Transcript of OH-00136

Edna Warren Simmons

Interviewed by

John Wearmouth

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Typographic Note

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

Subjects

African American teachers
Education
Racism
Rural conditions
Rural schools
School integration
Segregation
Segregation in education

Tags

Food preservation

One room school house

Transcript

John Wearmouth [J]: This is John Wearmouth interviewing Mrs. Edna Simmons at her home on Maryland Route 6 just east of Ironsides in the western part of the county. Her address is Route 6 Ironsides Maryland. She was born near her November 3rd, 1897 as were her mother and father. She was a teacher in this county most of her working life and we're going to concentrate today on her experiences as a black teacher in a segregated school. And this will be part of permanent Charles County Community College Oral History record of teaching in Charles County. How many children were there in your family, brothers and sisters?

Edna Warren Simmons [E]: Well of what I can remember now because some of them passed while they were little you know. I would say brothers and—I'll say 12. I'll say 12.

J: 12. How many of them lived to become adults?

E: Well, I guess about 10 of them I reckon.

J: That's a pretty good average. I see your husband's name was Sidney Mudd Simmons?

E: Yes but everybody called him Mudd you know.

J: Oh I see.

E: But that was his real name because when he got to go to Indian Head they didn't have the same name for him that they had when he went in the service see. And I went down to St. Thomas's and his name was Sidney Mudd Simmons.

J: How did he come by that name?

E: Well he was a baby born the same day that Mr. Mudd was running for an office and he visited his home and—

J: How old would your husband be now if he were alive in 1988?

E: He would be—I was one year older than he. I was one year—Now my birthday came November 3rd, 1897. And his birthday was [18]98. And he was born July—I think July the 3rd, 1898.

J: Alright so he was born when Sidney Emmanuel Mudd Sr. was in his very first full term in the Congress of the United States.

E: Well he was—I don't know what office he's in, but you know but his mother told me that.

J: Right he was a congressman from the 5th congressional district.

E: That's right. And then you know how they used to go from home to home?

J: Yeah right, shake hands, get out the vote.

E: That's right, oh my.

J: Did your father take politics seriously?

E: Oh my, oh my.

J: What party was he a member of? I really don't have to ask but I want you to tell.

E: Republican.

J: Of course.

E: Republican and he used to go up and vote in the morning but he wasn't one of these men who hung around voting all day. He'd go up there and vote six or seven o'clock in the morning and come on home and do his work because my father worked at Indian Head.

J: Now what was your father's full Christian name?

E: Well, Eddy Warren all I knew.

J: Eddy Warren?

E: Yeah.

J: And you were Ms. Edna Warren until you got married.

E: That's right. Yes.

J: Okay was your—how old roughly do you think your father was when you were born?

E: Well see [this is not anything]. Well I guess people around knew. You know but he'd never talk with us about his birthday you know like that. But I don't know. When I was born? Well I don't know.

J: Was he older than your mother a little bit?

E: Yes, but you know not a whole lot.

J: And so your mother was Sarah Hanson before?

E: [That's what she said]. That's what she told us.

J: Okay alright. Now do you know whether or not either of your parents were born as slaves into slave families? Did they ever mention it to you at all?

E: No, no.

J: Was this something that people would just not talk about sometimes?

E: Well, I think his parents must have been but he wasn't.

J: Okay. Is the house still standing where you were born? Do you know?

E: No. No because you know the two-story house you passed down here?

J: Yes.

E: Well that's our homeplace. And see that wasn't the first house you know. Another house this house that's down here now was built right in the same, on the same place.

J: Oh did your father build this house that's still standing?

E: No, a man named Isaac Posey.

J: Isaac Posey.

E: And some other men built the house.

J: Okay what was life like at home for you as a young girl? Did you have any sisters now?

E: One.

J: One and the rest were boys?

E: Yeah.

J: So this put a lot of burden on your mother and you girls in the kitchen?

E: Oh yeah I had to wash dishes all the time, all the time.

J: How did you like that?

E: I liked it and I even like to do it now. If I was able I'd still like to wash dishes. And I like to wash dishes and I like to wash [clothes].

J: What was laundry day like in your family?

E: Well my mother did most of that. My mother did most of the washing because you know they had a tub you washed in, another tub you rinsed in, another tub you rinsed in.

J: Okay what sort of a ringer did she use?

E: Ringer?

J: Did she have a ringer?

E: Her hand.

J: She'd just ring them by hand? There's no crank turn ringer? How did she heat the water?

E: On the stove.

J: Okay wood fire?

E: That's right. And we always had plenty of wood.

J: Okay what were some of your favorite meals at home? What did the children like? Were there certain things you asked your mother to fix for you on birthdays and special occasions?

E: No because whatever she cooked she always cook enough of it. Because you know we liked anything she cooked.

J: Okay what types of food were kind of scarce then? Did you have enough meat to eat ordinarily?

E: Oh yeah because my father always had hogs in the pen you know. And when he would kill the hogs you know he'd [put some of it salted away now he had now] up in the [corn] house.

J: Okay poultry, chickens?

E: Always had plenty of chicken and eggs and I think we had three cows and always had plenty of milk because we used to take out a cup and go to the barn with my mother and drink. She'd give us a cup of milk right there. But up until now I love milk.

J: Do you really?

E: Yes. I love it.

J: Did you girls ever milk the cows?

E: No my mother did that.

J: As you look back on it now do you think your mother realized that she was having a pretty hard life? Or did she just take it in her stride? How did she face up to this sort of thing?

E: Well wasn't anything too hard as far as we were concerned. Wasn't anything too hard because you know my mother would go out to—course my father worked at night sometimes. Sometimes in the day. And if my mother chose to go to one of the other ladies who lived near, you know they'd go to a birthday party or go sit up with the sick or something like that, why we would just sit there until she came back. And if the night came on we'd put a quilt in the floor and lay down there or else sit in the chair you know. Sit in a chair and—

J: So your father didn't mind her going out and socializing and good and getting away from the household chores?

E: No, no, no because you see my brother and I were the two oldest and we'd take care you know. We'd just a lamp burning sit around table you know.

J: Kerosene?

E: Yeah.

J: How much education did your father have? Did you ever hear?

E: He didn't have much. He had seemed like to me he had a good mind. He had a good mind of right and wrong and tell you what to do but he didn't read and write.

J: Okay and how about your mother?

E: My mother could read and write but you know not a whole lot.

J: But she did go to school for a while?

E: Oh yeah.

J: Do you know where her school was located?

E: Well it must have been somewhere in Pisgah. It must have been somewhere in Pisgah.

J: Okay did your other and father encourage their children to get as much schooling as possible?

