother. Something like or late 20's. Purchased the farm back.

J: I see.

D: See I think the brother's borrowed money.

J: So it had been home to him?

D: Home to him all of his life as far as I know.

J: Well that's interesting. We're building up here a little understanding of—

D: And I'll tell you I can't ever forget my father because he never—

J: Were there Chases living there then when you were growing up? Any Chases?

D: No [Jeanetta] stayed with us because she taught at the Ripley school and she boarded with us. Do you see what I'm saying? In order to get an education—

J: No wonder you knew her.

D: Yeah I knew her family well.

J: Who were some of the more distinguished or better all white families in that neighborhood when you were growing up? Were the Vincent's considered that is Lawrence's considered one of the?

D: Yes the Lawrence's.

J: Okay any others? I guess the Stone's also had to be considered part of that neighborhood.

D: Oh yes the Stone's but we were closer to the Lawrence's.

J: And there were Diggs's nearby in [Hydermont] I guess.

D: Yeah but we didn't know a thing about you know, [make somebody work for them themselves], do you understand what I'm saying?

J: Right, and the old Hanson place [I Mean] Hanson was not too far away.

D: Yeah.

J: Were the [Mattingly's] living down near where near where McDonough High School is now? Where you were growing up still were there still Mattingly's on Marshall's Corner?

D: I don't—I don't recall. See I don't recall the Mattingly's. Sweeney's used to be Wheatley. Wheatley kept a store at near the St. Joseph's Church. That's where my parents are. Did they find it? Wheatley.

J: Now was that—was Wheatley Store in the building where the Post Office was until what 20 years ago or so?

D: Yes yeah.

J: Because I remember that.

D: It burned or something you remember that.

J: It burned.

D: Yeah, mhm.

J: Okay after you finished at let us say the Diggs school just to put a title on it—

D: Okay.

J: Where did you go next in school?

D: It [they closed] the Diggs school and then the Pomfret school was too far for me to walk so my mother paid Geraldine which is Charles's wife's mother to transport me to La Plata school.

J: Where she was teaching?

D: Where she was teaching. And I stayed there until she died.

J: She was rather young when she died wasn't she?

D: Yes she was.

J: Now the black elementary school in Pomfret is that building standing today? Where was it located? In terms of—

D: I think—I think it is. It's—I want to give you a land mark.

J: Because I may know where it is. Had it been a white school at one time? Ever?

D: No I think it was built for black children. It's through the Rosenwald Fund [inaudible] that made a 500 dollar [inaudible]. But what I want to try to—you know where the [inaudible] is to the right? Going up on 227. Do you know where the [Billy Moe's farm]? Okay that school was over to the left. It's a house. I think it was converted from a school to a house. I'm not too sure.

J: Is that on the edge of what we call the Wesort community? Getting close to that?

D: Yes.

J: Alright now we've located it. Okay the white school of Pomfret I know I took pictures of it recently. It's still there. Not far from Salome and Herb's place. Right across the road.

D: Right across the road.

J: Back in the woods you can hardly see it from the road.

D: Excuse me but this is the black school I'm speaking about now.

J: Yeah and it may still be there.

D: See I think—I'm not too sure now—don't know whether Charles can give you this information. See we had a [oh well] my grandmother was a Jones and married a Blair.

J: Oh on your mother's—

D: Mary Alice. On my mother's side.

J: On your mother's side.

D: On my mother's side. And that was her brother's property. We called him Uncle Charlie Jones. All of that was black. But [not today]. Did Charles tell you that [he bought] all that was formerly black before. The Jones's owned all that land up in there.

J: Nearly everything between Marshall Corner and Pomfret on that side of the road.

D: Yeah on that side of the road.

J: Okay and there were a lot of Mudd's on the other side of the road [inaudible] there were.

D: [Dee dee dee he would came up] [inaudible].

J: That's right.

D: Deacon Mitchell. Deacon Mitchell.

J: That's right. You're right. [Hydermont] and then the [local]—

D: Deacon Mitchell.

J: That's right yeah. Okay now what was the attitude of your mother and father towards education for their children? Did they have strong feelings about it?

D: Great, great yes, yes. So much so that we paid to ride the bus. See we had to pay to ride the bus.

J: So there wasn't this feeling of because you are black you have no future, you know, forget education?

D: When we had the Ripley school in that area that was the closest school to the black children in Mason Springs.

J: In Mason Springs?

D: In Mason Springs? The [Ashton's], the [Mallick's], the Ford's, the Brooke's family. My mother went down and took census of all those children and had them to walk to Ripley school. See you it wasn't a highway like it is today they had a bypass and trail through the woods. And during inclement weather she'd pile them in the buggy. We had a buggy. So I'm telling you what her stint was towards education. [You see what I'm saying].

J: One of the first school bus operations in the county.

D: [Inaudible].

J: And who—

D: See my mother was a teacher.

J: Oh, oh, oh okay.

D: Way back in the early days with a high school education.

J: Where did she get her high school education?

D: In DC.

J: In the District of Columbia?

D: Yep in the District of Columbia.

J: And what was her maiden name?

D: Mary Alice Blair. Blair. Alice Blair.

J: But she had moved here?

D: Had moved here. But she went to DC at a very early age.

J: Before 1900 I would imagine?

D: Yes and went on to live with Aunt May [Smith].

J: Now where did she teach in Charles County?

D: Middletown.

J: Middletown.

D: She taught one of her students I've heard her speak so much about—see we this was the family—we'd sit around the table and converse. Conversation. Aubrey Marshall was one of her pupils.

J: He's the one you think I better talk to?

D: Yes, yeah, yeah, yes.

J: Okay and did she teach at any other school that you know of?

D: Well she did substitute work at Ripley school. [Well that was a long story because I don't want [inaudible phrase] the first—we had an elderly man when he wasn't real old to teach there. They wasn't paying but maybe five dollars a month. And I think we had to supplement that. My father had to supplement that to keep that school going. You seeing what I'm saying here? And the books and whatever. And he didn't make too good a time. He lived in Indian Head and then road the horse and then hitchhiked.

J: Are we talking about a black teacher?

D: Black teacher. Connolly, Connolly.

J: Connolly.

D: I'll tell you his name later. It'll come to me.

J: Anyway [Enolia] mentioned the Connolly's too in my interview.

D: Connolly.

J: Some of them still live down the road here.

D: Yes—

J: And were active in the church here at one time, the Methodist church.

D: Well anyway his name was Alonzo Connolly. A. C. they called him. Alonzo Connolly. Okay so as the result of his poor attendance my mother used to go and take over the school and teach and drag me along out of the [book] four years old.

J: Was she a good teacher do you remember? [Discipline]?

D: Evidently because she took—yes, yes a good strong—

J: Respect, respect for learning.

D: Yes, yes. Well I'd be [inaudible]—

J: Do you have any good photos of your mother? She's a historical figure [who knows]. Think about it later.

D: Yes I have some.

J: Okay we'll get together later.

D: Yeah I'll give you some. I'll let you copy them you know, take a copy of them.

J: Okay alright.

D: Oh yes, oh yes. And of my home place the house where I live.

J: Now do you remember the fire that destroyed the Woodland house when Charles was a young man.

D: Yes [a part of them lived with us].

J: Oh boy that must have been—

D: Part of them—part of them stayed with us. My father took care of some of them.

J: Was your house on the same side of the road as the Woodland house?

D: No to the right. To the right you see a little they had a built a [little] bungalow there and then adjacent there's house road. You see a sign that is across from Charles place.

J: Yes I see alright.

D: And there's a little house somebody put there for the [Kids]. And back in that gravel road my house where I was born still stands.

J: Does it?

D: Oh yes.

J: Alright we've got to get some pictures of it.

D: Yes, yes.

J: Alright very good. Okay so now did the inspiration received from your parents about education was that equally felt by all of the children in your family? How many went on as you did to become professionals?

D: I am the only one. But what I want to say I think the one that finished high school and was going to DC [might and all] was the one who was killed. He was boarding. He was there working during the summer months, you know, and my parents did not want him to do it but he wanted to go and the place he was working for [Capers] the richest Jews in the United States.

J: They've got some money.

D: Caved in mhm mhm and killed him. Broke his neck. Okay but as a result of this see we didn't have a high school but I wanted to stay here. When I became I guess I was six and my sister was ten years old my mother became very ill. She had a severe stomach sickness. She was in the hospital.

J: How old were you at the time?

D: I guess I was about six years old and my—

J: And we're talking about 1924?

D: Yes my mother was very sick. And my grandmother took care of us. My father hired a lady but she didn't stay like she should have. My father was a very strict man. Very religious and very strict. When we sat we would have to...

J: He was very—

D: Oh [lord] yea, yes, yes. And as a result—

J: No obscenities as you grew up? Obscenities [inaudible]—

D: No not even on the job.

J: Alright.

D: Okay so as a result my brother Carlisle the one I'm referring to who was very close to me repeated the seventh grade.

J: Was he always a [inaudible]?

D: Yes. I am 71 and he's 77. See he's—he'll be 78 [inaudible phrase].

J: 1912.

D: Yes.

J: Was he the oldest child?

D No. Joseph was the oldest. You know I told the older ones died, you know, at birth.

J: I see yeh, yeah.

D: Okay but my brother Joseph the one who was killed had one year at minor normal school at that time. I have or my mother kept his math papers all that showing where they had new math in DC schools then. You see what I'm saying?

J: What we now call the new math?

D: That's what we now call the new math. The basics. I [took] it to school and showed it to my kids. See I lost a lot of my stuff like that too. Okay coming back to where we were with the question that you asked. Then my brother Carlisle was going to—my mother had him—had made up the application to send him to St. Emma Military School in Powhatan, Virginia. You know it was Catholic and—

J: I know nothing about—

D: Alright you don't know about it. I sent my oldest son there.

J: What part of Virginia is it in?

D: In Powhatan near the James River.

J: Oh [inaudible] alright okay not far from Richmond.

D: Not far from Richmond.

J: Alright between Richmond and—

D: Okay alright. But he was not able to go to high school because we didn't have any means to get there. So he went on and furthered his education in the service. He lived—he bought this property here after my father with the money that he—was left to him and he owned all of this back and he had a house.

J: How much did he own right here along this road?

D: 21 acres for 700 dollars.

J: Wow.

D: And there's gold out there you know we got—we got [inaudible phrase].

J: Wow think of that.

D: So in order for his children to get a good education well he was a—he was a—he and his wife both he married Mr. Key's daughter. She taught school.

J: He married of the J. Wesley Key's.

D: J. Wesley Key's daughter. [Bernice]. So they moved to DC. She was teaching at the time and bought a house there. Reared all his children in DC and they went to school there. That's the one—one is a lawyer.

J: So they got a good education.

D: They got a good education. So you see it was—it was a tradition in my family.

J: I see well that sounds great. [Inaudible phrase].

D: Mhm. My brother would sit around that table and we had to learn the poems. Read, read to my father the southern planter, the *Sacred Heart Almanac,* and see what we loved so dearly we thought it was hard at that time but whenever he got a paycheck—I mean when they paid him in cash. I think he got five dollars or something a day from Indian Head.

J: [Inaudible] good money then—

D: Was good money at that time. Okay and my mother used to make little sacks for him to take his money in because a lot of people borrowed from him on the job and off the job.

J: Did they pay him with quite a few coins do you recall?

D: Some of them never paid him. He died and some of them came and paid him and some never paid. Okay in the meantime he would put his money in the bank and he'd open his bank book to us.

J: Where did he bank? Indian Head?

D: Southern Maryland, La Plata.

J: In La Plata.

D: My mother took care of all the business. Checking account and savings account.

J: And he was content to let her?

D: Oh yes, oh yes.

J: Who was the dominant figure in the family?

D: My mother.

J: Alright, okay.

D: My mother.

J: And he was content to let her do what he apparently felt she could do better than he?

D: My mother taught my father to read. See we had the newspaper to read every night. Sit around that table. Everybody had a chance to read that paper [no more than the weather]. The county paper. the *Maryland Independent* the *Times Crescent.* Okay.

J: Did you enjoy this as you look back? You didn't have to be driven?

D: Oh my oh no, no, no we loved it.

J: So this spirit you inherited—

[Tape Interruption]

J: So Dorothy as you look back on growing up in the Ripley Marshall Corner neighborhood do you feel that it was a good time of your life? That there were experiences there that were good for you?

D: Good for and some I missed. Well I wasn't exposed to—well the only means of getting to the city was my mother used to have to go to Indian Head and catch the bus. I mean boat I'm sorry. And ride up the Potomac [corridor] in the morning.

J: How did she get to Indian Head?

D: Horse and buggy. My father would take her then would leave the horse and buggy at somebody's house nearby.

J: About how old were you when she stopped getting there by horse and buggy? How many years did this continue?

D: I guess I was...when I was about four and before I went to school. And then after I went to school see my uncle lived at Marshall's Corner had a car, a [inaudible].

J: And what was his name?

D: Billy Blair. William Blair. He was the only brother and he would take her to DC. See I had a foot problem, fallen arch, so she had to take me to for a specialist. DC was the nearest. She was hospitalized when I told you at the [hospital] but it was very segregated then you know with St. Joseph Ward for the [whites] for the black [like out on] the porch and etcetera.

J: Oh even though it was a Catholic hospital?

D: Mhm even though it was Catholic.

J: What were the—what were the outward signs of segregation if any at St. Joseph's when you were going there as a youngster? Was it evident?

D: We sat in the back. The Wesorts sat upstairs. We had to pay for our pews. We really [seethed at that].

J: Did everybody have to pay do you recall?

D: [It was the poorest that paid]. I have some [writ] receipts I think for pews that my mother paid at St. Joseph's Church.

J: How did you folks look at the Wesorts? What did you think of them?

D: Well we never—the only time we got together was the, when we went to catechism we called it. And they isolated themselves.

J: They really stayed in their own little group.