E: Well my father always wanted you to go to school. He always wanted you to go to school. And I being the oldest girl there see he you know. He wanted me to be a teacher. Well of course at that time I you know. Course you had to listen to him. You had to do what mother and father told you to do. So I always wanted to be a teacher and if I couldn't be a teacher of course if I had have mercy I would like to have been a nurse. If I had have mercy.

J: Your father felt that teaching was a career for girls but not for boys?

E: That's right.

J: What hopes did he have for his sons for the future?

E: Well he just wanted them to—well I don't know. I don't know he just wanted them to do right and make a living.

J: Did any of your brothers ever end up working for the government at Indian Head?

E: Oh yes. Oh yes I had let me see...I think I had two to retire from Indian Head.

J: Was life then pretty good for them having a steady job?

E: Well they knew when they were boys that you had to do what you're told to. And you know they realized that if I don't work for myself I won't have anything.

J: What sort of food preserving work did your mother do? Did she can for example?

E: Oh my yes. Canned, made preserves.

J: Using the glass jars?

E: Oh yes and then we always had things like that all year round. When spring would come we'd still have it. You know we could go upstairs and look in the safe and get a you know can of peaches or tomato cherries. Course we had three cherry trees down there and we could go get cherries or black berries or anything.

[Tape Interruption]

J: Where did she keep her canned goods for safekeeping?

E: Well she had a cupboard, old cupboard set in the corner upstairs you know. It had a door to it—

J: In the attic?

E: No indeed just upstairs.

J: On the first floor?

E: That's right. And she'd keep her little canned food up there and then you used to put the [preserves] and everything [inaudible] in a big stone jar. And well we always had plenty of

canned food all year round. All the year around just like we'd have cutting meat into. My father used to get beef from the beef man. The leg you know, front leg or a hind leg.

J: Who brought the beef around?

E: The beef man, Mr. [Whitten]. And he—and Papa would always get a leg and hang it up in the [corn] house.

J: A hind corner?

E: Yeah a hind quarter or front. But he mostly got the front quarter I think. And he would hang it up in the [corn] house and in the winter time it would freeze and he would just [inaudible phrase] and cut it off a piece and cut if off then you saw it off because it was frozen.

J: Oh okay were the winters colder then than they are now? Was the winter weather colder then?

E: Oh yeah. It was colder then and the snow was deeper. But you know my father would always have on of these tall wood piles. You know he'd always get his wood before it got cold weather and then he would you know. My brothers used to cut wood or people cut wood we'd go out and get all the chips.

J: The slabs? The barks sides.

E: Yeah chips like that and put them in a basket and set them in the corn house so you have something to make a fire.

J: What sort of games did the children play in those days?

E: Well they played [hide] spy you know you go around and hide behind the house or hide behind the wood pile and you know. And then Mama was there a lot of the time with just the children and Papa would be at work and at night you know we'd play blind man's bluff. Tie your eyes up here and then while the others go hide. I know we played at that. I've kind of forgotten you know. They used to use slates at that time you know where you could draw things and we'd love Mama would let us write on the slate and draw whatever we wanted to.

J: So she encouraged the children to use the slate?

E: Yeah because see—

J: The nearest thing you could get to television wasn't it? It's the nearest thing you could get to TV.

E: Oh you know we didn't have any TV.

J: Did you ever feel as a young lady that life wasn't as good for you as for some of your neighbors? How did you feel about that? You and your sister and brothers.

E: Well no I didn't have any—I don't remember having any bad feelings like that. I don't remember having a feeling like that because we would go to school. Mama would let me stay with you know course she'd always know that this mother said it would be alright and we would stay—I could stay all night and come back to school the next morning and come on home. But you know she'd always say just now behave yourself or do what I told you, you know.

J: So you children never gave your parents any real trouble? There was a discipline in the family that was comfortable for everyone?

E: Well I'll tell you what you know...I don't know. I don't know it was you know we got what we wanted.

J: Okay and you were willing to work to get it?

E: Well.

J: Nothing was ever given to you?

E: No we had to work for it. We'd go out in the field and pull fodder. You know pull the blades off the corn and then we'd pull up grass you know this crab grass and tie it in a bundle and my father would give us a couple of pennies or a nickels or something like that. We were satisfied.

J: So there was always at least enough good food to eat?

E: Oh yeah whatever she cooked cabbage or turnips or she had chickens or what not. We'd always get enough of it. She cooked enough of it to get enough of it.

J: Did your mother make any clothes for the children?

E: Well yes she used to make our dresses and make the boys pants.

J: Excuse me. Where did your mother do most of her shopping for dry goods? Materials, thread, yarn, buttons.

E: Well there was a store up here. There was a store up here in [Rison, Maryland] and there was a white lady who lived across the road from us. Her grandchildren still live over there. Mrs. [Rison]. Mrs. [Rison] would come and get my mother in the buggy and take her up to this store. And then she was nice to us.

J: Who ran the store do you remember?

E: Well I guess [inaudible] Mrs. [Rison] that's all.

J: What sort of white neighbors did you have? Were they decent people that you could enjoy greeting?

E: Oh yes. Mr. [Rison] used to—he'd come over to the house and he would just sit anywhere. And then Mr. Bowie, Mr. Bernard Bowie lived down the road and he would, you know. Of course my father always had, had [cut holes] and things like that to work with and but any course you know a lot of the neighbors used to come and borrow or something. But not these white people they didn't come and borrow. But anything Papa wanted, anything he wanted he could go to them. Anything he wanted he could go to them. You know when time come to—

J: That's because he returned what he borrowed.

E: Yeah.

J: And repaired it if it broke.

E: Yeah he would always. They were always nice to him and you know the white people were friends of my father's and they would come on in and sit on the doorstep or sit anywhere you know. They were nice to him. And if there's kind of heavy snow or something like that my father would put the horses to the drag and drag over everybody's driveway. I can remember he did that. No not that I know of, not that I know of they didn't have any trouble, not that I know of.

J: So they respected each other and you talked together and helped each other out way out in the country like this you really that was the thing to do.

E: Oh yeah they were nice to each other you know. Yeah they were nice to each other.

J: Do you remember ever going into La Plata to go shopping?

E: No.

J: Or Indian Head?

E: Well see since my father worked over there, there was a Mr. Carpenter who lived over there. And he was always nice to my father and my father was always nice to him. And I know Mrs. Carpenter had a brother who worked at the banks at La Plata and whenever—of course I mean I was larger then you know. They were always nice to and Papa would you know they sold hats and things like that you know. Course you know I guess I was...[if he take me if I] if I see anything I wanted if my father could get it he'd get it. So I remember one time he took me over to. Course I don't know who kept the store at La Plata over there then. And he took me over there

I saw hats I wanted. And he said [you said to get the hat for her she wanted it]. So Papa went on and got it. But you know it seemed like to me everybody knew him so well.