D: Or with the whites. See my mother all of her people were very fair skinned. Very fair. My father's people—his father was I understand was a very black man but he married a light skinned lady. And my father was brown skinned.

J: Now is your skin tone average for your family?

D: Yes. You mean for my—you mean my immediate—for my?

J: Your mother and father. Is yours a blend?

D: Yeah a blend, a blend.

J: Okay so nobody can call you black because your skin tone is tan.

D: And then my brother—my brother's just about your color. Carlisle see.

J: Now have you ever been able to trace your roots back to a certain white family? Or white [inaudible]—

D: You know I think I told you over the phone. My grandmother Blair—Grandma Blair we used to call her— Alice Blair who lived on the Marshall Corner Road. Mrs. Olivia Floyd was her mother's sister.

J: Oh I see alright okay. So she was—

D: She was very—see a Mr. Smith excuse me—I've got to tell you what I think about him—

J: So she was a [Simms] Ms. Olivia Floyd.

D: Was a [Simms].

J: I believe was a [Simms]. Mrs. Olivia never married so her father was a Floyd. Her mother I believe was a [Simms]. And let me tell you an interesting story which you may not know. When a Mr. [Simms] died by 1840 he left some slaves in his estate and we read the will and he insisted that the executors of his estate build a little house close to Rose Hill for two of his favorite slave people, a mother and daughter. That wasn't done for a number of years and this mother and daughter, and this was before the Civil War, apparently he emancipated them. Sued the estate and won and that house was built and is standing today. So just to give you a feel for how Mr. [Simms] himself may have felt towards black people and it could certainly well be that you are

descended from the Simms family of Rose Hill and Olivia Floyd was a [Simms]. Have you heard that story before?

D: No I haven't but—

J: I've taken pictures of that house.

D: A Mr. Smith [interview]. There was Mr. Smith used to live in that—

J: Habre de Venture?

D: Habre de Venture.

J: Jameson Smith?

D: Yes.

J: In the late 1930's and early 40's.

D: He interviewed my grandmother Alice Blair.

J: How light was she?

D: Real fair. Real fair. Well her husband was of a red skin. He looked like an Indian. My grandfather. We called him Pa, Pa, Blair. His name was [Jimmy] Blair.

J: So you may be descended from that cemetery on [Inaudible from 39:26 to 39:37]. Well okay.

[Inaudible from 39:39 to 40:42 due to static].

J: He's still living?

D: [Inaudible phrase].

J: He's moved away? That's too bad. If he ever moves back [tell] me for a visit.

D: I think he [wouldn't interview].

J: Well before we leave [do].

[Inaudible phrase]

J: Yeah alright.

D: Okay.

J: So anyway did you feel at the time and did your fellow students feel that they were getting a good high school level education? Did you ever have any feelings that maybe you were getting a little bit below what was due you? Hard question to answer.

D: After I finished. Because there were grades we skipped because we didn't have—we went from the sixth right on into the 9, 10, then 12. You seeing what I'm saying. We didn't have junior

high. And we didn't know anything about a kindergarten. But I think [inaudible phrase] I didn't have [inaudible phrase] my mother had a [inaudible phrase] was instrumental in getting blacks to the [public schools] [inaudible phrase]. They went to the archdioceses in Washington several times.

J: So they really had to put a little pressure on them—

D: Yes, yes they did on the church.

J: Was that fought by local Catholic churches? [inaudible]

D: [Not that I—not that I know of]. Not that I know of.

J: Okay what was your grade average in high school?

D: B.

J: Okay so you were a good student. Did you have to work to get that B?

D: Not as hard as I should have.

J: You could have done better?

D: Yeah but we have very strict [good principal] walked all over the [high].

J: Who was it?

D: She's [Enolia] [Pettingen] McMiller [inaudible].

J: For heaven's sakes I've never heard her name mentioned before. What was her background where did she come from?

D: I wish you had told me I've got a picture of her.

J: That's alright it's not too late. Where was she educated?

D: I imagine in Baltimore because she came here from Baltimore.

J: So she had a pretty good academic background?

D: Oh gosh she was a [inaudible] almost a genius.

J: And was she a black woman?

D: Black woman.

J: Okay.

D: Not real black now. She's still alive. Very active in the NAACP. Oh yeah I have a picture. I've just showed it to someone.

J: Where does she live?

D: In Baltimore.

J: If she ever comes down for a visit again then we can interview.

D: Well you won't be—yeah, yeah but I don't think that because we had [her].

J: How old do you think she is now?

D: About 90. But she's very active with the NAACP. I was instrumental in getting my high school class organized and we had a class reunion. In 78 the first year that I retired. I was—that was my plan. That was my big push. We had a nice affair then [inaudible phrase] next day. We had it at [Bahama] [inaudible]. But I've lost so many members since.

J: Alright now how about your college, where did you start [inaudible]?

D: Bowie.

J: Okay and why did you go to Bowie?

D: Because that was the nearest black school for teachers to matriculate as a—in elementary education.

J: So it had nothing to do with financial ability? Your father would have sent you to—

D: Hampton.

J: Wherever you wanted to go.

D: Well about the two schools I guess I was interested in Hampton or Bowie. That's why I went back and pursued my—got my BA from Hampton. But I went to Bowie and see Ms. Chase—Jeanetta was the secretary there.

J: Oh I see.

D: And I guess she lured me to be interested in Bowie. I'd visited there. I would go there for [fear] meets. I was a volleyball player.

J: Oh my daughter is.

D: Volleyball player. Softball player. So I went there for tournaments.

J: How important was athletics to the girls at Pomonkey when you were in high school? How big a thing was it?

D: Not too big.

J: And what were the—

D: We had the field day once a year we would come together. Dodge ball was the great game. Dodge ball was the great game.

J: And today who's ever heard of dodge ball?

D: We [competed teams]. Then when I taught my first school was at Wicomico. Oh that was interesting.

J: That's interesting. Guess who else from Charles County first taught down at—

D: Mayme?

J: Mayme Ransome.

D: She did?

J: 1913.

D: Oh you interviewed Mayme too? Before she died.

J: About three years before.

D: She had a lot of artifacts [inaudible]. A lot we could've used but I—

J: And where did they—where did they go?

D: To the trash can. Because I let the, let the—and I tried to impress really how important it was to save it because I declared to come up and pick it up.

J: We said the same thing to her to her when we were there. Let us know. We'd like to go through these and catalog. We tried. Well anyway so you went to Bowie for two years?

D: Three.

J: Three. And where did you get your degree now, your bachelor's degree?

D: From Hampton—

J: Okay how did those two schools compare academically?

D: Quite a contrast.

J: In favor of which?

D: Hampton.

J: Okay.

D: Very rigid. With their nine weeks in the summer months. See that was—we could only go to Bowie three years at that time. First it was three year normal. Then three year [advanced].

J: Okay was that Hampton then offering graduate degrees?

D: Yes, yes.

J: Did you get in some graduate work?

D: Yes.

J: Good was it there?

D: Hampton, Morgan, Howard University, Maryland University.

J: Did you get a [masters]?

D: No I got the—

J: Equivalent?

D: Equivalent.

J: Okay. Alright very good.

D: See my mother when I—when she sold the farm she moved in. And I—

J: Oh and what year was this when she sold the farm?

D: In 59.

J: That recently?

D: [Inaudible phrase].

J: Now what—

D: She died [Inaudible phrase].

J: What [did you major in in college], straight education?

D: Elementary ed.

J: Elementary ed. and that meant you had to take which courses? Which were required?

D: Math, English, Social Studies, Science.

J: Math up through what level?

D: What do you mean?

J: Plain through plain Algebra? Geometry?

D: Oh, oh, oh that Geometry. I had to take Chemistry. I took....

[Inaudible from 48:14 to 51:52 due to static].

J: It was on the road to [inaudible phrase] and Charlotte Hall.

D: And Charlotte Hall.

J: [Inaudible].

D: [Inaudible].

J: Route 234 is the number of the main road to Leonard town you know through Allens Fresh up past the St. Clair's up the hill. That's now Route 234.

D: 234.

J: Right.

D: That school was right on 234 to the right.

J: On the right. On the west side of the road.

D: That's right. And on that—

J: What does the building look like? That first impression what did you see?

D: Like a barn. One room.

J: [Paint on it]? Was it attractive at all?

D: White washed. White washed. And I guess you'd call it this had a little annex or something where the children would walk in leave their shoes.

J: The mud room?

D: Mud room I guess. The cloak room we'd call it. The cloak room. Now I'm getting to it.

J: Yeah with the [hash]—

D: The cloak room. And but we made that out of a little kitchen I got [some curtains and made the girls and I]. We had to serve lunch. It was very [inaudible phrase]—

J: [Inaudible phrase] now that you arrived there?

D: 37.

J: 37.

D: Yeah I finished in 37. I got a job that September. Finished in May.

J: What was your first salary? Do you recall? What did the contract call for?

D: 56 dollars a month.

J: Where did—where did you live?

D: I lived with the Campbell's. Beautiful people. Bartholomew and Louise Campbell.

J: And where was this house?

D: I guess it was I guess you would say about a quarter of a mile to the north of the school. In the back. In the back yeah it was near if you turn off the dirt road to go to the [Bowman's]. And they were the—the [Plater's] and the Campbell's were the only two black homeowners down in that area at that time.

J: The others were tenant farmers?

D: All tenant farmers working for 50 cents a day or.

J: What were the names of some of these young—well some of your students that first year.

D: Thompson's.

J: Thompson's. The [Plater's] have children?

D: [Plater's]. The Thompson's, the [Plater's], the Price, the Hawkins. I'm trying to think where they lived. Butler's. There was a Madeline Butler who taught school I taught her children. She lived near the school but they were tenant—her husband was a tenant too. Did you ever interview her?

J: Not yet.

D: Okay she's dead. She was one of the old teachers in the county. She came here from Baltimore. Okay and that's about all I can recall now.

J: Were these primarily protestant families do you recall?

D: Catholic.

J: Catholic.

D: Attended Newport Church.

J: Okay. St. Mary's?

D: St. Mary's in Newport which was proudly segregated. So much so that it was built so that we had to go through a little stall to get to the black pews. And the lady with whom I lived with was very religious. We went to church during the week. The mass before school. Then I would have my evening—

J: You went in the old brick building there? Old St. Mary's Church.

D: Old St. Mary's.

J: I've been in that building.

D: Old St. Mary's. Edelen family was a great family because he was one of my oldest. He was real tall much larger and I used to call him [inaudible] but he was [every inch of a child]. He was almost assistant to me and looking after the children.

J: I see.

D: Helped me to make the fires and—

J: How old was he at the time? 15?

D: I guess he was in [his] early teens. About 13 because he was in the fifth grade. And he would see to it that the children would clean off their boots before they came in and took off their—whatever some of them—very few had galoshes and proper coats to wear. Because they were tenant farmers. They farmed under [Bowling, Sinclair]. They couldn't read and write. They gave them whatever they could. And I started an adult education class. Walked out there [inaudible]—

J: Were they well [interested? They seemed to want it]—

D: Yes, yes, they were. They were—

J: Did you hold your class right there in the school?

D: Right there in the school.

J: Evenings?

D: Evenings. Would be dark when I'd get out there with a lantern but you didn't mind it at that time.

J: You weren't paid for this were you?

D: No, no but it was a pleasure. Then—

J: Kerosene lamps and—

D: Yes kerosene lamps, potbelly stove. You had to make your fires. People were very [inaudible]. Had little dances you know square dances and the fiddles and the. All within the community people could play. They were talented and they—I would go to their homes. They would invite me to their homes. And then we had to make home visits, which was one of the greatest things because you learned your children.

J: And their family—and their background—

D: And their background. And their background which was very essential. That you could not take for granted.

J: Did you have also to help take the census of black families?

D: Oh yes.

J: That was a requirement. That was a contract requirement.

D: Oh that was—that was a contract. You were a mother, a father, a sister, and a brother.

J: Did you ever have a photographer in to take a picture of any of those classes? Any of those students?

D: No.

J: That's too bad.

D: Yes it's [too] bad.

J: Just wasn't that kind of money was there?

D: Wasn't that kind of money.

J: What did you yourself Dorothy have to shell out of your pocket to buy for that school, for those kids in the way of supplies, tiny little luxuries?

D: Games. Various games. We had to supply a [duplicating] to run off the work for the children. Chalk [of all kinds], crayons, well see [there's just that thing]. First you had a little I guess you call it a well like a pan, a big pan, four or five of those. We would get the gel, set it up, then run it off. You teach your children [on that] see. Then you say how did I teach seven grades? You let the ones in the seventh, sixth grade help the lower ones to do with the [seat] you had to do that. We took in from 9 to 4 and you had to be out on that playground with them. Teach them all [inaudible phrase] and outdoor games. Indoor games. You asked me what did I supply them with. Sometimes clothes to come to school. Get people to give them to me or my mother would give me money to buy them. And where I stayed I had to cook and everything in my own room where I—on a [tin heater]. No, no bathroom facilities. I had to—even the lady whom I lived [with] was very sensitive. You could not bring that—we called it the slop pan or the slop bucket—down through her house. I had to [wind] it out the window with a rope tied to it.

J: You wonder how you did it now.

D: And I had to sleep on a feather bed and I never had slept on a feather bed. I had to make that bed up [inaudible phrase].

J: When it collapsed [inaudible] it got hard didn't it all the sudden.

D: Yes. Mice and rats came [inaudible].

J: Did you sleep upstairs on the second?

D: Upstairs.

J: This is one of the older houses?

D: Yes, real, real, old. Kitchen was sort of off from the house.

J: A little cool on a cold winter morning?

D: Oh yes very cold. Come down [inaudible phrase] early in the morning.

J: What did you pay for this [inaudible phrase]? Was it room and board?

D: No, no, no board [inaudible phrase].

J: Oh I see. You had your own little—

D: I had my own—no, no cook stove.