J: So he worked for the government too?

E: Yes he did but he became blind.

J: Did he travel to work from here? From Ironsides every day?

E: Oh yes. No not every day. Not every day. Sometimes they had a camp or something over there and sometimes they used to stay over there.

J: Where was the camp located? On the other side of the creek?

E: Well I didn't know much about the creek see.

J: Did he cross this long bridge?

E: Well this was I usually am talking about that. You see I'm gonna talk about the bridge. But I didn't know much about it you know because see we didn't go over it.

J: How did you do in school? Did you like going to school? Did you get good grades in elementary school?

E: Well as far as I can remember I like elementary school but that hilltop hill was too much for me to walk up because I've always been small. And I remember my father—When I'd go to school, when I'd get to school you know they had this big stove in the middle of the floor and it would be hot in there. And I guess when I'd get to school you see it would be too hot or something and [inaudible phrase] I can remember that I would have a [pity spell] so my father took me out and let me live with. I had a half brother and he let me live in Washington with his brother you know for a while because I would. I've never been big. My sister was big but I wasn't. People used to say that Mama didn't give us the same kind of food but she did. But I was just mighty small and I couldn't stand as much as the other children.

J: How tall are you?

E: I guess about—I don't know five feet four, four foot five or something like that.

J: And how much did you weigh at your heaviest?

E: Oh I've never weighed over 20 some pounds?

J: A 100 pounds?

E: Well you mean when I was little?

J: Well when you were an adult and teaching? What was your average weight.

E: Oh I'll tell I have [inaudible phrase] weigh 100 pounds.

J: Oh for goodness sakes.

E: But I like the work so well you know and I wasn't sick. I used to drive and I'd just go to it.

J: How old were you when you decided that you might just like to be a teacher?

E: Well I don't remember just how old I was. I don't remember just how old I was because I tell you what the supervisor at that time wanted a teacher but they wanted—and they couldn't get a teacher. I had finished high school and they wanted a teacher I remember and he came to my mother's house and asked me would I go and keep the school just until they can get a teacher. And I said, "Well I haven't had any experience teaching or nothing like that and I wouldn't know what to do." So he said, "Well you do what your teacher did for you." So anyway....

J: How old were you at this time?

E: I don't know. I don't remember.

J: Where did you finish high school?

E: Well Bowie was a high school. Bowie was a state normal, it was a state normal and this was in 1922. State normal and of course I can remember that that Monday morning I don't know how I got over to oh yeah I can remember that some kind of way I went over there and boarded with this family of people. And I worked with these children you know. I did like I had done you know like the teacher had worked with me. And I worked with them and I liked it alright and the supervisor never. All he said was, "Just stay here, just stay here until we get a teacher."

J: Where was this school located?

E: McConchie.

J: Right here.

E: Yeah McConchie.

J: So who was this supervisor? Do you remember the name? A man or a woman?

E: I know the supervisor. Mr. Gwynn was the superintendent but he seemed like. This supervisor well they had a lady over at the La Plata office and then there was Mr. Parks I think.

J: Do you remember Ms. Jennie Bowie? Ever hear of her?

E: I heard of her. I heard of her but I didn't know. They had a white school colored school in McConchie and at Hill Top too they had a white school and colored school. So I went and seemed like they never did get a teacher. They never did get a teacher. I stayed there 25 or 30 years. And they never did get a teacher. No never did get one.

J: So what sort of a certificate did you get now which qualified you to become a teacher? Did you get one at Bowie? Bowie State.

E: Yeah. Yeah I got one yeah. It said I could teach you know.

J: Through what level of school?

E: Well it said but I don't remember, but it said.

J: Elementary school?

E: Yes. Yeah that's what it said. And so anyway I stayed over there and [they liked it] and I liked it. I stayed there 30 years I guess.

J: In that same building?

E: In the same building 30 years. And I know one year see the white school used to—the colored school used to close and the white school would be over a month after. And so I remember they had a little party at the school to get me to stay there you know. I don't remember if the school closed in April or May. I don't remember but anyway they wanted me to stay there that month that our school closed. So I stayed and they said well we can't pay you very much but we'll just pay you enough for your job, you know just enough. I don't know whether I was driving then or not.

J: You were living here in Ironsides?

E: Yeah.

J: At the old house down here?

E: Yeah.

J: How many miles are we from the school at McConchie from here?

E: Five.

J: Five okay.

E: Five or six something like that.

J: Did you ever walk that distance?

E: Yes sir I walked it one day but I was married then though. I was married and I don't know my husband didn't come from Indian Head in time or something and I walked from McConchie home and then when I got home hadn't anybody been to the post office and I walked on up to the post office.

J: How old were you then?

E: Oh I guess about I don't know I must have been in my late 20's. Or early 30's or something like that.

J: Where did you and your husband meet? Did you know him when you were children?

E: Well yeah I don't know. He didn't live too far from here. He lived over in Rison, Maryland and he seemed like to me before he went to Indian Head to work he worked up in Johnstown, Pennsylvania in a steel mill. But I knew him.

J: Was he from Charles County?

E: Yeah.

J: Okay.

E: Then after a long time you know we just met each other and he had a brother and his brother comes by to see me now. You know, "Just to came by to see how you feel and if there's anything I can do to help you." You know.

J: Does he live nearby, the brother?

E: He lives over in Pisgah in [La Plata] and he's 70 some years old. He's 77 or 78 or something like that.

J: What's his name now?

E: Grover.

J: Grover Simmons.

E: That's right.

J: Do you remember yet some of those children that you taught during those first few years?

E: I'd like to show to you a picture of them do you mind?

J: No I.... So you've met Mr. Gwynn huh?

E: Oh yeah I knew Mr. Gwynn I thought he was a fine person. Yeah I thought he was a fine person. He was superintendent at that time and Mr. Gwynn I think Mr. Padgett or—

J: You knew Mr. Barnhart I guess?

E: Oh yeah I knew Mr. Barnhart of yeah.

J: Now after you taught—after you started teaching here at McConchie did you ever return to school yourself to take graduate work? Where did you go?

E: Oh yeah, oh yes. 1927, in 1927 it was that every teacher had to have a first grade certificate. Well I went to Morgan College, I went to Hampton, Oh I went to Hampton one or two or three times.

J: Hampton, Virginia? Down near Newport, News?