J: Nothing?

D: I had to cook on the [tin heater] which heated.

J: Oh I see was it one of these oval types.

D: Round like this, like a bucket. You can buy them now. Some people have them. They're very dangerous.

J: Very light.

D: Yes. Rainbow [water] there stored in a [paste board] box you know I had it all covered with—

J: Your living conditions there were not nearly as comfortable as they had been at home [inaudible] were they? And here you are 18 years old?

D: 18 years old at that time.

J: What a responsibility. Did you find that this group of youngsters was as—terrible background of deprivation—were any more difficult to teach than anyone else would've been?

D: I don't think so.

J: Were there additional challenges to you?

D: Yes. Because I'll tell you what. They were all eager to learn. They were just—

J: [Nobody] to help them at home.

D: They could stay with [inaudible phrase] and didn't have any library books. You know at home we always got story books for Christmas, birthdays, we gave each other. My mother indoctrinated us each one at birthdays I would give my sister a gift. We all shared this. Christmas time the same thing. But these children didn't know anything about that.

J: You started at zero.

D: Yes.

J: Were you ever discouraged?

D: No, no because the children were so enjoyable. Didn't have no discipline problems. Only problem I had was [Inaudible name]. She thought her children [inaudible phrase] [better than anybody or soul.]

J: And this is a black family?

D: Yes. [Inaudible]—

J: They owned their own property?

D: They owned their own property. Lived across from the school. But the older siblings migrated to DC of the [Plater's]. There were 15 or 16 in the family. The older ones migrated to DC and taught—they came back and taught the others. You know, [and carried them various times to business]. See we had to plan field trips for those kids to DC, bring them to Pomonkey which was the only black high school in central to all of the [big affairs to all of Charles County]. Field day, I know you've heard teachers talk about field day.

J: How did you line up transportation for this? And you had to do it didn't you? You had to plan it and organize it?

D: Yes.

J: Get them there.

D: Well what I [source to find them]?

J: Yeah what on earth?

D: We would have little dinners. As I said the little dances they called them. You know we had them [inaudible] right in the school played a fiddle and what not.

J: Were the desks loosely pushed them back to the walls?

D: Yeah, yeah.

J: Benches or desks? What did you have there?

D: Benches and desks. Double. Stack them up. Get it clean by Monday morning for school. You would have them on a Saturday night then I 'd have to stay down too.

J: So you did janitor work too.

D: Janitor, janitor.

J: Was that floor just raw unpainted wood?

D: Oil. We used the oil. [Wet the cloth].

J: Any insulation underneath? Some of the [cold come out]?

D Yes, yes, extremely cold. And then see at that time there were no snow days for us and students. See we had to walk to school and there wasn't but one child there. Or usually you would have 10 or 11 because they all walked. And I had to be there. So we didn't know anything about any snow days. I have walked in snow up here and drifts.

J: How far was the house you lived in from your school?

D: I guess about a quarter of a mile.

J: So in really bad weather...muddy roads?

D: Well I cut through the woods and crossed a field. Yes it was muddy through the woods.

J: So you went to St. Mary's when you were stationed there.

D: When I stayed [inaudible].

J: Who were some of your really best friends there? Adult friends.

D: At St. Mary's?

J: Yeah.

D: My...the members of my school. The parents of those children they would be there. Those would be the only people.

J: How did the parents treat you?

D: Beautiful.

J: Okay and they had never met you before? You were a complete stranger?

D: Never I was a complete stranger and they invited me here. Teacher in the community at that time felt the same as the president of the United States. They were the leaders and of course they were highly respected. They would invite me to their house for dinner.

J: What was a good dinner, Dorothy, that they might have served you?

D: Biscuits, cornbread, cabbage, potatoes, ham, and sweet potatoes.

J: That sounds pretty good. Were the women generally good cooks do you recall?

D: Very, very. [A lot of them cooked that on the farm].

J: Alright almost professional.

D: Yes, yes, yes. Stuffed hams, they cooked stuffed in hams like [inaudible]. Then as Indian Head opened up I was educating the men to get better jobs. How to fill out applications. So some of them [succeeded]. Some of them went to DC to work for [inaudible phrase]. Various areas in the county. Other than an addition to working on those farms. Because they really couldn't make it on those farms.

J: Who supervised you Dorothy? Who if anyone would come out to the school from time to time and see how things were going?

D: Walter J. Huffington the State Superintendent.

J All the way down from where Annapolis or Baltimore?

D: Baltimore.

J: What'd you think of Huffington?

D: Rough.

J: [Laughs]

[Tape 2]

J: What role did Mr. Joseph C. Parks play in Charles County education during the early years of your teaching experience?

D: He was the supervisor.

J: Okay. County wide.

D: County wide.

J: Did he visit the school on occasion?

D: Yes he did. He was [inaudible phrase]. Supervise your own teaching and everything.

J: How supportive and encouraging was he to young school teachers? What did he do to help you directly?

D: Oh he didn't think that he wanted to have get the local teachers. Hired the local teachers for example, placed them in jobs. That's the way I saw him.

J: What do you mean by local teachers?

D: The ones who finished [because I] lived here went off to college and pursued an elementary ed.

J: Okay now wanted to come back?

D: Wanted to come back home.

J: Okay.

D: Those who wanted that. Then he was instrumental in getting a lot of children who finished high school to go to college.

J: Okay big thing. A big thing.

D: A big thing. A big thing.

J: Do you recall Dorothy, roughly, what percentage of black school teachers let's say before 1940 were from outside the state of Maryland?

D: Before 1940?

J: I could think of a few.

D: I guess the majority of them were.

J: Okay was there any friction there? Any resentment between the native born teachers and those who thought they were so good coming in from outside?

D: Some, some, yes.

J: I won't name them but we both know half a dozen.

D: And see I was, excuse me, when you talk about Mr. Parks. It was difficult to obtain teachers from outside of Charles County because most of them didn't want to live under the conditions, substandard conditions, that we lived in. So he—I worked with him in helping to get the teachers at Bel Alton. I was on the trustees. I was one of the trustees. [Elise Harris] Davis who was living then, you interviewed her?

J: Yes, [I interviewed her].

D: Eleanor Pickney.

J: Don’t know of her.

D: Mr. Sweat.

J: Heard of him but I've never met him.

D: William D.

J: Was William Diggs there at Bel Alton?

D: William D. No, no, no worked on this committee.

J: Oh I see.

D: Was a trustee and helped to [find], purchase this teacher so that the teachers would have a place to stay right across from the old Bel Alton High School.

J: Okay it seems to me that [Lena Dyson] stayed near there at one time. Maybe not the same place.

D: Maybe she did. See Lena, Mrs. Neal, Ms. [Rector], Minnie [Heel], I won't say came at the same time but approximately. Because see Ms. [Rector], Mrs. Neal, and Minnie [Heel] were from almost the same area. [Inaudible].

J: That's true, that's right, western Pennsylvania—

D: That's right. They came. And also, see when I was going to Pomonkey High School Mr. Parks was instrumental in getting that dormitory and the buses on the highway to get the children to and from school.

J: Where—what was this dormitory? Now was that right near the school?

D: Right down from the school. You know where the Metropolitan Church is?

J: Yes indeed.

D: Do you know where the—well the court administrative building now I think.

J: Yeah, yeah, yes.

D: That was the primary building when I taught over there. But it's the administrative building. That's where the dormitory stood.

J: I see so the children could spend the night—

D: Could stay there. My sister lived there. I didn't live at the dormitory. I lived with—boarded prior to riding that bus—I lived with Ms. [Nancy Myers] right across from the school. The old house burned recently.

J: Right on Metropolitan—

D: Myers. Yes on—you know the Myers have a great family in Charles County.

J: I don't know them.

D: And Bryans Road. You don't know the Myers? The father was a minister, Mr. Fred Myers. His mother was a very [dear woman] and very brilliant. She was the best cook. We stayed there for 15 dollars a month. That was big money at that time. In order to get an education we had to either pay to ride that bus or stay in that dormitory or board in neighbor, neighboring house home.

J: I see. This is while you were still living near Ripley?

D: While I'm living at—while I'm living at Ripley and going to school. [See I'm not going to live in any other place than Ripley and here.]

J: Oh for heavens sakes. Well now where did you go from Wicomico? How many years were you at the Wicomico elementary school?

D: About ten years at least.

J: Really that long? So when you left there you were an experienced teacher?

D: Yes. I went on to Pomfret until it closed.

J: How many years were you?

D: I guess I was there about five or six years. Then I went off to J. C. Parks.

J: Who were the leading black families in the Pomfret neighborhood that you got—

D: Frances Brown.

J: Frances Brown.

D: The Brown family. Teresa Chase.

J: She's still alive?

D: Yes she is.

J: Should I interview her?

D: Yes. Yes.

J: Okay. I've been having a little trouble with her. She doesn't like the idea at all. I know where—

D: Well maybe she had...for the purpose. Maybe you have to do a little more explaining. She just lost an old sister. 101 years old whom she looked after.

J: I met her.

D: She's the oldest one in the family.

J: Yeah. I wanted to interview her but too late.

D: Yeah but talk with Barbara Golding [inaudible] dynamic person at St. Joseph's church.

J: Yeah, yeah he is. I have difficulty communicating with him.

D: You do?

J: Well I'll talk about this later.

D: Alright, okay.

J: Anyway I'll try again, Teresa Chase. She must be about 85 now.

D: Oh no near 90.

J: Is she?

D: Yeah. 88 or 89.

J: Is she lived in that Marshall Corner neighborhood most of her life?

D: Yes, yes.

J: Well I'll get back to her. I know exactly where she lives.

D: Okay. As soon as you can.

J: Yeah, yeah, okay. In the Pomfret area who were the most supportive black families of education?

D: [That's the one family.] The Brown's.

J: Okay. Alright. How many—

D: Woodland's, [Gene Philip].

J: Oh yeah, okay.

D: Philip, Philip.

J: How would you have gotten from the Woodland's home back to the school? Crossed through the woods? Through the fields?

D: That's right through—

J: Because the roundabout roads would have been a while.

D: See I carried Phil's children to Pomfret school.

J: Oh did you?

D: Picked them up, the little ones, Calvin and Kyle.

J: Where were you living when you taught at Pomfret?

D: Ripley.

J: Back home.

D: Back at home.

J: Okay. Glad to get away from the Wicomico establishment?

D: Well yes I was yes.

J: As far as living was concerned?

D: Yeah living conditions.

J: Back home where it was—

D: Actually the children there I [inaudible]. Then my mother would—

J: How many at Wicomico?

D: I started with six or five or six kids. Nothing but babies down there you know. But average there were nine and ten was the average number [in a home]. And most of them are three and four now.

J: Good lord. So coming up to Pomfret—

D: God knows [he kept women back there]. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

J: Okay what caused them to close the school at Pomfret? Where did the students go?

D: Pomonkey.

J: Pomonkey.

D: They closed Pomfret, Marbury, and Pisgah and bused all the children to—well they were substandard schools. Bused them to Pomonkey.

J: So they were really better off from the change? This was an improvement?

D: Oh yeah, this was an improvement. During Mr. Parks supervision.

J: About what year did this occur? The closing of those three schools.

D: Let's see I retired in 78. I guess it was—I was over here about 50—about 56.

J: Okay alright.

D: And all of us came to Pomonkey. All the teachers. Mrs. Georgia Lucas was our principal in that time.

J: Now was there any improvement in the support of black teaching comparing Pomfret with Wicomico? Were you noticing during this period of roughly 15 years any good substantial change in attitude of the county board of education toward black education?

D: No.

J: Alright.

D: We had to fight for everything. We got the old books. We got the old desks.

J: The cast offs.

D: Cast offs. And Mr. Gwynn was the superintendent at that time.

J: You met him?

D: Oh yes. He didn't come to the school very often.

J: Oh he didn't?

D: No. And of course I did—I don't want—I shouldn't—I'm not going to say this because I don't want...

J: Okay.

D: [That was Mr. Parks].

J: So now your third school was Pomonkey? Wicomico, Pomfret, and Pomonkey and we're talking about Pomonkey Elementary?

D: Pomonkey Elementary.

J: Okay and how many years—how many teachers were at Pomonkey in the elementary department? You and—

D: Oh I guess it was posted to. See we had primary, middle grades, and upper grades and I taught when I first went to Pomonkey I taught the sixth grade. I was in with the junior high. So I met quite a few older children, [you understand]. And then but to view the television we had to go from the upper building where I graduated in the [inaudible].

J: Your original building?

D: In the original building where I graduated from high school. Down across the field to where the administrative building is now. All the way down there to view a television. But and then the older children would have to come up there to the auditorium.

J: Were you the only teacher at Pomfret?

D: I was the only teacher at Pomfret.

J: So this was a new experience—

D: Another one room school.

J: Was the building at Pomfret any more substantial than the one at Wicomico?

D: Yes, yes, much better. I had more space. See I had a kitchen there. I had a cloak room there. You know where the children? Nice space much better.

J: Did you yourself as the teacher help prepare a noon meal?

D: Yes.

J: Regularly or just in bad weather periods?

D: Winter was, winter...the winter months.

J: What did the parents contribute towards these noon meals? Did the school system itself contribute anything?

D: No.

J: The board of education—

D: Yes well they used to be something called surplus commodities. I guess what we getting now. Surplus commodities. And the board—well at that time they used to use the school to teach canning. Community service, canning. Some of the [inaudible] [extension service.] [To start off].

J: Part of the [inaudible] program? You ever meet Mrs. [Demotte]? Did you ever meet her?

D: Yeah I knew her and Mr. Hall was supervisor of that for the blacks. And Pomfret was one of the [inaudible] with one of the schools.

J: I see okay.

D: And of course I inherited the pots and pans after that went out [state business]. And my mother was with the 4-H Club and also [that building they called up there]. The fairground for the blacks. She worked a lot—

J: The Pomfret fairgrounds?