E: Yeah that's right. I went to Hampton. And I went to Petersburgh, Virginia. I guess it's a Petersburgh normal now. And I went to, I went back to Bowie.

J: Well did you eventually have the equivalent of a baccalaureate degree?

E: No I just got this first grade certificate.

J: I see.

E: See because that's what the requirement was. That you have a first grade certificate by 1927. But I was so anxious to have it when they counted my credits I had many more than I really needed. But you know it was—we weren't getting much money but sometimes I have to go to work before coming back home. Oh yeah a lot of times when I went to Petersburgh I got a job down there and worked before I came back home. To get my fare you know.

J: What was it like living in Petersburgh in those days as a young black girl?
E: Wasn't so good.

J: Was it worse than here?

E: It didn't bother me. It didn't bother me because the people that I lived with they had a daughter who was a teacher here in the county. They told me all about you know how things were. You'd be polite to everybody and mind your own business and so forth and so one morning—of course I didn't know. I didn't know the conditions down there at first but one morning a girl got on the

bus and there was a teenager I guess on the bus too and she sat down in the seat where he was and he pushed out.

J: So this is a white teenager?

E: That's right and he pushed her out of the seat. And I said, "Won't the bus driver tell him don't do that?" And she said, "No the bus driver not gonna say a thing to him."

J: About what year was this? 1928 or so?

E: Oh yeah maybe before that. Maybe before that.

J: You'd never seen anything like that?

E: Oh no. No see I had never seen anything like that before. And you know I didn't know why he did it you know. And so she just got up and she went back in that car bus and sat down but we were already sitting down and didn't anybody bother us. And everybody was alright. I went back home we were talking I was telling the lady about it. Of course I guess her daughter already knew. She said, "Well we're not supposed to sit up there. We're supposed to sit back here." And I said, "Oh well didn't she know it?" And said, "She knew it but that was the only seat for her to sit in." And he was sitting by himself so she just sit down there. You know but nothing bothered me. Everything went on alright. We never had any trouble like that that I know of. Only you couldn't use the same—in La Plata you know you had to—

J: Where would you go to get a lunch in La Plata when you were a young lady? Was there any place?

E: I could go to Bowie's. Mr. Bowie who lived right there on the corner by the railroad tracks. And that's the only place I know.

J: You could go in there and sit down and be served?

E: But you see you had to sit on this side.

J: Oh there was a special place for you to sit.

E: That's right. There were like in there you know all the white people sit over there.

J: They sat on the left side as you went in the door?

E: Yeah.

J: And you were on the right side toward the track?

E: That's right. That's right but we didn't mind. When they have a meeting and thing we'd know where we had to go. I can't tell the color for who used to cook for us. I can't think of his name now but anyhow he would serve you but you didn't get served over there. You'd get served over here but we didn't mind that because we knew how to do it. [Wasn't] I didn't do it you know. And we were thankful to be able to get something to eat and not have to wait until we came back home.

J: Did you ever ride on the train from La Plata?

E: Oh yeah that was my only way of going to Bowie.

J: Ah okay what years were you going to Bowie now? Late 20's? How old do you think you were when you were traveling back and forth?

E: Well you see one thing before I left here to go to Bowie I hadn't finished elementary grades. I don't know maybe. I don't know grades I were in because you see I left Washington and went to Bowie because see I was there just a year. And my father since it was a boarding school I stayed up there.

J: At Bowie?

E: At Bowie it was a boarding school and I stayed up there.

J: How expensive was it for you to go to Bowie? Did anybody help you at all?

E: My father. My father helped me. I don't remember now how much a month it paid and then my sister went to Bowie too but see I was working when my sister went and I helped her. My father—

J: Was she older than you?

E: No, no, no I was about five years older than she. There was a brother between us.

J: Did she teach eventually?

E: Well she taught. Yeah she taught for a while but I don't think her husband liked it too well for her to be. He worked at the Navy yard and for her to be down here teaching. I don't think he liked it too well. But she didn't teach until she retired. No she didn't teach until she retired. She was a good teacher but she didn't teach until she retired.

J: What were your favorite subjects in school?

E: You mean for the children or myself?

J: For you. Where did you feel you were strongest?

E: Reading.

J: Reading okay did you do a lot of reading?

E: No teaching children to read because when I first to McConchie you know there had been a teacher there before. And there was a little boy used to come to school and he'd come and sit in the back. Just come right on in and sit in the back. And I wondered why he didn't sit in the seat—those seats were so they would hold three children see? And I didn't know why he would come in and sit in the back. So I talked with his mother one day and his grandmother didn't live very far from the school. So I said, "James comes in a sits in the back and when the children get up to go home he waits until they go out and then he gets up and goes on out." She said, "Well the teacher didn't teach him." She said, "He couldn't learn." I said, "Did he? Couldn't learn?" I said, "Well now suppose you want him to take a message down to your mother's for you. Take a package down there or take a message?" So she said, "Oh he can do that." I said, "Well if he can take a message he can learn." She said, "Well the teacher said he couldn't learn so she just told him to sit in the back there when he come in." So anyway I said, "Well I'm going to help him. I'm going to bring him out of that corner." I just don't like the idea of him coming in and sitting in the corner.

J: How old a child was he?

E: Well he was about six years old. Six or seven years old I think. And I said, "I'm going to help him." So I felt sorry for the little fellow because he would just come on in and go back there and sit right down and so I started helping him and I don't know whether he went to Bel Alton High School or not but I do know when you know they used to send children to different places to take a test. Some of them would go to Pomonkey, some of them would go to Bel Alton. She said that, she said, "I'm so thankful for him. I'm so happy for my little boy." She said, "Because he can do as well as other children." And I said, "Well I'm thankful too because I really tried to help him." I said, "You don't want him coming into school and sitting in the back."

J: Was he just a slow learner or did he just need some encouragement?

E: He just needed help.

J: Somebody who cared.

E: That's right. That's right. He just needed help.

J: What ever happened to him later in life? Did you ever follow up or have you heard anything?

E: I don't know but I know he worked. He had a job and he worked but I don't know what happened to him. I don't know what happened to him but I do know his brother graduated from Pomonkey High School. And he had a sister she graduated from Bel Alton because see the bus they used to have to pay to go on the bus and the mother used to do different things so she could give him his bus fare.

J: Was this a privately owned bus service? Do you know?

E: I don't know Mr. Compton used to have a bus but you had to pay to go on that bus at that time. And Mr. Posey had a bus at that time. But you had to pay to go on the bus.

J: When you were a young lady who were some of your favorite authors? What kind of reading did you like most? Fiction, history, poetry?

E: Well I don't know that I had any best but I you know I would just read to get information. I don't think I had any—

J: So newspapers were important to you and magazines when you could get them?