D: Pomfret fair—Charles County fair but was held in Pomfret. She worked very hard on that fair. I mean volunteering laboriously.

J: So what improvements were there at Pomonkey as—

D: At Pomfret.

J: Well let's leave Pomfret—

D: Alright okay.

J: Let's go back to Pomonkey.

D: Alright.

J: What improvements were there at Pomonkey for you a teacher in facilities and so forth?

D: Had everything. And the office see Mr. Parks office was right there where I taught. We had our—we didn't have to contribute financially. See we got better books. We got—we had access

to the library. We had a music teacher. We had a P.E. teacher. Which gave us all of the time for planning period in the school. Which helped us greatly.

J: It sounds like Pomonkey was really the center for black education in Charles County.

D: Yes it was. Yes it was.

J: For a number of years really.

D: Yes it was. Yes it was. Yes it was.

J: And also from my interviewing it seems to me that Pomonkey has been the pioneer in the whole of—from the beginning in the cause of black education.

D: Yes it has. But I'll tell you had a great man in Pomfret by the name of Samuel [Streetman]. Have you heard of his name?

J: No. Oh well yes of course [inaudible]. Salome's father?

D: Salome Howard. Salome's father.

J: Yeah absolutely I didn't know this.

D: And he sent all of his children to St. Emma. Sent them away to high school.

J: As long as I've known her she—

D: He was a very brilliant man. But a lot of people—he was spoke out. He was for integration.

J: Sounds like Salome's a chip off the old block.

D: Yes she's a chip off the old block. And he made very little money because he was too smart to [kept him down at Indian Head], you know. At that time you had to have a high school education in order to work to be a [piler handler] and he didn't.

J: Yeah his—

D: See I worked—I worked at Indian Head.

J: Oh did you?

D: Yes I did.

J: While you were teaching?

D: To supplement. Yes I did. To supplement my education. To supplement my [income] to get this home. To help to support my mom. Since I've been married.

J: How the heck—you were teaching full time too?

D: No I only worked in the summer months.

J: Oh I see okay.

D: When I went on maternity leave see you lost your money. You didn't get any money.

J: I see. How did this increase your income percentage wise? Did it almost double it?

D: Yes. Oh yes.

J: So you could work three months and—

D: And make as much as I made in [an hour]. See when I became a teacher we only taught nine months. Then we were only paid for nine months. I can't recall the year but one year we worked. I have it in my files somewhere. We didn't get paid. We started like the 13th of September which was a horrible month. We didn't get paid for that month the full month. We only got paid for the days that we taught.

J: Were you during these years, let's say from Pomonkey on able to continue your education?

D: Yes.

J: Okay yeah that was all on you? Any financial assistance?

D: All on me.

J: Okay.

D: Workshops.

J: Where were some of these workshops held?

D: Maryland University. Then we toured various schools, Eastern Shore, PG County to observe to see how we could better our conditions. Then after—

J: Was it worth it? Were you able to learn valuable—

D: Yes you learned valuable things. Yes you did. And then we—after, Mrs. Lucas became supervisor after Mr. Parks retired. Then Mrs. Margaret Quilwn was the principal of the J. C. Parks school.

J: How was her last name spelled?

D: Q-U-I-L-W-N. She was a Pierce. Margaret Pierce Quilwn. There's a picture.

J: Oh yeah Margaret Pierce Quilwn.

D: Yeah she taught here many years ago as a teacher here from New Jersey. Then she left went to [Inaudible] with her husband Quilwn whom she married. And I retired—no I didn't. I didn't retire then. She retired. I retired under Mr. [inaudible].

J: Did you see, Dorothy, during these years let's say after World War II from 1945 on did you not an increase year by year of the capability of new black teachers coming into the system?

D: Yes.

J: Was this noticeable that they were getting better and better preparation?

D: Yes. Yes and then you see we began—we had to catch up in the summer months with the children who were slow. I say tell you that when I was at Wicomico I did a lot of tutoring. I don't what on Saturdays. Went to the homes and tutored children.

J: Of your own duty?

D: Own duties.

J: Now all on your own time.

D: On my own time. Some of those children didn't make good time in the winter months and the spring. They were out there on that farm planting, doing the plants.

J: An economic necessity for the family.

D: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

J: What on earth would these little kids have been paid if they were say 10, 12 years old?

D: Hardly nothing. Hardly nothing. Because I think they elderly men who were farm hands got fifty cents a day when I was there. 50 cents a day.

J: Times were really harsh.

D: Really, really hard yes.

J: Really hard for everybody.

D: So we had to catch up in the later years and then I would teach 12 months. The summer months where they selected us. You know how it is. Those who were dedicated and interested. We went on with that. Carried them on field trips and planned picnics for them, you name it. I had a truck and I would haul the produce to the picnics.

J: Now when you came to Pomonkey you became a new sixth grade teacher?

D: First. Then we dropped the sixth grade and that was called junior high. Then I went to fifth and I stayed in the fifth grade.

J: All the way through the rest of your career?

D: All the way.

J: Now what subjects were you teaching during the past five years of your career?

D: Math, math.

J: So you were concentrating on that one subject?

D: On that.

J: Was that pleasing? Did you enjoy that? Having to put all your eggs in that one academic basket?

D: Well I'll tell you what at first we started with the regular subjects. You kept your homeroom in the morning for reading, language arts. And then I went into math for the evening. We called it departmentalization. Children moved. Then after another principal came and then we had to move and the children stayed. When Mr. [Riderman] came after Mrs. Quilwn retired. We had a white principal Mr. [Riderman]. You know him now.

J: Did in looking forward towards—

D: And we were integrated.

J: Integration. Did it come as you thought it might? Were there any surprises in it when it arrived?

D: I doubt it.

J: Do you recall what feelings you had toward it?

D: I was happy for it.

J: Yeah okay.

D: I was really happy.

J: You were ready.

D: I was ready.

J: It didn't upset you.

D: No it didn't upset me.

J: Okay.

D: Because I'll tell you what see I had gone to—well I'd been with white people in Catholic school. Then for my confirmation. See when we were being prepared for confirmation, which was in the fall, we had to take off half a day each day for 30 days. For your practice work. And I had so many white friends.

J: Well I asked you the question because three, about three of the older retired black teachers were a little bit nervous about what this would do to them. And I can—but I'm taking about teachers now 90 and above. You know who they must be.

D: Older yeah I know which.

J: But you were more adaptable. You had a resiliency built in you because of your background.

D: Yes, yes. I was fine for me.

J: Okay. No problem. Of course Pearl, we first met Pearl [Peary] at Port Tobacco School.

D: She's very modest.

J: Yeah.

D: Very modest.

J: Right yeah she is. She is I know who...Edna Simmons was—

D: Reserved.

J: Reserved. She was a little worried about how she would be able to cope with this.

D: She was a darling. She was a sweet person.

J: Yeah she—

D: Oh my [inaudible] genuine. But she had a lovely disposition. She would help other teachers. When I was on maternity leave and I lived in Pisgah then with my mother in law and my I was married then. She would always get me to do her substitute work for her.