E: Oh yeah that's right.

J: Where was the nearest library to McConchie and Ironsides? Where we are now. Where did young people go 60 years ago for books?

E: Well I guess the teachers would have them in the schools. I guess the teachers would have them in the—

[Tape Interruption]

J: I'm going to ask the question again to put it on here. What was so different, what was so special to you in teaching the first grade? What was the inspiration and the challenge for you?

E: In teaching the first grade I loved to see the little people get started. There you see they'd come in and some of them didn't know how to sit down you know. And they didn't know how to take their coats off. They'd just stand there you know.

J: They were little mirrors of their home life. You could tell.

E: That's right the poor little things they didn't know, they didn't know up from down. They'd come in and just stand there before you'd take the coat off, hang it up and show them where to sit.

J: Was discipline ever a problem with youngsters like this?

E: Not that I remember course I didn't have any big children. You know they told me, "You mean what you say." I said, "Oh yes I mean what I say alright." And I didn't, I didn't have no fighting back with no children like that. And I always had good parents.

J: That's important.

E: They were good parents. They would tell me you know if he doesn't do what you tell him to do tell me, tell me. I always had good parents.

J: So they knew the value?

E: Yes, yes.

J: Of training this thing up here.

E: That's right. That's right when Ms., when Ms. Hill returned one of my—

J: Ms. Minnie Hill?

E: Yeah one of—they had an affair for her over to Alexander Church I think. There was a young man who came in there because he had been president during out parent teacher meetings. And he said, "I see Ms. Edna Simmons back there." And they didn't come there to talk about me but he said, "I see her sitting back there and," he said, "I'm telling you she was number one." And he said, "She helped me. She helped me." Well he's retired from the Navy yard and he's heading down to over Pomonkey somewhere now. And he said, "She helped me." You know.

J: So they are grateful after all these years? They are grateful.

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

J: Now that sort of feeds the spirit doesn't it?

E: Oh my he's—I mean he's a graduate from Bel Alton High School and then he married and I've taught his children. I taught his children. He said...so I was saying they didn't come in there to talk about Edna Simmons they came in there to talk about Minnie Hill you know. But he said, "She helped me." But he's retired from the Navy yard and as I said he [inaudible] when the schools, when the high schools opened—

J: Now when you were teaching at McConchie did you teach all of the grades there?

E: One through seven.

J: One through seven.

E: That's right.

J: And for how many years again?

E: 30.

J: 30 years at one school teaching all grades.

E: That's right and then I went to—then when they came with consolidation I went to Port Tobacco. And I think I—well I stayed enough year to make it 46 years. I loved it. I just loved—because and I had the first grade all this time.

J: What was your pay the first two or three years?

E: What was what?

J: How much did they pay you in the late 20's?

E: Didn't even get 100 dollars.

J: A year?

E: No. I mean I don't know about a year, paid in the year, but I'm talking about the month. I didn't get 100 dollars from it but I wasn't bothered about the money. I wasn't bothered about the money. It was helping these children. It was helping these children you know.

J: At about what point in the development of these children did you begin to pick out children that needed and extra push? Children you thought were going to go on to high school. When did this sign begin to develop? In about what grade? That's a hard question I know. But somewhere along the like you must have been able to see in certain students some promise?

E: Well you see when they get in the seventh grade they go to Bel Alton and take this test. Or they go to Pomonkey and take this test.

J: Those were the two colored high schools?

E: That's right. And well then you see after taking this test you know I had some of those papers where the children made the scores. I think the passing score was around 60 and I—around 60—and I didn't have any that go take the test and fall below 80.

J: That's marvelous.

E: You know that I know of.

J: What was considered a very high score on that test?

E: Well I had one little boy I think made 98. And I don't what he's doing now. I [mean] [inaudible phrase] children these days don't you know don't do that.

J: Now was this test the same as one given to white students?

E: Yes. Oh yes.

J: Was it the same test?

E: And probably the same you should have had in your school because they had geography at that time and they had history too. And you know different subjects like they call it social studies now but they don't know whether they're taking social studies. The children don't know themselves they don't know each from [inaudible]. They you know, I don't criticize the teacher because I don't know what they're doing. I don't know what they have. I wouldn't dare to criticize the teacher. I don't care who the teacher is. I wouldn't say nothing about what she's doing what she got to do, but I do know that some of the children my lord.

J: How much emphasis did you place on speech? Language? Enunciation?

E: Well you know in teaching at that time you would get the children to pronounce things as well as they could. If you couldn't you'd go back and have them again you know. What I believed in that I used to stay after school or maybe stay after school and help them who's slow and because my sometimes I couldn't sleep because I don't believe that John Doe really got it. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't sleep.

J: Did you find it difficult to undo incorrect speech patterns that weren't much different?

E: No but you know what you had to do would take time. It'd take time. And you know in the home in some homes they didn't always hear good language.

J: No radios to listen to?

E: No.

J: No telephone?

E: No. And sometimes when the child says, "I ain't gonna do this. I ain't gonna do that." They don't take time to say, "I'm not gonna do it," you know.

J: Do you recall some of the unusual pronunciations of common words that were not strange at all to you that you tried to do away with, to correct? Were there modismos, idioms, local speech patterns that you made a special effort to overcome?

E: I don't remember doing that. I don't remember doing that but I always tried to tell them what to say and what to do and things like that but I don't remember.

J: How much emphasis at Bowie State was placed on speech, diction?

E: Well I don't know particularly that now. I don't know that now. I know they worked hard on it you know.

J: When you went to Washington how long did you live in Washington with your—

E: Just a year.

J: Did you notice a difference there in the way people spoke? Was there a difference between city speech and country speech?

E: Well I don't remember too much about it. I don't remember too much about it because I was just 13 or 14 years old and I don't remember too much about it.

J: I thought you might have thought to yourself these folks speak kind of funny?

E: No, no, no.

J: When did you meet Minnie Hill? How old were the two of you?

E: Oh I don't know I would have been teaching quite a few years before I met her because she came from Pittsburgh like Mrs. Neal did. And Mrs. Neal was our supervisor. [Inaudible] but I mean principal at Port Tobacco. But I don't how old I was or how long I had been working when she came. I don't remember.

J: During your teaching at McConchie what shortages were there in the classroom of teaching aides? What did you have to do without once in a while?

E: Oh my.

J: Did you ever have to try and earn a little extra money for some of the luxury hot items like more chalk?

E: No.