J: Oh really?

D: She would send one of her—she'd call to find out if I had transportation because at that time my husband worked in Washington and we only had one car. But she would always call and see if I had transportation and if I didn't she'd send somebody to me.

J: You know it's amazing to me that you and Edna and Mercedes and Pearl Thompson [Peary] I know all still live today. Almost within walking distance of where you were born.

D: That's right.

J: It'd be a long walk but.

D: That's right. That's right.

J: And Edna lived within a quarter of a mile of where she's been her entire life.

D: Isn't that beautiful.

J: So these are the local girls that are—

D: Yes really local.

J: All these years that's right. That's great.

D: Yes, yes, yes.

J: Did you, did you feel—I don't want to put words in your mouth but did you ever feel that the teachers coming in from outside offered you competition that in the long run was helpful? Did you learn anything new from them? Their academic preparation? Their attitude and so forth? Was this a good—

D: Some, some had some negative attitudes but once I got [some that]. I'll tell you of one—

J: Because you local teachers could have been a big help to these—

D: I'll tell you of one instance. The first year we integrated over here at J. C. Parks we had a group to come in from Billinglsey Road. They lived [inaudible] which lived in fine homes. And these little boys of those four [of them]. I always saw to it that my children had homework and carried books home. Don't go to my classroom with swinging your hands. So they would always want to stay back and look in their desk trying to find the book. I said, "What kind of book are you looking for." So they had had some grievances with the black boys. That was their first time being with black children and vice versa first time the black children were with the whites. So I had a little meeting. I did not take it to [the office].

J: We're going back mid 60's now roughly?

D: Yes, yes. I did not take it to the office. Mrs. Quilwn, this lady whom I referred to was the principal. I just had a little meeting with them and I sat there and told them all about. I said, "You

know what." I said, "These children cannot live the way you do it. I can't even live the way you do." They said. "What Mrs. Barbour?" I said, "You—

J: They were just as ignorant.

D: As, as—the whites?

J: Yeah.

D: About us. And see I was the one who was [inaudible] and teach this black history. Not only during February. See we had open space. And I would open the school up in the mornings like that. So after I [talked to them] they told me the name of their book was *Hell's Angels* and I told them that was a terrible book. I said, "Don't you want to see anything like that because that's a whole motorcycle group," you know? I told them all about that so they were so happy to know that I sat down and I never had [another] problem after that. They didn't know but I said, "Do you know that four or five of them are sleeping in one bed and each one of you has a separate room." I said, "I can't live in Billingsley. I can't live next to you just because of this." And they were amazed.

J: A lot of them were from families that were from long ways away and never experienced.

D: And they were from [Die-hard's]. They were from the [die-hard's]. Well I'd go into Bowling's store now. I'm [inaudible] now but I got to tell some things. It's so appealing to me and so rewarding but a couple weeks ago I walked in there and I always talk to Chip Mudd. You know the Bowling family were of that store, always my mom would go there and buy my clothes. And had them to ship them or mail them parcel or package to Bowie for me.

J: Oh for goodness sakes.

D: And there was a lady in the 30's and there was a lady there who lived on 301. She's dead now. She was a sales person.

J: Not Mrs. [inaudible]. Was her name [Lyon] by any chance?

D: No, no, no. It'll come to me. I can see her face now. Her husband was the...operate that space right in there in La Plata.

J: Sanders?

D: Sanders. Winnie Sanders.

J: Mrs. Joseph Sanders.

D: Winnie Sanders. That's what they called her. Winnie—

J: Winnie, Winnie?

D: Winnie. That was her—that's what they called her at Bowling's store. Okay so when I went there a couple of weeks ago there was young man there who was one of my students. [inaudible]. I said, "Don't I know you?" He said, "I think I know you. Russel Willett from Marshal Hall Road."

J: I know Russel. I know his family. Robert Willett's son.

D: And the little girl named Robin was just a dear.

J: Spectacular [wasn't she]?

D: She loved me dear. But today when I run across her she's married and got a family. So he said, "This is the lady who taught me the math."

J: Isn't that great. Now looking back on it now, did things come up more smoothly than you thought they might?

D: I'm not going to say that because I'm [of a person in community]. I'm not bragging on myself. When I went in that classroom I never had a grudge, no hang ups. And I'll tell you to that day [going on with inaudible with hang ups]. So I would always start my class with a joke. And I always instilled in my children: because I'm your teacher I don't know it all. We learn from each other. You teach me and I teach you. I even visit when they invite me to the home it's a mile [inaudible]. A big historical home.

J: George [Mileson]?

D: You know them? Taught their daughter. And see they were just as close because I knew a lot of—see I knew of most of the people in Charles County in this area to the southern part of [inaudible] because I got around. My mother would take us to McConchie. I had a [dear] great aunt there. We'd go there for dinner on Sunday.

J: Oh what's her name?

D: Mary Eliza Smith. She was my father's sister. Mary Eliza.

J: By the way when did you buy your first automobile? I usually ask people this—

D: I guess I bought it in—let's see I taught began teaching in 37. See I used—when I came home I used my Mom's little 34 Ford. My brother gave me an old Dodge I guess in 37 and I must have bought my [brief] car I guess [inaudible].

J: Okay what kind was it?

D: Ford.

J: Bought it in La Plata?

D: Mhm yes at...Wade's. Right. Thomas Mudd and Frank [Wade].

J: Thomas V. R. Mudd?

D: Thomas V. R. Mudd.

J: Yes I know him—

D: And Frank [Wade]. They're both dealers. See my mother was...politically Republican.

J: Oh okay that's certainly—

D: And she campaigned. That's right.

J: Did she like Sydney Mudd?

D: Oh yes. She campaigned for Thomas. Had my brother out in politics. Call on it [inaudible phrase]. He was an orator my brother was. He always wanted to have been a lawyer had he gone to school. And his daughter's a lawyer and a granddaughter is studying to be one at Yale now.

J: Well how do you feel about education today?

D: Oh I'm 100 percent for it. That's the problem with our world today.

J: Okay. Are we losing any ground?

D: [Inaudible]. Somewhere along the line [inaudible phrase] and I could push everything over that telephone. How did this [drug] war take over.

J: Yeah it's hurting. It's hurting.

D: How did we allow it to take over?

J: Just think you've only been retired now what 15 years?

D: No, no, no 78, 12 years.

J: 12 years.

D: 12 years this June.

J: And already we're looking back on those as the good old days in education.

D: That's right.

J: Pretty sad. Would you like to be back in there today?

D: Teaching?

J: Yeah. They need you.

D: No I'm too old.

J: Well they need you.

D: I could be a resource but I'm too old for that. I couldn't get out on that playground. You see—

J: Oh you couldn't play baseball but—

D: No but what I'm saying is I could not go on field trips over night, [hay rides in day]. See that's what I had to do. Up at the Ferguson farm. I got out at 59. I was 59 when I retired. And I've been

doing volunteer work ever since. I took on the job of Tri—County for nine years. Seeing that people get oil, wood—

[Tape 2 Ends]