J: How did you as a teacher—

E: Yes I used to take out of my own pocket and buy a box of crayons and buy paper for the children, buy pencils for the children. But you know we could get a certain amount because the school board would give us a certain amount. But then it wasn't as much as you wanted. So you

know you'd have to buy it if wanted paper to run off on machines. Run off the children's work you know you'd have to go over there and buy it.

J: How helpful were the parents in filling in these gaps of administrative and logistical support?

E: Well they would give the children a certain amount of paper to use you know. But not the kind that you used to run off on the machines.

J: Were the books furnished in the early years that you taught?

E: We could use the books that the white children had finished with. Yeah the white children had to finish with them.

J: And what was left, well—worn.

E: Yeah. The supervisor used to go around and get a whole lot of books that had been used. Well we were glad to get them. We were glad to get them.

J: Did Mr. Parks do that too?

E: Oh yes and we were glad to have them. Yeah we were glad to—and he'd come in there with five or six books you know. But we knew that they were—we knew they weren't new but we were glad to have them.

J: Did most of the youngsters seem to be proud of their books? Respected the—

E: Oh my goodness. Oh my yes. They were glad to get them. Yeah they were glad to get them.

J: How many of them used to come to school with their lunch?

E: Well I'll tell you—

[Tape Interruption]

J: What was the lunch situation? Did most of the children have to bring their lunch at McConchie?

E: Well most of them wanted to bring but you know they didn't have what they wanted. So we took the cloak room—you know the cloak room?

J: Yes.

E: The room that you hang all your coats and everything. We took that and made a kitchen out of it.

J: Was there a separate entrance way?

E: No we just had to come right in, come in through that door, one door. But we made a kitchen out of that cloak room.

J: So McConchie was just one big room? One room?

E: That's right. But it had an entrance. It has a—well you'd come in the cloak room first and then come on into the school. But anyway we made a kitchen out of it. And we bought an oil stove. An oil stove you know.

J: Kerosene?

E: Kerosene. And I used to buy some cans of soup and—

J: Out of your own money?

E: Oh yeah and buy maybe I'd get a beef bone. See the one time they used to give us a bone from the store. And I'd buy a bone and a lady used to come up in the morning and see I couldn't take time from the lesson. And she'd come up in the morning and open these cans of beans or open the cans of soup what not and we had little bowls and spoons we bought it—

J: Was this lady a mother of any of the children?

E: Oh yes. Oh yeah.

J: And did she ever get paid anything for this?

E: Oh no. No she did it out of kindness and she would empty the bowls of soup and add water with it you know and give it. [When pictures of] all of those children who were there would get a bowl of soup regardless of whether they had their lunch or not. Would get a bowl of soup.

J: Did you fix anything to drink in addition to that? Hot chocolate or?

E: Oh no. Well sometimes if we had hot chocolate. [Inaudible phrase] with what they had.

J: Were you able to pick out children that you knew were not coming to school with food in their stomachs? Could you tell and were they generally from the same family?

E: You mean who were coming to school who didn't have?

J: Who had not even had a meal that morning.

E: Oh yeah, oh yes. That's why we always tried to give everybody a bowl.

J: So they not only didn't bring their lunch they hadn't even had breakfast in addition?

E: That's right.

J: What about dress? In warm weather were some of the children coming barefoot to school?

E: Oh yes some of the boys. And then you know I bought many a pair of shoes. I bought them many pairs of shoes. And the children talk about it now. There are some who are grown. They said, "Mrs. Edna bought shoes for me." They called me by my first name. And they said, "She bought shoes for me and she gave me [this or that]." But you know I'm thankful. I'm just so thankful I could help.

J: Now you never saw girls come to school like that did you?

E: Oh no. Oh no.

J: Now today this young lady sitting across from us is dressed like most young ladies with jeans of some sort and a heavy cotton either sweatshirt and the soft tennis shoes or jogging shoes. Now in those days how were most of the girls dressed that appeared for school? Did they generally wear some pretty nice clothes to school? The best they had that is?

E: Well....

J: In warm weather for example.

E: They had more skirt and blouse.

J: Or one piece? Okay did you have your own well at McConchie? A good water supply?

E: Well at first we used to have to go to a spring down through the woods. We used to go to the spring and then [was found] you know it came to it that this spring on this right hand side is at the foot of a hill that comes down from a house and then we found another spring back of the school and we started to do that. And then I asked the school board if I may have a pump. A well you know with a pump. They gave us a well and a pump.

J: And before that you were carrying it in a bucket?

E: That's right.

J: Who's job was that to get the water in everyday? Did people take turns?

E: Well yes that's right.

J: And you would assign this responsibility?

E: That's right.

J: The boys generally did that?

E: Always.

J: Okay what did the girls do? What was their little extra job.

E: They would sweep or wash windows, clean the [inaudible] board.

J: You had no janitorial service assigned at all?

E: Oh no. Oh no.

J: Was McConchie school finished on the inside? Were the walls plastered?

E: Well they were plastered when I first went there. They were plastered when I first went there you know. Then the plaster used to fall. And then they put that on.

J: They covered it with a wood, a plywood type thing in later years which made it easier to heat?

E: That's right.

J: What was your heating situation there? Your heat system.

E: Well we just had a big iron stove that sat in the middle of the floor.

J: Okay right in the middle of it.

E: Yeah.

J: Was it enough to keep you fairly comfortable?

E: Oh yeah. Oh yes because you know see we when I first went there I had no ventilation unless I put a book or something to raise the window up you know. So one day Mr. Huffington, Mr. Huffington came and he said, "You can't use your books—"

J: Who was he?

E: He was the State Superintendent. And he said, "You can't use your books to put the window up like that." And he was very caustic. During the next week there was a man around who used to you know do things for us or you could call on to help. And I asked him if you would, I said, "Run up there and get your [cut bit.] When they cut a piece out of there. You know, windows that you had to push up? "Cut a piece out about like that three pieces and leave the stick. Don't throw the stick away that you cut out. And let it, so I can let that window down." He said, "Well

you can't do that to our school." He said, "You can't come over here and think you're going to tear up things." You know so I said, "Well I'm going to get it done." Course I was young you know. I said, "I'm going to get it done." So he said, "Well you want it done so badly," he said, "I'll cut it out." So he cut the little stick out up there and that let the window down see. And when it would rain or something we pushed the window up and put the little stick back under there. So anyway he did that. And when the Superintendent came back he said, "Oh you've done a—" Well you know he commented on it. And he said, "That was a nice thing to do because you can get air from the top." Another thing they didn't like, you know the old schools used to have something to put the teacher up higher than the children.

J: Oh the platform—

E: That's right yeah. So I told them I wanted to take that out. So one of the trustees said, "You can't take that out. That's a part of the school. You can't take that out the teacher belongs up higher than the children." I said, "No the teacher belongs down with the children." So he had it with me but I was young of course and I had it with him. And I said, "Well I'm gonna if there's a floor underneath of it. If there's a floor underneath of it we're gonna take it out." So I didn't ask the trustees or anybody. Next day I told the children take the ax and raise that up and if there's a floor under it we'd leave it there. If there's no floor we....

J: If there's a floor you're gonna move it?

E: Move it. So there was a floor. So we moved it and split it up for kindling wood.

J: Did you have a desk of your own at the school most of the time?

E: Well it had some kind of a one at first but I asked Mr. Gwynn for a desk and he gave me a new desk.

J: A new one?

E: A new one. He gave me a new desk. And it had drawers that you pull out you know and a piece that they pull out that you could write on you know.

J: Oh yeah. How old were you then when you got this new desk?

E: Oh I don't remember.

J: You were in the first decade of your teaching? 1930 or so?

E: Well no I had been when I started turning things around I hadn't been there more than one year. But you know I don't know whether it was the right thing or not but I wanted I wanted. I

wanted done. And I was kind of determined being young I guess. I was kind of determined. But you know they didn't like it so well for me to do things like that but I did it just the same.

J: How did you feel about the equal opportunity situation in the county? Did you think about it seriously?

E: Well I—

J: Did you think it existed?

E: Well I'll tell you...I didn't think about it in that way see, about equal opportunity. But of course it was all done before I got to thinking about that. You know about things being equal because what I mean to say I like school so well I wasn't bothered. Because I remember once I went to Mr. Bowling's store in La Plata and Mr. Bowling only had one clerk at that time. And I used to go there often for what I wanted. And he said, "How do you like this consolidation?" I said, "I don't like it. I like the one room school." He said, "Well you don't know what you're talking about." I said, "Well you know it seems like to me you can get closer to your children." I said, "They don't seem to be doing very much all these." Well I had been in a one room school so long see I had just.

J: When consolidation came how many of the one room schools were put into one at Port Tobacco? McConchie was one and what were some of the others?

E: McConchie, Port Tobacco. I don't know we had 13 teachers over there.

J: So possibly 13 schools?

E: We had 13 teachers over there.

J: What were their names? Do you remember some of them?

E: Yeah [Pearl Furey] was one.

J: Pearl Furey. Pearl Thompson Furey.

E: That's right. And Clara Price Marbury.

J: Okay Clara Price Marbury.

E: And Minnie Field. Minnie Field Hill.

J: Minnie Field Hill okay from Pittsburgh.

E: That's right and Anna K. Barbour. Anna [Kiera] Barbour right here in Pisgah.

J: Any men teachers at all?

E: Well yes, once in a while but he didn't stay. William Digges.

J: Oh he's still with us is he?

E: He's on this negro history now.

J: Oh yes, right, right. So am I but he doesn't know it.

E: And well....

J: Who was your principal?

E: Mrs. Mary Neal for one. And then I had...won't come to me right away. Only had two principals while I was there. But Mary Neal was one and I know the other one but I can't think of his name.

J: Well anyway I'll add to this what I get from Pearl. She's got that big black and white photograph of all of you and I'm gonna see if she will let me make copies of it for the college record. So you'll be there and she'll help me put the identification on the back. If she can't I'll come and see you. But she seems to think she knew them all. What was it like going into a new building? Brick, running water, good lights, good windows, how did that affect you?

E: Well it didn't affect me it was all alright but seems as though to me in going into it was hard for me to become—to find something to do all the time. See you know—see I had been working with these little children all day you know. When I went over there you know it seemed like if I worked with them in the morning don't seem like to me there was anything else to do later.

J: So at McConchie every minute of the day you knew what you were going to do?

E: Yeah.

J: And there was never any time when you could slack off?

E: And then see when your children would go outside you'd have a big girl or a teacher or somebody in charge. But see when my children were at McConchie when they'd go outside I'd be out there with them.

J: That brings up something else—

E: Well I told the Superintendent I didn't like the idea of somebody else taking the children outside. I'd like to do it myself. But you see I don't guess I could see through it then.

J: What sort of organized sport activities did you as a teacher plan at McConchie? Were there certain type of games that you tried to teach the children? Did you sometimes actually play with them?

E: Always. Most of the time. Most of the time. Most of the time I was out there to see what went on.

J: Could you play baseball?

E: In some kind of way.

J: Did some of the girls?

E: In some kind of way but you know if I didn't play I was right there to see the gameplay.

J: Did you have any sports equipment at all at McConchie?

E: Nothing but nothing.

J: A soccer ball for example?

E: No nothing but I had a baseball and bat. Seesaw and swing but see I was out there unless in the morning when I had the first grade there'd be too many in the school room for me to keep I'd let the little children go outside. But there was a window right there. I could always look right out the window and see what they were doing.

J: And they knew you were watching them too.

E: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

J: What was the playground like? Just dirt smooth?

E: No we had grass on it.

J: Did you have grass? Okay. Well you look back on that now that was—sounds like a very rewarding life for you.

E: In here—excuse me.

J: When did you begin teaching at the new consolidated school now what year was this?

E: 62.

J: 62.

E: Yeah I think we went there in 62. I stayed there 14 years. Well I think it's 14 because I was at McConchie for 30 and I stayed there long enough to make it 46 when I retired.

J: So 16 more years.

E: That's right.

J: And you retired then about what year? 70—

E: 68.

J: You retired in 68?

E: Yeah. I retired in 68.

J: So 52 was when you first started at Port Tobacco? 52.`

E: Yeah that's right.

J: And you retired in 68. So you were there when my two children were there.

E: Oh really?

J: Pearl Furey was my son's first grade teacher.

E: Oh really?

J: Yep very first year. How was it? You were a teacher in the Charles County Schools during those early years of integration right?

E: Yes.

J: Were there any problems for you? Any unpleasant experiences? How did you as a person take?

E: No. No I didn't have any. No I [Inaudible phrase]. I don't think that I—no I haven't had any problems at all.

J: Who were some of your favorite white teachers that you met during your last years as a teacher?

E: Well—

J: Were there any you felt especially good towards?

E: Well I can't remember. I can't remember. I can only remember.... I don't remember coming into contact with them. I just don't remember. I know the lady up here at the post office. I can remember her. I can remember coming into contact with her.

J: Was she a teacher?

E: No she's a postman. The lady who kept the post office. She had a sister who was a teacher but she wasn't over in this area. She was over.

J: Okay did you have any concern or apprehension about how this thing was going to work in the beginning? Was it smoother or rougher than you thought it would be teaching mixed groups?

E: Well I didn't have—I haven't had any trouble like that you see. I haven't had any trouble like that. I...we didn't have so many.... It seemed like to me most of the children were in the upper grades. See I didn't have any in the lower grades. But I did have one. I had one family but they were very nice because I had known them all the time. But I didn't have any—you know I—

J: What grade did they put you into at Port Tobacco?

E: Supervisor told them give me the first. Supervisor said to give me the first grade.

J: And you were happy with that assignment?

E: Oh delighted. Delighted because I just loved—even back when—if I could work with children now I would still want first grade. And then to—excuse me—not only the first grade but I would want children who were slow. I want those who were very slow.

J: You feel that that's your special mission or was as a teacher?

E: Yeah that's right.

J: Which meant you were willing to work harder and longer and accept a little less.

E: You know years ago they used to—we have a test with whole group and then—

J: Grade by grade?

E: No first graders. First graders would come in. They had—they'd give them a test and then—

J: When they first arrived?

E: No we'd have them about two weeks or something like that. Then they'd give them a test. And then after giving them the test the principal would give me 32 and give Pearl Furey 32. Or give them 30. And I would—see the beginning of school not two weeks and I would always say now,

"Mrs. Furey all those who fail in the test give them to me. All those who fail." She said, "Well you can have them. You can have them." I said, "All those who fail the test give them to me." And she'd give them to me so she would and then there was another teacher who had the second grade. She said, "I don't like no slow children. I don't like no slow children." She said, "When school closed all those that are good I want to know because I want them for the second grade." I said, "Well I want all who are slow. Those who finish—those who don't pass the test." And then, Mrs. Furey used to say, "I don't see how in the world your children do so well?" She said, "You don't [like] the best?" I said, "No I don't." But she said, "You take those little children but," she said, "They get ahead of mine. They get ahead." Pearl will tell you that. She'll tell you that. She said,
They get ahead of mine." I said, "Well I don't care how slow they are. Give me the slow ones."

J: What was there about your teaching that enabled them to get ahead of the other group?

E: Well I don't know.

J: You had to be doing something different.

E: Well I don't know. I don't know because maybe the little fellow who just you think he's impossible but after I work on him and keep him and work on him. And then too I always told her be honest with the parent. If he's not ready for the second grade don't pass him. But talk to the mother and father. Talk to the parents and tell them that sometimes you take the children even in your own family [inaudible] [maybe the youngest one with cut teeth pulled out of them.] And maybe he'll walk before another one. Or maybe he'll talk before the other one. But I say you have to think about all that. They don't always do things the same time.

J: How important is motivation to the slow learner?

E: Well it's very important I think.

J: How important is self respect? Now we're getting there aren't we?

E: Oh my. Let him know that I want to help him.

J: That he's somebody too.

E: That's right. I want to help him you know. You know I'm telling you if I was able to work now I would want the slowest first graders that they have. The slowest ones that they have.

J: Did you ever do any tutoring work after you retired?

E: Well I substitute for one teacher about four days or something like that but I never. I didn't go back.

J: So in helping the slow learner we're talking about self respect, you build that. Care, you let them know you care. Three, you have confidence in them. Four, you can teach your subject. Five, you're honest with yourself, the student, and his parents.

E: But I said above all if you're going to keep him back talk with the mother. Talk with them because sometimes they don't want you just to keep them back. I said you know talk. If he can't pass give him a chance, another year and he'll do a whole lot better you know. But I said, "Talk with the mother though. Talk with the father. Get them to understand that all children are not alike. All children are not alike." But you know I just love that first grade. I just love the first grade. And what I mean to say, I would try to work with the others and I'd do all I could but still you see that little fellow he seemed like he just can't get it. Just can't get it.

J: Do you think there would be a place in Charles County schools today for a young teacher feeling as you do? Do we still have those slow learners out there that people aren't reaching? Are we wasting some of these youngsters because there's not enough care?

E: Well I—of course I don't know what the other teachers are doing now. That's what I told you. I don't know what the other teachers re doing and don't know how they're trying. I do think that [to make it] you got to want to help him, to want to do it. Not because you're getting paid but you just got the want to help him.

J: And that student must know how you feel?

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

J: Would integration have helped much if it had come a quarter of a century sooner? Have you ever thought about that? How do you feel now?

E: Well the only thing I think about—

J: Would we be ahead?

E: We may have gotten more things to help us. That's the only way I feel about it. We may have gotten more to help us you know. You see since consolidation came you have a whole lot to help you. [Inaudible].

J: That's true.

E: You didn't have—

J: No shortage of equipment or space. All the comforts are there. Two people come to work [hungry] anymore.

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

J: So it's hard to measure isn't it?

E: [Inaudible talking to unknown person in the room]. Well when I first started teaching it seemed as though I got about 36 dollars a month. It seemed like that. And then I paid 12 of that to the lady I boarded with.

J: Where were you boarding?

E: Over in McConchie. I paid 12 dollars for that. Well then many time I'd come home and wash out my stocking and you know wash my clothes and hang them up so I'd have clean clothes for the next day. But that didn't worry me as well as Johnny was going to get and I [oh how he] was gonna do you know. I wanted him to show his mother and his father that he could learn you know and that I was trying to help him you know.

J: What role did this play in developing character in these young black people who would have had nothing, who had come from nothing and as far as they knew had nothing to look forward to? Your attitude of caring and caring more for those who had less to my way of thinking that meant something far beyond the school.

E: Well—

J: You've seen them grow up how do you feel about it? How did some of them turn out?

E: Well I'll tell you I think I have about—I think I've turned out about five teachers. There are about five I guess who have taught or are teaching now. One when I was teach—one of them the children wrote a letter to my supervisor Mr. Parks and told him that you know I'm teaching now but I'm using some of the same methods that Ms. Edna used when we were in school. So you know he put his hand over the name. I'll never forget he put his hand over the name. He said, "Do you know who sent this?" I said, "Oh yeah I know who sent it." I could tell who sent it. But you know, you know....

J: Do you recall any of your children who ever got into serious trouble in life?

E: From my school?

J: Can you remember any one of them that you would consider a total failure?

E: Well see I don't remember. I don't remember some of them did but I can't remember any who went to school to me and got into serious trouble. I can't remember that. No I can't remember that. But I know, you know some of them who didn't do anything. Who didn't come up with some kind of standard job but I don't remember any who got into serious trouble you know, who went to school to me.

J: Did some of them get through college that you taught in the later years?

E: Oh yes. Oh yes that girl who was on the picture with me she got to college. And yeah one or two others. One or two who are teaching over here. They're married now but I don't know what—their maiden names were Short's.

[End of Tape]